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A RENEWED READING OF THE FOOD-CITY RELATIONSHIP
TOWARDS URBAN FOOD POLICIES

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SUMMARY

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD
AND CITIES AND URBAN FOOD POLICIES:
A SPACE FOR GEOGRAPHY?

Introduction. – Over recent years, the theme of «food geographies», established as topic or sectorial considerations, has emerged in the international debate and has developed into a wide range of themes, approaches and scales of analysis that describe, analyse, interpret and criticise the spatial configurations of flows, networks and food systems (Winter, 2004 and 2005; Cook *et al.*, 2006; Cook, 2008; Cook *et al.*, 2011; Colombino, 2014; Goodman, 2015).

One of the most interesting aspects, from both the theoretical and empirical perspectives is the relationship between food and city, and particularly in relation to *Urban Food Planning*, a term that Kevin Morgan (2009, 2013) defines semantically as urban planning of food systems. With a few years of delay compared to Anglo-Saxon countries, that first perceived the importance of food as an area of urban policies, considerations and practices on these issues have also begun in Italy. This monographic issue is in fact a starting point for new reflection and the first outcome of a multidisciplinary path, straddling theory and research-action, which has contributed to the diffusion and affirmation of the Italian urban food policies as a new and promising area of investigation and intervention. Within this process, meetings and confrontations at national and international level were essential to build shared knowledge: starting from the food-city section in the Franco-Italian Seminar of Social Geography (from which some of the contributions presented in this issue originate), to the International Conference of the *Sustainable Food Planning* theme group of the *AESOP* (*Association of European Schools of Planning*) network. Equally central in the genesis of the coverage of this monograph has been the active role of the curators and some of the authors of this issue in building and promoting urban food policies (particularly in Turin, Milan and Bergamo).

In this context, this issue presents a collection of writings that share the attention paid to the spatial and territorial dimensions, yet come from a variety of different disciplines, reflecting the connections between food and city, as evidence of the progressive integration between *food studies* and *urban studies*.

Given the recent appearance of these themes in the Italian scientific and political debate, it seems appropriate, in this introduction, to outline a short conceptual itinerary both on the subject of study of *Urban Food Planning*, i.e. the relationship between food and cities and the food systems in an urban environment, and on the instruments used, namely *urban food policies*. The contribution ends with a consideration on the potential role that geography can play to link the theoretical debate, the practices and the policies.

Food and the city. – The reasons for which food can and should (also) be considered an urban issue are multiple, starting from the most obvious, i.e. the quantitative prevalence of the population living in a city compared to the total population of the world (reached in 2007, according to the United Nations), which is constantly growing and that in some parts of the world has peaked at levels that exceed 80% of the total. Therefore, most of those consumers, whose individual choices are decisive in defining how the food system may evolve, are concentrated in cities.

The relationship between food chains and urban systems dates back to the very birth of the urban phenomenon, as Emrys Jones points out (1990, p. 26): «Behind the urban revolution lay the food-producing revolution, the ability to control the growth of food in permanent settlements as opposed to hunting and collecting. It was this that made cities possible».

Whilst the predominant function of food production sites or places of consumption has historically contributed significantly to the separation between city and country, the transformation of the relationship between food and territory is at the same time one of the causes and one of the consequences of the progressive conceptual weakening of the urban-rural dichotomy. On the one hand, the city has physically and symbolically invaded the nearest rural areas, transforming their spaces and lifestyles; on the other hand, the rapprochement to a countryside, often more imaginative than real, has become one of the recurring symbols of a strongly urban trend in search of lifestyles, societies and economics, alternative to those of contemporary cities (Donadieu, 2006). Food is also a vehicle and a field of action for many of the material and symbolic transformation policies that characterise contemporary cities in the North of the world, from *gentrification* processes that transform the historical centres (Zukin, 2008) to the use of local resources related to the food sector as key to the reconstruction of the image and economy of cities (Vanolo, 2015).

