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## Chapter 1 - Food as an urban question, and the foundations of a reproductive, agroecological, urbanism

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### Introduction

In this chapter we aim to present and discuss what we mean by the concept of 'agroecological urbanism' (Deh-Tor, 2017). In the introduction to the book we began by illustrating how encountering agroecology has changed our way of looking at sustainable food planning in a profound way. Here, while delving deeper into the ideas of an agroecological urbanism, we aim to unpack further how we envision a transformative agenda for the sustainable food planning community.

An agroecological urbanism – as a realm of professional practice – does not yet exist. Ours is a call for a dialogue between two sets of discussions and reflections that, until today, still largely operate in separate worlds and are rooted in very different communities of practice. On the one hand are the political agroecology and the food sovereignty movements; these largely represent rural communities engaged in struggles and negotiations at national and transnational levels to shape production and trade conditions of farmers. On the other hand is the urban food policy community that is mostly engaged in debates on urban and regional food strategies, strongly focussed on issues of food access and consumption, such as urban diets and food poverty, but lacks a radical stance on the ecological basis of food production, and the reproduction of life in general. As largely separate movements, they are rooted in very different sets of historical subjectivities and resonate with political positions that have been historically rendered as the conflict between the agrarian and the urban question (McMichael, 2013; Tornaghi and Halder, 2021; Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2020).

While our work is largely positioned in this gap and attempting to build bridges between these communities and movements, in this chapter we mostly speak to the food planning community. This chapter tries to link up to the unfolding discussion on sustainable urban food planning while trying to break open its agenda: we do this in three ways. First, we aim to inscribe food planning within a *different geography*, moving beyond the city as a self-contained world exploring the complex geometries of planetary urbanisation (Brenner, 2014) and the many concretely existing overlaps between what used to be country and what used to be city (Parham, 2019). Second, we aim to expand and open up *the thematic confines of the urban food agenda*, unpacking the logics of urbanisation that still largely contribute to maintain food as an afterthought, after the 'hard' subjects of housing, transport, and energy have been taken care of. Third, we aim to challenge *the disciplinary confines* of traditional ways of understanding planning, embracing a view that sees planning as a field in transition, rather than a singular and monolithic disciplinary basis upon which food planning is to be built.

The chapter is organised along four sections. In Section 1 we start from the way sustainable food planning has engaged with the urban food question so far, and try to map the boundaries of the

terrain that the sustainable food planning agenda was able to conquer within an urban policy context. The aim is to describe its geographical boundaries, the selective character of its political agenda, the main planning approaches followed to implement this agenda, and to begin to illustrate its limits.

In Section 2 we turn to the social reproduction literature as a forceful entry point to rethink the urban food agenda. In particular, we illustrate how the feminist social reproduction literature (Federici, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2004; Bakker and Gill, 2003; Bezanson and Luxton, 2006), has helped us to see the variety of practices that have been residualised and side-lined in a capitalist society that has built the urban question around the question of the reproduction of capital and waged labour (Castells, 1972; Harvey, 1985), rather than bodies and ecologies.

In Section 3 we then move to agroecology as a radical starting point for a new food planning agenda. The clear positioning of political agroecology helps us to map where further articulation is needed in order to creatively imagine and build an urban society that embraces and nurtures the ecological processes that feed life (and us).

In Section 4 we conclude with a call for a heterodox planning practice, and try to map some of the voices present in this edited volume within such a heterodox approach.

## **1. How ‘urban’ is food planning?**

Over the past two decades, since the first publications calling for more attention to the food agenda, sustainable food planning has moved from “being a stranger to the planning field” (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000) to become one of the issues driving the renewal of planning. The reasons for planning communities re-engaging with food are varied and have been described by Morgan and Sonnino as part of the ‘new food equation’ (NFE) (Morgan, 2009; Morgan and Sonnino, 2010). With this term, they refer to the interplay of five profoundly destabilising trends in the capitalist food system that revolve around food, and that could potentially lead to a food regime change (Friedmann, 1987): the sharp rise of staple food prices, increase in food insecurity, the link between food insecurity and national security, the effect of climate change on food production, and the growing incidence of land conflicts. Cities, as Morgan and Sonnino (2010) remind us, are at the forefront of the NFE for ecological, demographic and political reasons.

The Food Interest Group (a subsection of the American Planning Association), and the Sustainable Food Planning Group (its counterpart within the Association of European Schools of Planning or ‘AESOP’) can now look back at more than 10 years of exchange in research and teaching activities on this topic. The emergence of the field of sustainable food planning went hand-in-hand with local and regional actors engaging in the drafting of urban food plans, food strategies and, to some extent, food policies (Ilieva, 2016). Over the last decade, a growing number of cities have installed local food councils (Moragues-Faus and Sonnino, 2019); in turn, this has led to the establishment of networks of cities coming together around the urban food agenda and learning from each other, both within national (i.e., the UK Sustainable Food Cities network) and international networks (i.e., the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact).

