Carving your own career path...

URBAN SCALE

DISCOURSE PRODUCTION

TENSIONS CONTRADICTIONS
Just, equitable and democratic food systems. Is there an easy recipe?

Graph 1: From Harris, Dougill et al. 2015, p.70: “Number of Publications by Year (Urban Food Systems); reproduced from Scopus search results accessed on February 2015”
My PhD research: Exploring the politics of urban food strategies in European cities

- Three case studies in comparative perspective: London (UK), Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and Pisa (Italy).

- Different methodologies: Policy and Discourse analysis on selected documents (Hajer and Veersteeg 2005), ethnographic and interpretative research (Yanow 1999).

- Multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives (urban, food and policy studies): Andrew Jonas, Saskia Sassen, Jamie Peck, Harriet Friedmann, Philip Mcmichael, Christopher Pollitt…

- Four papers published from PhD
Urban Food Strategies (UFSs)

(UFSs) can be identified as a broad category of efforts by municipalities to improve food quality, access or distribution in order to pursue sustainability and the general wellbeing of the population.
UFSs labelled as “alternatives” to standing “neoliberal” policies and practices operating in urban governance and the food system

UFSs the manifestations of the rise of an “alternative food geography”, wherein cities are opposing the “old” “neoliberal” organization of food provision through actions that are “grounded in a different logic and incorporating other than economic values only” (Wiskerke, 2009).

UFSs as democracy enhancing: they might offer a viable option to mitigate the top-down, technocratic and neoliberal structure of the contemporary ‘smart city’ (Maye 2018).

“food planning in its broadest sense is arguably one of the most important social movements of the early twenty-first century” (Morgan 2009).

“By providing comparative data on urban food strategies social scientists have the unique contribution to make to the creation of global policy networks that can disseminate best practices” (Sonnino 2009).

Wiskerke (2009), the rise of the Alternative Food Geography
My PhD research: Exploring tensions and contradictions in urban food strategies

**Neoliberal elements:** economic competition constituent cipher, placing profit over societal and environmental needs, reframing ‘citizens’ as ‘consumers’ (or in other words ‘rights’ with ‘choice’), rolling back of welfare, tendency to apply market mechanism on the public sphere (New Public Management)

**Alternative elements:** focus on welfare, democratization, participation, social and environmental justice, active citizenship, sustainability, redistributive policies, ‘greening’ and re-localization of the food system, food democracy.
London Food Strategy 2006/2011:

Healthy and Sustainable Food for London
The Mayor's Food Strategy Summary

Crippes! The Mayor is backing a Leftie plot

Milk矫正

Socrates, who was a great philosopher and one of the early leaders of the Athens revolution, was an ancient Greek philosopher and a historian of music and art. He was a student of Plato and a teacher of Aristotle.

Socrates was a leading figure in the development of Western philosophy. He is known for his dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and his emphasis on personal reflection and self-examination. Socrates believed that true wisdom comes from understanding basic moral and ethical principles, and he emphasized the importance of critical thinking and questioning assumptions.

Socrates' ideas have had a profound impact on Western thought, particularly in the fields of ethics, politics, and philosophy. His philosophy continues to be studied and debated today, and his legacy is a testament to the enduring value of inquiry and the search for truth.
2012 London Olympics: “The greenest games ever”...
Food as creative city politics in the city of Rotterdam
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A B S T R A C T

This paper investigates the emerging importance of food and Urban Agriculture in the city of Rotterdam. In particular, these themes have been at a core of policy documents recently launched by the municipality: the Sustainability Program and the strategic agenda Food and the City. In the process of planning and involving the city for middle and upper class residents and creative workers, these strategies directly contribute to the marketing of Rotterdam as the most "sustainable world harbor city". By means of discourse analysis, we analyze policy documents to highlight the tensions between the advertised social and economic benefits of these operations. Food and Urban Agriculture emerge as being framed to target the needs of the lower-income, marginalized populations, and as such these can ultimately be considered as a form of creative city politics.

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1. Introduction: the drive towards urban food governance

Food provision, and its implications for issues such as sustainability, social justice and economic development, is nowadays a subject for discussion in various political arenas. Food scholars have paid particular attention to the role of cities, where for many reasons the food system requires the most urgent action (Folke et al., 1999; Steinitz, 2009; Morgan, 2015). One of the main reasons to support this notion of urgency comes from the UN report World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, which indicates that population growth will become a largely urban phenomenon, predicting that by 2050 67% of the world population will live in urban areas. In more developed countries, the percentage of urban dwellers is estimated to amount to 88% by 2050. Moreover, it is estimated that “cities consume 75% of the world’s resources and produce 80% of CO2 emissions” (Knoop, Lupescu, & Berger, 2014, p. 6). These figures indicate the need to deal with the impacts of food production, transportation and consumption in urban settings, which will become ever more important.