In addition to influencing food systems at different levels because of the food demand that is concentrated within them, cities are the places where the powers and decisions are located thus directing the contemporary - globalised, industrialised and financialised - food system, governed by a few economic and political players who are able to determine the characteristics of production, distribution and consumption (Morgan *et al.*, 2006). On the opposite side, cities are political and cultural arenas in which movements of - more or less conscious and explicit - opposition and resistance to the distortions of the dominant system manifest themselves with great emphasis, through the varied activities of *food movements* (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011); the increasingly widespread *urban food policy* experiments (Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015) and the variety of practices that fall under the broad definition of *alternative food networks* (Jarosz, 2008; Dansero and Puttilli, 2013).

At the same time, however, cities are places where access to food is often problematic and where entire neighbourhoods are called *food deserts,* where it is impossible to find fresh and quality food, especially for culturally and economically disadvantaged subjects (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002). Urban populations are also particularly vulnerable to the possible localised effects of some global dynamics (raw material prices, climate change, etc.) that make up the so-called *new food equation* that characterises the global food system (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010).

As the following paragraphs argue, despite its relevance, the food system has for decades been invisible to the policies and strategies of city government and planning (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000). However, over the last fifteen years, urban food policies have become

the subject of debate on the sustainability, justice and efficiency of food systems, and cities have become critical scopes and players in the strategies, the debate and the economy linked to food (Morgan, 2009 and 2013; Blay-Palmer, 2009; Calori and Magarini, 2015).

Meaning, size and scale of an urban food system. – Referring to the writings of Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999), who first denounced the absence of food from the city's political agendas, the food system can be defined as the chain of activities related to the production, processing, distribution, consumption and post consumption of food, including institutions and the related regulatory activities.

In a theoretical-analytical perspective, which is the one underlying this type of definition, it is interesting to observe where and how the food system intercepts spaces, players, resources and dynamics in a city and its *hinterland* (Dansero, Pettenati and Toldo, 2014). The production stage in the city involves urban and peri-urban farming experiences, a broad and articulated scope (just think of the differences between produce grown in cities or around the city), characterised by a variety of approaches and a remarkable heterogeneity of practices (Ingersoll *et al.*, 2007) ranging from commercial farms, to farming parks, to the heterogeneous set of horticultural experiences, taking place in public and private spaces (Tornaghi, 2014). Distribution is instead a service activity, the purpose of which is to transfer food from producers and processors (agriculture and food industry) to consumers. In general, food distribution intersects with urban dynamics in spatial terms (as it has implications on how space is experienced, designed, consumed, trivialised or enhanced), social terms (because it is related to relationships amongst players) and environmental terms (because it causes impacts in terms of air pollution, traffic and congestion, consumption of soil and energy, etc.). The urban consumption phase is complex and difficult to analyse, since it addresses a wide variety of issues ranging from the areas in which food is consumed to the cultural implications of customs, traditions, consumer choices, ways and times of consumption, the socio-spatial injustice of food accessibility, etc. Finally, the theme of waste and food scraps - FAO makes a distinction between *food loss* (in production, collection, distribution and processing) and *food waste* (produced in the final stages of sales and consumption) (Gustavsson *et al.*, 2011) - is becoming increasingly relevant in relation to issues such as global climate change, social justice, and food education.

However, the intersections of the food system with the urban system and its spaces require a few clarifications. Existing literature often recalls the relationships between food systems and urban systems, without however providing a definition of *urban food systems* (among others, Morgan 2013).

One such contribution, relating to the scale and characteristics of these systems, comes from the *City Region Food Systems Alliance* network (made up of an international co-ordination of players) which defines the concept of *City Region Food Systems* (CRFS) from a theoretical and operational point of view as

the complex network of actors, processes and relationships to do with food production, processing, marketing, and consumption that exist in a given geographical region that includes a more or less concentrated urban centre and its surrounding peri-urban and rural hinterland; a regional landscape across which flows of people, goods and ecosystem services are managed.