We share the excitement for this growing attention. At the same time, however, we feel that the planning community has only started to address food as an *urban* matter of concern. The impact of this renewed attention to food is still rather limited and insufficiently integrated within a broad transformative urban agenda, i.e., an agenda for the city, urbanism and urbanisation more broadly. We believe that the work of planners needs expanding beyond the boundaries within which food has been treated so far and should be understood as an ‘urban question’, giving it the same weight and centrality that has historically been given to the housing question, mobility, or sanitation in

urbanism. The particular gaze we adopt has roots in the literature and debates on 'urban questions' (typically the housing questions), and the ways in which planners' social movements and governing authorities have negotiated issues of social reproduction and collective services in the past century. We first take stock of the ways in which the city has been conceptualised within food planning, then explore the frontiers of an expanded urban agenda.

### **1.1 Multiple versions of the city in urban food planning**

As mentioned above, Morgan and Sonnino (2010) have pointed out that after half a century in which faith in the industrialisation of agriculture made it seem as if the issue of feeding people had been resolved, food has regained centre stage in the international arena. Wiskerke (2015) identifies five urbanisation challenges to which urban food planning has responded:

- (1) governance capacity, especially given the new sustainability challenges;
- (2) resource use;
- (3) growing inequality;
- (4) environmental pollution; and
- (5) food provisioning for a growing urban population.

Each of these challenges has led to different ways in which the food planning community has engaged with the urban context. Building on these analyses and emerging debates, we can identify the following ways in which the city and food planning intersect.

#### *The city as a distinctive level of governance: the rise of urban food councils and alternative food networks*

While in the post-war period food was dealt with largely at the national and supranational level (through trade agreements and price control policies, including subsidies, for example), in the past 30 years the city has re-emerged as a distinct level of governance for the food system. Moragues-Faus and Sonnino (2019) describe the rise of food policy councils since the establishment of the first council in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1982. The experience of this growing number of cities has led to the emergence of city-to-city exchanges, and city-to-city learning, and is now also available as a rich resource for the empirical analysis of urban food governance (Baker and de Zeeuw, 2015). Food planning in this context is looked at as a specific subject of local and metropolitan governance. The intersections with the urban planning literature are many. Food planning has been analysed as a form of multilevel governance, calling for horizontal and vertical policy integration (Ilieva, 2016). It has been analysed as spaces of hybrid governance and social innovation (Manganelli and Moulart, 2019), as a new form of regional metropolitan governance, etc. (Wascher et al., 2015). While these new policy arrangements have been celebrated by many, they have also been questioned as symptomatic of a techno-managerial and post-political form of climate governance (Kenis and Lievens, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2010).

#### *The city as a multiscalar territorial entity: reterritorialisation and the rural-urban continuum*

The relative neglect of food in the history of urban planning until the mid-1980s is partly explained through the historical physical and mental separation of town and country. Food has been treated as a question of agriculture and constructed as belonging to non-urban territories (Sonnino, 2009; Cabannes and Marocchino, 2018). Many voices have pointed to the region as the preferred geographical entity to rebuild urban-rural linkages (Kneafsey, 2010; Cohen, 2010; Forster and Getz Escudero, 2014; Wiskerke, 2015). Research has shown great differences in the structure and make-up of the geographical area upon which cities rely (Zasada et al., 2019). However, the concept of urban agriculture has reconnected actors on both sides of the urban-rural divide (Viljoen, 2005) and has actively explored opportunities to integrate food production within the urban context. Designers

and planners reimagined the possibilities of reconnecting open spaces along the urban transect (Duany, 2012) into Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes (Viljoen, 2005; Bohn and Viljoen 2010) and discovered the specific opportunities presented by the peri-urban interface (Sieverts, 2003, Parham, 2019).

#### *The city as a contested terrain: urban food movements and the struggle for food justice*

While urban food movements across the globe have typically organised around questions of urban hunger and food insecurity, a more organised response to the corporate food regime has united many of these movements around a food justice perspective, striving for equal access to food in cities (Wekerle, 2004; Alkon and Agyeman, 2011). These movements have typically tied into community garden initiatives or community supported agriculture; they have also challenged the enclosure of resources and reclaimed public land as a collective food growing resource (Lyons et al., 2013, Tornaghi, 2012; Certomà and Tornaghi, 2015; Tornaghi and Certomà, 2019). While the food justice movement is typically rooted in race-, gender- and class-based struggles for equality, in their rights-based orientation they are potentially aligned with the more globally oriented and agrarian-based food sovereignty movement. Many urban movements, however, encounter the limits of a neoliberal context (Clendenning et al., 2015). Urban food planning, in general, remains locked up within reformist, at best progressive, policy frameworks that lack a radical and transformative dimension (Holt Giménez and Shattuck, 2011; McClintock, 2014; Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2020).