Alongside concerns for the growing population, access to healthy food makes a substantial contribution to human wellbeing. Today, globalized food supply chains make it possible to meet the high demand for food in urban areas. However, various problems arise with regard to the agro-industrial food supply chain, including environmental degradation, increased health risks, and outbreaks of foodborne diseases (Metzger & Kühner, 1989).

In response to these issues, local food production and consumption has been promoted as a way to facilitate access to fresher, more nutritious and therefore healthier food (Perron, 1997; Braun, 2007), while helping to reduce “food miles”, the distance that food travels to reach the consumer’s plate (Lang, 2006). In recent years, various organizations, consumer groups, and food movements have been actively advocating for the establishment of more regional and local food supply chains in cities (Holt Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; Just Food, 2014). The effects of these movements have been especially felt around the promotion of sustainability and social justice, framed in opposition to the global, understood as the economic logic of capitalism (Marks, Murdoch, et al., 2004; Duffield & Goodman, 2005).

Especially in the cities of the Global North, among causes of activism is associated with the practice of farming following from this renewed interest in local food, as for instance for the many projects recently sprouting around Urban Agriculture (UA). As defined by Mogent, UA is “the growing, processing, and distribution of food and nonfood plant and tree crops and the raising of livestock, directly for the urban market, both within and on the fringe of an urban area” (Mogent & Cooren, 2006, p. 4). Although distinctions can be made between intra-city and peri-urban agriculture, for the purpose of this research the definition will be limited to the scale of intra-urban agriculture taking place within city limits. Current examples of how UA can take place in cities are offered by Pearson, Pearson, and Pearson (2010), who distinguish between urban agricultural practices on different scales. The intra-urban UA practiced on green roofs and walls as well as in backyards and on roofs. At the meso-level UA takes place in community gardens, individual allotments and urban parks. Commercial farms, nurseries and greenhouses are forms of macro scale UA. At the macro scale public, private or cooperative forms of ownership co-exist, with different intentions.

It is relatively recent that municipalities started recognizing the role that food and UA can play in sustainable urban development, and
Research questions

1. What triggered the Pisa Food Plan development?
2. What caused its demise?

Respondents were divided in two groups:
‘Insiders’: Actors officially participating in the project
‘Outsiders’: Actors relevant to the ‘food context’ that did not participate
The local context:

Pisa has 90,000 inhabitants, while the whole province counts about 421,000 residents distributed among 37 small municipalities.

City in economic and demographic decline: economy largely based on tourism, universities and research centers.

Administrative situation: policies are more adaptive than strategic (Pasquinelli and Teräs, 2013). Last city strategic plan from 2005.

‘Associazionismo’ (community organizing) is very strong and historically linked to the Italian Communist Party.
The alternative food scene:
The recent opening of the municipal-subsidized organic/local shop La Bottega della Leopolda further substantiate the process of migration of alternative food from its traditional spaces (squats), which have been described by Outsider 4 as “dirty, full of junkies and dogs”.

La Bottega della Leopolda's customers have been defined as “nice people, professionals and middle class” looking for “a decent place where to buy their foodstuff in a clean and sophisticated atmosphere”.

For another informant, alternative food has become over the years socially crosscutting in Pisa, and it is now a topic able to bring together “the lady in furs and the far-left militant type” [Outsider 2].

The normative food scene:
The Pisa Food Plan (2010-2015)

- October 2009. the University received funding from the Province of Pisa to start the project.

- Concretely, the ‘Piano’ was envisioned as a participatory project and consisted in the organization of meetings to discuss different visions and agendas.

- 5 meetings during the first year with around 25-30 pp, followed by smaller working groups (6-8 pp) in the next 3 years roughly 6 times per year.

- A weblog and social network were created in 2011.

- On the 15th of October 2011, a declaration of intentions was officially launched and signed by 19 of the 39 municipalities composing the Province.
The Pisa Food Plan

• Promote the local food culture based on the concept of sustainable diet
• Improve the understanding among citizens of the links between diet, health and the environment
• Develop civic innovation paths that can improve eating habits and reduce waste
• Strengthen the capacity of the territory - and of local farmers - to provide sustainable and affordable food
• Promote institutional change for the integration of policies that can pursue local food security
The Pisa Food Plan: Outputs and Epilogue

• After signing the ‘carta’ there was no institutional change in the administrative system of any of the municipalities in order to include the discussed principles.