According to FAO (2014), the notion of city-region does not only refer to to big urban agglomerations and to the surrounding productive rural areas. It also encompasses regions where small

and medium towns are markets for local productions.

The flexibility of such approach allows to acknowledge the big variety of territorial relationships, food systems and urban-rural linkages.

Calling to mind existing conceptualisations on food systems in general (e.g. as already mentioned by Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999) this definition links them to the urban dimension, identifying the scale (of analysis and action) and the specificities of a possible urban food system. Several issues, however, remain open. Speaking of the urban food system, for example, what role do they play and how does one consider those actors and activities (in the food sector) that, albeit located in the city, are a part of poorly territorialised networks and flows?

In this regard, it is interesting to note that besides theoretical-analytical descriptions, it is possible to approach definitions of a more political-design nature, as is the very notion of *City-Region Food System* or that of *«local food system»* (Hinrichs, 2003), which highlights (and hopes for) a local increase of the connections between the different phases, activities and actors of the food chain, and the re-setting of the elements of the food system to be in relationship with the places (Feagan, 2007).

Whilst referring, for a more systematic discussion of these concepts, to the contribution by Bagliani *et al.* in this monograph, we stress here the impossibility of narrowing the «local» on an analytical plane from a functional and spatial point of view. However, the emphasis on the local, which is often controversial (Born and Purcell, 2006), is one of the distinguishing features of *urban food policy* (see also Sonnino, in this issue) that view relocation actions as one of the means to achieve the objectives of sustainability, justice and economic development.

In this context, beyond the slogans and commonplaces on the rhetoric of «local» and «zero food miles», it is crucial, above all in a political-normative perspective, to thoroughly question how much of the food consumed in a territory can be - and should desirably be - of local origin and to ask what are the real advantages (environmental, social, economic, occupational, landscape and nutritional) of the relocation of food flows, also starting from the consideration, contained in the CRFS definition, that not all cities are the same and not all have the same possibilities regarding the potential for proximity farming and processing, storage, packaging and distribution of the product itself.

Scale issues. – Following this logic, it becomes more and more necessary to question the significance of the urban scale to reason both on food and food policies, since in these matters – where the boundaries of the city cross over with the boundaries of the food system – different and important meanings of the concept of scale overlap and also contrast each other (McMaster and Sheppard, 2004), which might be interpreted as:

- *scale as an amplitude and extension of a phenomenon.* The relevance of the urban scale is measured according to the concentration of population and activities. It is evident that, especially for large cities, the municipal scale, albeit relevant as a scale of skills, is increasingly inadequate to govern the scale of processes that refer to a wider dimension. The urban system, conceived as an area where there is a concentration of people and activities together with the relationships between them (typically the home-work-urban services flows), actually develops on a larger scale. These relationships tend to be self-contained in a specific space with fickle boundaries linked

to the progressive improvement of mobility infrastructures, whereas, in a widespread city context, many residences and activities relocate outside the narrower urban centres. The amplitude of the urban phenomenon can therefore be understood by considering concepts such as system of urban commuting, widespread city, urban *sprawl*, city-region, and, on this basis, it can be compared to the food system within the opposing and contradictory processes of de-territorialisation (Morgan *et al.*, 2006; Wiskerke, 2009), and global, metropolitan and local food networks (Wascher *et al.*, 2017). Drawing the attention to the system that feeds a city can lead to the emergence of connections between dynamics, problems and skills, while considering formal public actions and other informal ones already in place, and highlighting the possibilities for intervention;