#### *The city as a dysfunctional ecosystem: mending the urban metabolism*

A large section of the food planning literature reflects a general effort to analyse the environmental performance of the urban ecosystem, reducing the extractive use of resources brought in from elsewhere and internalising the negative externalities caused by urban growth. Urban agriculture in particular has been praised for its potential to deliver a broad range of ecosystem services: contributing to the reduction of food waste and the circular use of urban waste streams, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, integral urban water management, the use of renewable energy, and improved biodiversity (Viljoen and Wiskerke, 2012; Aerts et al., 2016). Many urban food policies are implemented in the context of policy arenas specifically geared at the realisation of urban climate goals. The urban arena and the regional food system have been embraced as plausible scales to analyse and structure the complex relationships within the global food-water-energy nexus (Allouche et al., 2019) and to mend the metabolic rift between town and country (Schneider and McMichael, 2010; Dehaene et al., 2016).

#### *The city as a growing number of mouths to be fed*

Many advocates of urban food planning make reference to the UN habitat statistics stating that since 2008 more than half the world's population lives in cities (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010; Wiskerke, 2015; Ilieva, 2016). The growing challenge of feeding the world is increasingly an urban challenge. Carolyne Steel's bestselling book 'Hungry City' convincingly showed how urbanisation historically also comes with a growing dependency on processes that largely fall outside of the control of cities (Steel, 2008). At the same time, cities, in particular those of the Global South, have been documented as the habitat of local food initiatives, and forms of self-organisation, contributing to a geography of small- and medium-size cities that still display a significant degree of self-reliance (Mougeot, 2005). Urban agriculture, and even more specifically urban agroecology, has been taken up by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as an important alternative source of food and contribution to the creation of sustainable livelihoods (Dubbeling et al., 2010; IPES-Food 2018).

Against the background of this landscape, in the next section we aim to contribute towards pushing the boundaries of urban food planning, to discuss how we advocate for food to be fully embraced as an urban question, and to prepare the ground for what we call an agroecological urbanism.

## **1.2 Food as an urban question: pushing the boundaries of urban food planning**

As the field presents itself in more consolidated form we are also at a point in which we see its limits. We see limits in the extent to which the field has questioned current models of urbanisation, the selective uptake of 'urban questions' (i.e., what has been taken up as a matter of urban policy and urban collective arrangements), and in the planning models that have been adopted to address the urban food question.

### *Urbanisation unbounded: the geography of the urban food question*

Food planning by and large still treats the city as a container in which food needs to be retrofitted. This is particularly true for the sometimes uncritical embrace of the full spectrum of urban agriculture initiatives. Urban agriculture has been mostly projected on existing open spaces, fringe spaces, often along infrastructure corridors, on roofs, etc., without fundamentally questioning the land use dynamics that, more often than not, contribute to the further destruction of valuable soils, the contamination of aquifers, the fragmentation of nutrient cycles, and the disruption of critical ecosystems. Most food plans accept the division between town and country that places the urban on the consumption side and introduce urban agriculture as a novel exception. Different forms of Urban Agriculture are typically mapped along the urban transect (Duany, 2012; de Graaf, 2012; Lohrberg et al., 2016) and work under the assumption that the geometry of urban-rural land-use dynamics can be adequately captured in terms of centre-periphery relationships.

A more complex understanding of the urban landscape can be found in the framework of the urban food region. This perspective also runs the risk of uncritically embracing the urbanistic consensus that sustainable urbanisation is compact and can be contained within the regional geography of a physiographic basin. While these models may have their role to play, they stand in the way of a food urbanism that embraces the multiscale geometries of the planetary urban in full (Brenner, 2013). Such exercises may take inspiration from the historical work of early socialist and anarchist thinkers such as Vandervelde (1903), Kautsky (1988) and Kropotkin (1998) that tried to translate the politics of land and labour of industrial urbanisation within a mixed geography of "fields, factories and workshops" (Kropotkin 1998). Equally inspiring are the echoes of these historical reflections in the work of Murray Bookchin (1976) and Colin Ward (1999), or the speculations about Desakota landscapes (McGee, 1991) and Agropolitan Development (Friedmann and Douglass, 1978) in the Global South. All these are speculative exercises that share attention with the agrarian side of the question of urbanisation and resist the extractive, centralistic, cumulative *status quo* of capitalist urbanisation in favour of distributed models in which food production is part and parcel of the urban landscape. In our quest for a radical rethinking of food planning, our first key message is a call for overcoming the artificial and capitalism-driven geographical and conceptual separation of what is thought of as 'agricultural lands' from what is conceived as 'urbanisation'.

### *The selective uptake of urban questions: the food question as an afterthought*

Food planning is in part a response to the selective and limited ways in which food has been treated as an urban question over the past 100 years. Urban questions have historically been concerned with social reproduction under urbanisation (Castells, 1972) and the exacerbated relationships of interdependence that urban life comes with. While answers to the urban social reproduction crisis have not always been necessarily urban, the interplay between social movements and business interests has posed considerable pressures on the urban political agenda to provide an answer.