• “The only concrete output of the project after 5 years from its launch, stays in the creation of the network itself” [Insider 3].

• In 2015 a national reform in Italy abolished the Provinces and most of their powers. Consequently the Food Plan concluded its activities the same year.
What triggered the Pisa Food Plan development?

1. Influence of international ‘best practices’
2. Established network
3. Relevance to the context

«Now, it is clear that in defining the idea of the Carta we got inspired by Toronto, hence from the first experiences of that kind. We conducted a little research and we saw that in fact, these ‘food councils’ are born based on the definition of a charter of principles and then of an action plan, and so we were inspired by those [Insider 4] ».

«[Talking about what was driving the project]. [..] Yes, then I think it also depends a bit from the initiatives that are there, no? [..] We were not working in an environment where everything needed to be built. Starting from the consumer activism of the traditional forms of GASs, or the community supported agriculture groups etc., and the local movements active on critical and sustainable consumption. In short, things were already quite present [Insider 2].».

«Over time there was a convergence of many stakeholders around the same themes. People would meet with members of the department in different moments, sometimes occasionally sometimes regularly, and this created the opportunity to converge altogether around the same topic [Insider 3]». 
What caused its demise?

1. Academic format
2. Organization/Broad objectives
3. Appropriation of movements struggles

«The meetings were regrettable. There were very few people to the ones I attended... there was not a clear trajectory, because you know, when you work on a project in order to carry things forward you should know from where to start and where you want to go, then you find a methodology to get there. Instead it seems to me that they were just pulling meetings randomly, one after the other. [Outsider 12].»

«Maybe it was all a bit on the academic level. [...] I mean, they could have found other ways to make the whole things more appealing. [...] It is perhaps because they are in academia since a long time and they cannot get out of their ivory tower [Outsider 11].»

«It’s the norm not just in Pisa or Italy but also in Europe the fact that institutions subsume the concepts of social movements. This is happening also with the Piano del cibo. Thinking of developing such a policy without the involvement of farmers or of who struggle every day for food democracy in the city confirm the idea of politics as a mere administration of the public good [Outsider 2].»

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Some conclusions...

Contributed to development:
1. Role of academics in policy design, advocacy and diffusion/International best practices
2. An established network between the Province, the university and selected local food actors.
3. Relevance of the topic in the specific local context (grassroots initiatives)

Contributed to demise:
1. Externalities: the abolishment of the Province
2. Academic format
3. Broad objectives/poor organizations
4. Appropriation of movements struggles
Challenging assumptions. What’s next?

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My current role at SHARECITY

SHARECITY is a 5-year research project funded by the European Research Council which is exploring the practice and sustainability potential of city-based food sharing economies.

Aims & Objectives

To establish the **significance** and **potential** of food sharing economies to transform cities onto more sustainable pathways

1) Develop deeper **theoretical** understanding of contemporary food sharing

2) Generate **comparative international empirical** data about food sharing activities within cities

3) Assess the **impact** of food sharing activities on urban food sustainability

**4) Explore the governance of urban food sharing in comparative perspective**

Food sharing definition used - having a portion [of food] with another or others; giving a portion [of food] to others; using, occupying or enjoying [food and food related spaces to include the growing, cooking and/or eating of food] jointly; possessing an interest [in food] in common; or telling someone about [food].” (Davies and Legg, 2018: 237)
## Urban food policy: multi-scalar and multi-sectorial

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<thead>
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<th>Scale of plan/policy formation</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>National</th>
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Provenance and legal status of policies affecting food sharing in Dublin, Berlin and London.

New skills...

SHARING-FUTURES multi-stakeholders workshop: Dublin, 26-27 Sept. 2019

• 35 International participants with different backgrounds: academics, policy-shapers, practitioners and futurists.

Aim

• Identify food sharing policy challenges
• Identify existing responses to policy challenges
• Brainstorm innovative responses to challenges
Collective writing and learning

For a sustainable future, we need to reconnect with what we’re eating – and each other

November 4, 2019 9:28am GMT

Eating alone, once considered an oddity, has become commonplace for many across the Western world. Fast food chains are promoting eating on the go or “al desko”. Why waste time in your busy day sitting down at a table with others?

Surveys indicate that a third of Britons regularly eat on their own. Open Table, an online restaurant booking app, found that solo dining in New York increased by 80% between 2014-2018. And in Japan, the world capital of solo dining, a trend for...
Thanks for your attention!

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