- *scale of skills*. The urban scale is important both because, more generally, there is greater proximity between citizens, problems and politics, and because there are specific sectoral skills relevant to some very important aspects of food and nutrition, such as public catering (see Toldo, in this issue), the regulation of the spatial distribution of commercial activities and food-related logistics (retail and wholesale markets), the uses of land (for the various possible forms of agriculture in and around cities), thus crossing them with other typical urban skills (environment, mobility, school, social and health services, city planning and urban space). In the Italian case, the metropolitan city as a political-administrative level could offer the opportunity to find greater consistency between the scale of skills and the scale of the urban phenomenon. To introduce into this consideration the question of food and the opportunity/necessity of a food policy on the urban scale poses interesting prospects for a different reading of the town-country relations in the construction of the metropolitan city, and whether or not there is a system of local food at the metropolitan scale, of its possibilities and desirability.

- *scale as a product of action*. The reflections here proposed on *urban food policy* are geared towards building the urban scale as a major scale of food policies. Through the identification of the urban-metropolitan territory in its various functional forms (see Bagliani's and others' contributions in this issue) as a reference scale for *food planning* - which in this sense becomes *urban food planning* - it produces politically a scale of action (and sometimes of skill) for the local analysis and regulation of food systems (considering the term regulation in a very broad sense, and similar to that used in the literature on local development and industrial districts). This raises several issues of meaning and method in relation to urban food policies, discussed in the following paragraph. Global food policies are in fact governed by markets, more and more often by financial ones, but also by trade agreements between states, and, last but not least, by international cooperation actions. At the macro-regional level, the Common Agricultural Policy is the main item of the European Union's budget and, together with the regulations dedicated to food processing and production and free market rules, it creates a regulatory framework that influences the functioning of food systems on the smaller scales, from the national level (which has an important regulatory role in the agri-food sector) to the regional levels (institutional, that are also relevant).

What is the point, on an even smaller scale, of talking about local and, particularly, urban food policies? Ultimately, it implies the possibility of a relatively autonomous local action, compared to the regulatory contexts of the market and supra-governmental policies. This collective action, with different approaches to building an expanded governance of food system actors, is aimed at re-orientating the system that nourishes the city towards locally defined goals, and that are included in the agendas of the various actors involved. This perspective, applied in theoretical-methodological but also operational terms, is an added value in observing and taking into account food systems on the urban scale, more so at a time when the scale, as a concept, and especially an urban one, are ever more frequently questioned as ordering elements of meaning of the spatial analysis (Bolocan Goldstein, 2014).

The activation of local public institutions, civil society and economic actors, in identifying on the urban and the city-region scale a spatial dimension with which to identify and imagine a «food system», is the central step of the socio-political production of this new scale of action; one with which to think of new public policies (the *urban food policy* outlined in the next paragraph) thus dealing with issues of sustainability, justice and economic development linked to the local manifestation of networks, flows and actions related to the nutrition of the urban population.

The city as a space of action for food policies. – Urban food policies define a heterogeneous field of action in terms of objectives, forms of *governance*, contents and actions. Even from a semantic point of view, the coexistence of different terms with which both the scientific literature and the political and cultural debate define them – *urban food policies, urban food strategies* – proves the fluidity, the complexity and the geographical origin, of British and North American origin. These policies were initially developed in the United States and Canada as a response to negative externalities (linked in particular to public health problems and access to food) generated by the dominant food system that, aggravated by the aforementioned *new food equation*, are reflected at a local level and the consequences of which tend to intensify in urban nodes (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010). More generally, these are voluntary policies that share many aspects with strategic planning, such as shared visions, integrated goals, mixed partnerships, but above all, a broad involvement and participation of civil society (for a wider treatise refer to Sonnino, in this issue).

Scientific debate recognises, as the main denominator of the different experiences, the systemic approach to the food theme (Moragues *et al.*, 2013; Sonnino and Spayde, 2014), which translates into policies aimed at integrating and connecting actors, resources and tools in terms of:

- multiple dimensions of food (environment, productive activities, logistics and transport, education and training, economic and occupational development, health and socio-welfare aspects, culture and tourism);
- different phases of the agri-food chain;
- geographic scales and relative levels of government of the territory;
- urban and rural areas;
- public and private sectors, and civil society.