Affordable housing and cheap food were equally essential to the reproduction of industrial waged labour; however, their different historical treatment, and the different ways in which they have been commodified, is striking. Transport and commuting have been key to keeping house prices low and to keep the proletariat out of the city, but public housing provision would always remain central to the urban agenda (Polasky, 2010). The urban food question could have been sorted through protection of urban and peri-urban agricultural land, an investment in logistics, municipal slaughterhouses or the appropriate provision of wholesale markets, while in fact they have been used only to facilitate the import of food from elsewhere (Cronon, 1992; Steel, 2008) and to enable the massive conversion of agricultural land to urban land use. While housing, transport and sanitation have made it into the main chapters of the urban planning textbooks, food was for the footnotes, only to be rediscovered lately as a novelty in the field.

While cities have begun to subscribe to (slightly) more ambitious goals, such as those formulated within the Milan Food Policy pact or by the FAO, the translation of these goals in actual policies remains attached to those policy areas that have historically landed on the urban side. Urban food policies tend to focus on consumption and consumer behaviour, insufficiently questioning the extreme state of food commodification within cities. Strategies to decommodify food remain attached to welfare measures typically associated with food poverty (i.e., food vouchers), compensating for the failures of a commodified urban foodscape rather than aiming for its fundamental transformation. In order to put food on the urban agenda, food policies have been tactically linked to urban climate governance, public health policies, food poverty measures, or waste management. These tactical alignments do not necessarily break open the structural barriers that exist between divided policy silos, leaving the potential of a food perspective to contribute to policy integration largely untapped.

Our second key message for a renewed planning approach to food is the call to fully embrace the production of food (not only its consumption) as an 'urban question', a question that needs to be responded to locally. In order for food to surge to the same level as housing or transport in the planning agenda, it is necessary that land and soils enter the political agenda, and reshape the politics of resource management. This means that land for food production and the preservation of healthy soils do not come secondary to (and hence sacrificed for) the expansion of road infrastructure, housing development or new commercial areas. While it is obvious that no urban context alone is expected to meet its food needs, the surging of food to a fully articulated urban question will require new fields of work to be defined and articulated in ways that substantially redefine the hardwiring and the software of our urban environments. This is in terms of land use (i.e., proactive policies for enhanced land protection in the urban and peri-urban, programmes for the use of existing public land, plans for reconversion of land to agricultural use), infrastructure (i.e., build or rebuild the infrastructure for food production, including use and redirection of organic waste streams, legal protection of soils, programmes for soil regeneration, waterways sanitation and restoration for agricultural use, creation of municipal free-seeds banks, etc.), and logistics (institution of municipal storage spaces).

#### *The hegemony of established planning ideas: a food blind planning guild*

Food might be innovative for planning, but is planning sufficiently innovative to address the urban food question? Some humility is in place here. As Ilieva puts it, "planning might be part of the problem":

For many years, urban plans have labelled periurban lands around cities as 'awaiting development' and hatched them as blank space, disregarding the great diversity of rural infrastructures and landscapes that distinguish one periurban area from the other. Urbanization

proceeds regardless of these diversities and thus has had a detrimental impact on many peri urban farms and rural heritage sites, particularly in European urban regions. (Ilieva, 2016, 80)

The great challenge is to see the historical blindness of planning to food. Changing that does not only require a new song, but touches the epistemological foundations of planning. This includes the conceptual hierarchy that is embedded in the field, that thinks from the centre and disqualifies the rest as periphery (Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2015), gives disproportionate weight to questions of real estate, housing, transport, etc., the subjects that drive the urban growth machine, that operates through legal frameworks and technical instruments that reproduce this conceptual hierarchy.

Our third key message for the renewal of food planning is that this is not possible without a deep rethinking of the field of planning itself. The very notion of planning, as deeply anthropocentric, rooted in instrumental rationality, the domination of nature, and historically complicit with the power geometries of a colonial world order, may even be the wrong label to imagine a food inclusive, resource conserving and regenerative urban world. The wager to fully think food as an urban question, however, may be a concrete and tangible starting point to imagine a future for 'the field formerly called planning', including the delivery of its emancipatory aspirations.