To reach a definition of urban food policies that holds together such a complexity is not easy. Some authors, referring particularly to *Urban Food Strategies* (UFS), recognise them as

processes of change of the city food systems (Moragues *et al.*, 2013, p. 6), which influence the way in which food is produced, purchased, consumed and disposed of by those who live there (Sonnino, in this issue). In fact, the UFS capitalise on existing experiences and networks, and propose complex strategies that aggregate and provide a coherent framework for different interventions (urban agriculture, alternative forms of distribution, food education, waste prevention, etc.) generally aimed at ensuring for everyone – particularly for vulnerable groups – accessibility to food that is healthy, nutritious and of high quality, socially just, ecologically compatible and culturally appropriate (Sonnino, 2009). To achieve these broader goals (each city reinterprets visions within which prevalent narratives are recognisable, Sonnino and Spayde, 2014) it is possible to identify recurrent and interrelated strategies, including the relocation of production and consumption and the reconnection of urban with rural (*ibidem*), the «re-moralisation» of the food systems (Morgan 2010), and the education and training interventions aimed at changing habits and lifestyles.

Although each city develops its own peculiar and contextual process of definition, adoption and implementation of a food policy, it is possible to recognise some common phases that characterise, above all, the North American and North European experiences:

- a more informal start-up phase, usually initiated by the interest of single individuals in the institutional context, or by the commitment of local interest groups (associations, fair trade economy networks, etc.);
- a phase of institutionalisation of the process, through its adoption by public entities, but also by other local actors sufficiently structured and organised to be recognised and legitimised to action;
- an analytical phase, generally conducted by institutions, universities or other research centres, aimed at assessing the food system and mapping its actors. See, for example, the documentation from Calgary (Calgary Food Committee, 2012) and Bristol (Carey, 2011) papers;
- a participatory process, according to different strategies and modalities, involving actors and stakeholders in defining the objectives and priorities of the future *food policy*;
- the construction and the subsequent adoption of a first statement of intent, formalised in a Charter, Agenda or food Manifesto (see, for example, the historic *food charter* of Toronto), sometimes signed collectively or by individuals via web, as is the case with many English *food charters* (Durham, Oxford, Bristol, etc.);
- the establishment of a new food governance structure, generally referred to as the *Food Policy Council* (typically in North America, Scherb *et al.*, 2016), but also *Food Boards* (as in London), *Food Partnerships* (as in Brighton) and other forms (Moragues-Faus *et al.*, 2013);
- The adoption of a strategic document that, depending on the degree of detail and effectiveness, may introduce: the development vision, the general objectives, the specific objectives, the individual actions, the responsible parties, the responsibilities and the expenditure commitments, and the monitoring indicators.

The debate identifies some pioneering realities, such as the major North American and Canadian urban areas, including Toronto (Blay-Palmer, 2009; Mah and Thang, 2013), and New York (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010; Morgan and Sonnino, 2010). More recently, the phe-

nomenon has extended to London (Reynolds, 2009) and small and medium-sized cities in the United Kingdom (e.g. Bristol, Carey, 2013) and Northern Europe (Wiskerke, 2009; Cretella and Buenger, 2016), Greece (Skordili, 2013), Australia (Caraher *et al.,* 2013), to the metropoles of China (Lang and Miao, 2013), Brazil (Rocha and Lessa, 2009) and the South of the world (for a closer look at the countries in the developing world refer, in this issue, to the contribution by Bini *et al.*). Several reviews and comparative studies have been produced over the years, with the aim of identifying common traits, also from the perspective of transferable practices; refer, for example, to contributions by Mansfield and Mendes, 2013; Sonnino and Spayde, 2014; Toldo *et al.*, 2015; Calori and Magarini, 2015; Sonnino, 2016.