## **2. Urbanism, food and social reproduction**

Planning's historical blindness to food can be better understood (and challenged) in all its consequences if we look at the history of planning and urbanisation from the perspective of social reproduction. Feminist social reproduction scholars have provided fundamental insights into how the social and material reproduction of societies, including for example giving birth, care work, and food provisioning; these have been historically ensured over time<sup>1</sup>. The rise of urban planning in the last century was met with an ongoing critique of the links between capitalist industrialisation and processes of urbanisation. Scholars in the 1960s and 1970s exposed how urbanisms were ideologically-driven and value-laden practices organising urban space and life, functional to the dominant economic, political and social order. Colonial, capitalist (and patriarchal) values shaped the articulation of urban space needed to ensure the maintenance and thriving of capitalist societies, processes of accumulation, and resource extraction. Critical urban scholars, such as Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, and David Harvey, have pointed out, for example, how the expansion of the built environment and the destruction of fertile lands was essentially linked to the circuits of capital and the search of its ongoing expansion (real estate speculation, capital spatial fix). They also describe how state-led provision of collective services, such as education and social housing (elements of social reproduction) were functional to enabling a work force (once based in the countryside as at least partially self-sufficient farmers) to be concentrated around factories, and how urban ways of life had a growing environmental and social effect on a planetary scale. These effects included the ongoing depletion or pollution of natural resources, the development of tourist resorts on virgin lands, and the subjugation of agriculture to commodity markets. All these were well beyond the sphere of the urban.

Feminist scholars have provided fundamental critiques and much needed integrations to these theories, shaping a 'social reproduction' perspective. They observed that a fundamental element in the ongoing renewal of capital relationships was not only the appropriation of means of production on behalf of the capitalist (as most Marxist literature has unpacked), but also the unpaid and unrecognised labour necessary for the reproduction of the workers, which were often the responsibility of women (Dalla Costa and James, 1975; Federici, 2004, 2012, 2019). These included,

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<sup>1</sup> Given the space constraints, we focus this discussion around the last 150 years, although Silvia Federici (2004) and Harriet Friedmann (1987) have provided detailed and enlightening overviews of the social and international relationships that impacted on both food regimes and women's lives, covering a history dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.

alongside the obvious biological reproduction of life (giving birth), all the domestic and care work needed for the day-to-day reproduction of able workers: providing for the satisfaction of sexual needs, the preparation of food, the washing and sewing of clothes, care for the children and the elderly, the education and socialisation to cultural norms and social rules (Fraser, 2016, p.23; Jacka, 2017). These activities were not only necessary for the reproduction of society and life in general, but were often a direct outcome of oppressive social arrangements emanating from patriarchal values.

Some of the feminist scholars active in this field had begun to critique how the urban design and architecture informing new urban and suburban development were often implicated in the reproduction of isolating living conditions, which rendered impossible the socialisation of these tasks (Hayden, 1982). Socialist and anarchist material feminist groups, especially in the period between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, engaged in the conceptualisation and development of concrete alternatives for the management of these tasks in common, including experiments in urban planning and development. At a time where the male-dominated professions tried to render housework more efficient through the technological innovations of modern utility systems and imagined apartments equipped with housekeeping machines and kitchens built into each minimum dwelling, the imaginaries of these groups were centred around public/collective kitchens, kitchenless houses, co-operative housekeeping, communal living, and community-led urban agriculture (see, for example, the work of Melusina Fay Peirce, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mary Livermore, Ethel Puffer Howes, Charles Fourier, Ebenezer Howard, among others).

However, while pointing out that social reproduction has been undervalued and under-investigated, they also pointed out how it remained secondary and subservient to capitalist production. It is important for our argument to focus on the conditions of the provision of food.

First, it is important to remember that capitalism had deep roots in agriculture in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the expropriation of land and common lands to farmers, what is called 'primitive accumulation', and the rise of international trades of goods, and later slaves. The creation of masses of dispossessed, destitute people was the pre-condition for the rise of industrialisation and rapid urbanisation.

Under conditions of commodification of labour, workers become

“dependent on market for the items they once produced at home (or obtained through the informal economy). (...) without a wage they cannot obtain crucial subsistence goods. It is because of this cycle of dependence that the market actually comes to dominate social reproduction in general.” (Ferguson, 1998:4, in Bakker and Gill, p.21).

Alongside the commodification of labour, family-based food production/gardening/animal rearing, that had been common practice and survived in many urban contexts, has progressively been residualised, and food provision treated as a commodity.

The agro-industrialisation of food, supported by the green revolution, as well as various forms of dumping of “cheap food from nowhere” (Bové, et al. 2002), have naturalised the abstraction of agriculture from its ecological and cultural foundations (McMichael, 2003, p.173). Over time we have become used to think of the urban being on the side of consumption and rural on the side of production. Alongside the furthering of primitive accumulation, the enclosure of common lands, the urbanisation of residualised fields and the set of hygiene standards, many food provisioning practices have been rendered impossible and its scope and diversity severely reduced. People have grown disconnected from the ecological basis of food production, its seasonality, the importance of returning organic waste (i.e., kitchen waste) to the land to feed the soil. They have lost not only



fundamental knowledge to understand our mutual interdependence with other life organisms (what Schneider and McMichael have discussed as “epistemic rift”) and the ability to provide for their survival, but they have also lost the very possibility of reproducing such knowledge: they have lost the possibility of practicing it (Schneider and Michael, 2010; Tornaghi, 2017).

In the consolidated urban environments of the global north, public and private spaces are not generally designed to accommodate food self-provisioning communities, nor do they offer the infrastructure needed to serve urban and peri-urban smallholders. Land values and land tenure regimes devalue food production and cater for speculative and profit-oriented approaches to land ‘development’. Organic waste management is driven by short-sighted cost-saving approaches, rather than soil-nurturing and nutrient-recovery practices. A social reproduction perspective enables us to see the specific biopolitical character of those forms of urbanisation that have institutionalised and reproduced urban ways of living that assume the endless provisioning of cheap food ‘from nowhere’. This food is produced unsustainably by underpaid farm workers, wasted in disproportionate amounts, and often processed in unhealthy ready-meals because people increasingly do not have the available time or skills to cook.

Social reproduction scholars have indeed pointed out how the progressive absorption of women into the labour market, and the ongoing retreat of the state from social provision of welfare, have coincided with a re-privatisation of social reproduction (Mitchell et al., 2004) by either externalising care work to paid workers, or a re-burdening of women with care work, often in addition to full-time waged work. To heal the knowledge and epistemic rift, we do not only need to promote a reconnection of farmers with urban dwellers, but also need to create time and space for those practices needed to reproduce (embodying) lost knowledge.

Sustainable food planning, in its attempt to transform the food system, therefore, needs to understand and challenge the profound interconnection between capitalist and neoliberal values and practices on the one hand, and the arrangements for social reproduction ingrained in processes of urbanisation on the other. These efforts should not stop at the critical deconstruction of the urbanisms of capital. We see it as a call to imagine alternative urbanisms that decouple urbanism and capital, and seek to imagine forms of urbanisation that value the social reproduction of life in general, and of food in particular, differently (Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2020). This is a tall order given the intimate historical relationship between urbanisation and capitalism that has defined the ways cities have been structured since the rise of industrial capitalism. Our call for an agroecological urbanism (which we will work out further in the next section) in order to transform our food system, takes inspiration from political agroecology, as a movement that offers concrete alternative value systems, social arrangements and ecological practices from where to imagine a post-capitalist world.

### **3. Agroecology and the re-articulation of the urban food agenda: imagining an agroecological urbanism**

“Agroecology -in our view- is not just an agricultural method: it is a ‘package’ of value-based practices which are explicitly addressing social and environmental justice, are culturally sensitive, non-extractive, resource conserving, and rooted in non-hierarchical and inclusive pedagogical and educational models that shape the way food is produced and socialised across communities and generations. Agroecosystems, while specific to each geographical context, share a number of ecological and social features including “socio-cultural institutions regulated by strong values and collective forms of social organisation for resource access, benefits sharing, value systems”. The principles and practice of agroecology, centred around multi-species solidarities, biodiversity and environmental stewardship, have been extensively noted for their ability to conceive of and deliver *alternative ways of producing food*. Agroecology is also being strongly mobilised as a *political tool*. Its strong links with the international food sovereignty movement, and its inclination to action-oriented, transdisciplinary and participatory processes has led to defining it simultaneously as a science, a movement and a practice. Political agroecology and urban political agroecology are taking shape at the crossroads between scholar activism and urban movements, although its full political potential is yet to be metabolised” (Deh-Tor 2017).

Political agroecology has been the framework within which we have embraced the lessons learnt from feminist social reproduction scholars and began to push the reimagining of the urban food planning agenda. Below we explore how agroecology may push the geographical boundaries of the discipline, the political agenda, and the disciplinary scope of sustainable food planning.

### *Agroecology and the biopolitics of the productive city*

Thinking the urban through an agroecological lens is more than a call to rebuilt urban-rural linkages within the existing geography of capitalist urbanisation. Rather it challenges the mechanisms that reaffirm their separation, with production on one side and consumption on the other, with agrarian versus urban questions, but also with nature on the outside and technology, culture and artifice on the inside. An agroecological urbanism is a political ecological project that seeks to rethink the 'nature of cities' (Heynen et al., 2005) and tries to imagine urban ways of life that relate concretely to, make space for, and are centred on the ecological basis of food production.