The conditions for the emergence and development of urban food policies as we know and practice them today – albeit with their peculiarities – are the fruit of the intersection of different paths, some of a more informal and smaller kind, others of a more institutional nature, both locally and internationally. In addition, the construction of the complex meanings of these policies is strongly influenced by the continued contamination by the world of scientific and academic research. The next paragraph will briefly reconstruct the assumptions that gave rise to *Urban Food Planning* as a new field of action and reflection.

Urban food policies as a result of complex processes. – The first forms of criticism of the non-sustainability of the dominant food system, and the accumulation of its externalities in urban contexts, began to emerge in the 1980s in the political vacuum left by national governments, but above all by local and regional decision makers and planners (Morgan, 2009) and derive from the complex landscape of the *food movements*, a diverse archipelago of social actors involved in more or less radical actions of reaction and reconstruction towards more sustainable and equitable systems (for a thorough discussion see Holt-Giménez, 2011; Holt Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). The role of these «energies from contradiction» (Magnaghi, 2011) that seem to have been the first to understand the many connections between food and human activity (Holt-Giménez, 2011), is crucial if we think about the weight these movements and their associated practices (urban agriculture, *alternative food networks*, forms of food sharing) have had in creating the basic conditions to establish food policies. The entrance of cities into the debate on food issues (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010; Sonnino and Spayde, 2014) imparts a strong acceleration to this process. The progressive awareness of the centrality of food in urban development models and the greater awareness of the agri-food system's externalities have prompted local governments to regain their dietary responsibilities and to actively engage in the creation of institutional pathways and local food governance processes. These paths and these processes are more difficult to map and reproduce, because they are specific to single contextual development trajectories. In general, however, it is possible to at least identify the macro issues within which they have occurred: for example, North American pioneers in urban food planning have a long tradition of policies related to public health (Morgan, 2015), particularly in the fight against obesity and illnesses related to eating habits (see, for example, the *food policies* of Toronto and Bristol), as well as to aspects of socio-spatial justice, with the already mentioned *food deserts* (Walker *et al.*, 2010). The urban realities of South America, Africa and Asia, however, state the food policies more explicitly in terms of food security and promotion of local economic development, especially through urban and family farming initiatives, often with the support of international cooperation (Calori and Magarini, 2015; Bini *et al.*, in this issue). In Europe, the landscape of urban food planning is heterogeneous and very fragmented. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom, have been active

for some time with systemic policies borrowed from the North American tradition. In others, like in Italy and in France (Brand, in this issue), the theme is mainly based on the experiences promoted by civil society (particularly with the reestablishment of producer and consumer relations through the *Alternative Food Networks*) that just recently seem to be evolving into more systematic approaches with the involvement of institutions (Calori and Magarini, 2015).

Regarding, on the other hand, the international dimension, which in part influences and directs the local one, it is possible to reconstruct at least briefly all the key elements that have contributed to strengthening urban centrality in the development of food policies, including: the *Millennium Development Goals*; the publication of the *Food for the Cities* report prepared by FAO in 2000; the Agriculture and City conference, promoted the following year by UN-HABITAT; the *Healthy Cities* programme of the World Health Organization, which explicitly refers to the inclusion of food policies in urban plans; the *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food* adopted in 2010 with a resolution of the UN General Assembly; the *Post 2015 Development Agenda* with the new 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (for a more detailed discussion see Calori and Magarini, 2015) and finally the *New Urban Agenda* defined within the United Nations Habitat III Conference, which took place in Quito in October 2016. Towards the end of the year, the European Union, through the Committee of the Regions, also expressed the need for a «*sustainable EU food policy*» aimed at achieving sustainability and growth goals in European cities and regions ([1]).