As reproductive work is enmeshed with production and cannot really be thought separately, the reshaping of an urban food agenda cannot just be done by plugging agroecology and food into the interstices of the system. Remembering that an urbanism is made up of the collective arrangements that a society makes to organise the collective support and care in the context of exacerbated conditions of interdependence, the agroecological urbanism we imagine joins the political path of agroecology, and builds on the quest for nature-inclusive forms of agriculture in order to imagine an urbanism that thinks social interdependence and more-than-human interspecies solidarities together (Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

Rethinking the biopolitics of the city in an agroecological perspective means to shape an urbanism that re-operationalise the links between urban green spaces and farming fields in the periurban fringe, between urban dwellers and food transformers, and between organic waste collectors and territorial food hubs. Within this reflection we see a specific role for the peri-urban context where the processes that work towards the separation of the agrarian and urban question can be seen in action. It is a context in which 'urban', 'rural', 'no longer rural' and 'already urban' communities are co-present and where we see possibilities to imagine the construction of an agroecological urban subject. It is a reality where the skills, the farmers operating infrastructure, the differentiated landscapes that historically enabled regenerative farming practices are often still in place in residualised or fragmented form. In the midst of such landscapes in transition an alternative order could be established, starting from the reappropriation of such residualised landscapes, taking back the nutrient scapes and valuable soils, mobilising remaining skills, activating remaining proximity relations between rural and urban fragments.

An equally important role in the re-organisations of these relations can be played by the neighbourhood 'political community kitchen', a place that can act at the interlink between communities (peri-urban food producers, food processors, community caterers, urban gardening and reskilling groups), food producing activities and territorialities, recasting the neighbourhood scale as central in the building of resourceful communities.

### *Agroecology and the urban politics of ecological resources*

The agenda for an agroecological urbanism is one that has to be literally built with constituencies that belong to worlds that have been separated by the urbanisation of capital. While the agenda of the political agroecology movement has been built in urban exile, with the urban often seen as a direct threat and driver of the logics of dispossession that movements such as the Via Campesina have been fighting, we see agroecology as a comprehensive agenda that provides the key principles

upon which a socially inclusive, ecologically sustainable and resourceful urbanism could be built, that is a way of organising the urban that would putting the care for its social reproduction central.

Agroecology as a science a movement and a practice (Wezel et al., 2009) is a rich and contextually diverse repertoire of very concrete ideas that can be mobilised by communities 'in place' and around which new collective arrangements can be built. The agenda of the agroecology movement has been typically defined in terms of the contrasting logics of agroecosystems and conventional farming. Gliessman (2007, pp.8-16) builds on this to identify 7 areas in which agroecology could play a curative and transformative role: soil degradation, overuse of water and damage to hydrological systems, pollution of the environment, dependence on external inputs, loss of genetic diversity, loss of local control over agricultural production, global inequality.

If we understand the close connection between the process of urbanisation and the expansion of large scale, extractive forms of conventional farming, we immediately feel how this list could equally lead to the construction of a transformative urban agenda. Such an agenda would:

i) link land use to soil care and interrupt the logics of substitution that make it possible to bring food to the city rather than produce it locally.

ii) give a central role for agroecological farmers as stewards of the watersheds that urban systems are typically part of.

iii) team up with agroecology not only to reduce the polluting effects of industrial agriculture but also to engage in the rebuilding of topsoils on urban damaged lands, including the use of organic material from urban waste streams.

iv) join forces with nature conservationists and builds rich gradients and connections between the intrinsic biodiversity of conservation (or rewilding projects) and the functional biological diversity of agroecological farming.

v) adopt the principles of resource sovereignty as a means to reinforce both farmers autonomy as well as a tool to rebuild some local control over food security.

vi) challenge ethnocentric and exclusive constructions of territorial sovereignty in favour of place based solidarities that embrace the full diversity of the urban demography.

#### *Agroecology and the politics of (planning) knowledge*

Political agroecology has convincingly made the link between a systemic and systematic analysis of agroecosystems and food systems. That relationship is extremely complex: the transformation of the system requires not only a radical transformation of the way processes of urbanisations are organised, but also a partial renewal of the type of planning that is needed. To successfully nurture and build an agroecological urbanism, new concerns need to be put at the centre of the planning profession and new skills need to be taught in planning schools. While sustainable food planning has been an innovative force in planning education, the call for an agroecological urbanism is a call to move out of planning schools into the world of agroecology and back, exposing a new generation of planning students and professionals to matters of concern that were not included in the traditional imaginaries of an urban-based community of practice.

We see great potential in forms of advocacy planning that literally translate the principles of agroecological food production, in all their local and cultural diversity, into an agenda for the transformation of the urban landscape from a food disabling into a food enabling one. Such a food planning project is not just a technical endeavour but requires political pedagogies that make new

positions available for the food-alienated citizens, subjects of the urbanisms of capital. We imagine concrete advocacy working with food growing communities, identifying the building blocks of an 'agroecological mode of life', finding the forms and collective articulations for a society that places food practices central in caring for its social reproduction.

While such a call may sound overly abstract, the beauty of focussing on agroecological imaginaries and principles is that such work could find direct and concrete roots in concrete communities and places, in the existing efforts of the very people that today try to create the circumstances to care for the soil, to care for their plants, to care for their communities, and face very specific, contextual, daily challenges to do so. It is from these cumulated efforts of political agroecology communities that the force of an urban agroecological transformation could be derived. An agroecological urbanism, then, is more than an agenda: it is also a quest for the platforms and spaces through which such an agenda can be built and supported. We take inspiration from the efforts to root the renewal of urban planning within innovative and radical forms of urban governance, such as radical municipalist projects or communities of food commoners. Where the national planning and supra-national planning arenas continue to cater to the vested interests of the agro-industrial complex, we see potential and precedents to bring a radical municipalist agenda (Russell, 2019) and the struggles of political agroecology together. The first initiatives to build networks of agroecological cities point towards such an agenda (López et al., 2017).

#### **4. Resourcing an agroecological urbanism within a heterodox community of practice**

"What if solidarity, mutual learning, interspecies (more than human) exchanges, environmental stewardship, food sovereignty and people's resourcefulness were the principles of a new paradigm for urbanisation? How would urban design, property regimes, food provision, collective services, and the whole ensemble of planning and socio-technical arrangements change, if they were informed by urban agroecology? How can we begin to radically transform the food disabling urban landscapes that have systematically displaced food production, recovering both historical food growing practices and imagining new urban arrangements?" (*Deh-Tor, 2017*)

The incipit here above illustrates the kind of questions that, in 2017, led us to call for an international forum for urban agroecology. We were looking for allies within the food planning community to embrace the principles of agroecology, and the tools of political agroecology to join forces with social movements and food activists to build a constructive vision for an agroecological urbanism. The forum we imagined does not exist in consolidated form but the project moved ahead on different fronts. The conversation with the AESOP sustainable food conference continued with sustained attention for the intersection of agroecology and sustainable food planning in the 2019 conference in Madrid, hosted by Marian Simon Rojo. We (the authors of this chapter) received funding from JPI Urban Europe and the Belmont Forum to explore pathways for resourcing marginalised peri-urban agroecological farmers and for the conceptualisation of concrete building blocks for an agroecological urbanism, with partners in Riga, Brussels, Rosario and London (Tornaghi and Dehaene, 2020). This edited volume is also an attempt to bring together pieces of the urban agroecology puzzle.

The voices in this book are quite diverse. A few chapters squarely belong to the community of food planners and are authored by people who identify themselves in those terms. For many the question of planning, let alone urbanism, is by no means the starting point of their engagement. One of the great merits of the food planning community, however, is that it has contributed to the encounter of heterodox voices and thereby to an expanded understanding of planning. In a moment of growing production in the field of sustainable food planning, what is becoming increasingly clear is that there is wide divergence regarding the kind of planning that is being promoted, and the specific role assigned to cities and the urban policy arena. We believe that it is important not to lock up the urban food question within the confines of disciplinary boundaries, but rather to link up to the diverse movements leading food systems innovation.

The selection of contributions in this book reflects this diversity, without any ambition of being comprehensive. Together they form a grid of entries into a field. Most importantly, the various contributions show different trajectories through which an expanded and re-politicised urban food agenda can be built and identifies some of the communities that could be mobilised or are mobilised already. The authors in this book share the belief that to bring about an agroecological urbanism, a project so fundamentally at odds with capitalist urbanisation and the dominant food systems in place, the road ahead is a political one that requires clear positions regarding the geography and territoriality of the food planning agenda, the value positions that define what is appreciated and depreciated, reproduced or discarded, the subjectivities and terms of engagement through which such a transformative agenda could be moved forward.

The book includes several chapters that discuss the methods of mobilisation and engagement that could bring about situations in which humans and non-humans could enter into more virtuous relationships and take up roles for which they now lack the resources, the skills, or the imagination. The book includes accounts of concrete participative forms of action research that has sought to include agroecological farmers within debates on food systems transformation and sustainable food planning (in particular Chapters 2, 7 and 8). Several contributions reflect on the counter-hegemonic strategies necessary to bring about an agroecological urbanism. These could come in the form of the politics of the commons (Chapter 3), could take inspiration from the solidarity economies built by the Chiapas in Mexico (Chapter 9), or may require global solidarities between precarious communities in the north and peasant movements in the global south (Chapters 8 and 10). Several chapters start from the need to challenge and interrupt the mechanisms that reproduce the problems of our current food system, its inequalities and logics of dispossession (Chapter 10), the pervasive contamination of soils in general and urban soils in particular (Chapter 6), the loss of skills and the extensive alienation of urban subjects (Chapters 2 and 7), the reproduction of colonial and extractive relationships with capitalistic urban societies (Chapter 3). Some chapters build on specific practices that hold the promise of engendering new agroecological relationships within our urban landscape (Chapters 4 and 5). Chapter 5 explores the way in which the introduction of food producing perennials and principles of agroforestry could transform the way we look at open space resources and the landscape ecology of the urbanised landscape. Chapter 4 discusses the reappropriation of fragmented lands on the peri-urban fringe by agroecological smallholders.

Overall we see the authors of these chapters as travel companions, and we hope the book will inspire other practitioners, scholars and scholar activists to join in reimagining and building an agroecological urbanism.

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