In this framework, the final milestone is the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact* (MUFPP), the first international pact on food policies that directly involves cities, signed by their mayors. Started in 2014, upon the initiative of the city of Milan and launched at the end of the Expo in October 2015, the MUFPP currently counts the membership of 132 small, medium and large municipalities, representing over 460 million citizens all over the world. From a strictly political point of view, this is an important step that legitimises the urban approach to food and nutrition issues, enshrined – as far as the international level is concerned – by the involvement of the United Nations with FAO and – at the national level – by the acceptance of the Italian National Association of Municipalities (ANCI). In operational terms, the proposed framework for the promotion of healthier, more equitable and sustainable food systems is built on the basis of the many food planning experiences initiated around the world. The recommended improvements are therefore to be considered as individual options in a list from which every city should draw to reconstruct an operational agenda consistent with its own context, its requirements and objectives. In this sense, the MUFPP can be considered as a simultaneously political, theoretical, methodological and addressing instrument capable of networking an increasing number of cities in the plurality of peculiar experiences and conditions; thus favouring debate and the exchange of good practices, which are important tools to innovate the governance of the food system globally, starting from an unprecedented scale in food policy such as the urban one (Dansero and Nicolarea, 2016). However, one must remember that since it is a voluntary and non-binding commitment, there is a risk that the Pact will be understood as a simple and harmless statement of intent, and that the adherence of cities - many of them approaching food planning matters for the first time - may not have real effects on the territories. For this reason, a double effort is necessary, by the cities, to operate the pact indications, and by the international

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1 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2017.272.01.0014.01.ENG

co-ordination of the MUFFP, to constantly monitor its implementation.

Finally, as far as the contribution of the scientific world is concerned, ten years after the publication of the aforementioned contributions by Pothukuchi and Kaufmann (1999, 2000), a monograph of «International Planning Studies» (2009) introduced, for the first time, the term *Urban Food Planning*, hence semantically defining the more general, broader and varied set of practices and policies that have long been launched with the aim of nurturing cities in a sustainable manner, i.e. in an ecologically compatible, socially fair and economically effective way (Morgan, 2009). In this context, the diffusion of urban food planning is certainly accompanied, but also sustained and directed by the structuring of a multidisciplinary international scientific community that is very active and involved in research projects, conferences, territorial partnerships and thematic networks (such as the *AESOP Sustainable Food Planning* network, but also *Eating City* , RUAF - *Resource Centers on Urban Agriculture & Food Security, IUFN - International Urban Food Network* , in addition to the *FAO Food for the Cities meeting Urban Food Needs-MUFS*, etc.) and especially strongly involved in the practices, through their outreach and support for projects, experiences, and processes.

Urban Food Planning in Italy. – In Italy, the need, but also the opportunity, for an integrated planning of local food systems – which not only exist but can rely on a wealth of valuable resources, materials and intangible assets – is not yet a widespread real perception, especially at an institutional level. This is demonstrated by the fact that despite a rather lively scientific debate and above all an important heritage of practices aimed at increasing the sustainability of food systems – urban vegetable gardens, practices of fair trade economies such as GAS (fair trade purchasing groups), charity canteens, innovative *procurement* experiences – only the Province of Pisa and the City of Milan have so far issued documents that can be considered urban food strategies. The Province of Pisa was the first local public entity in Italy to initiate a building process of a Local Food Plan - promoted together with the University through the Sismondi Rurali Laboratory – with the aim of managing the food system in an integrated way with a cross-sectional activity to integrate and capitalise on various manifestations and multiple policies related to food and social agriculture (for a more detailed discussion see Di Iacovo, Brunori, Innocenti, 2013). Stimulated by the Expo 2015 opportunity, Milan started its *food policy* path in 2014, signing an agreement with Cariplo Foundation and launching a four-stage process: (i) the analysis of the city's food system; (ii) the elaboration of goals through a public consultation; (iii) the design of a *food policy* by urban institutions (subsequently approved by the city committee and council) and (iv) its implementation with pilot projects (Està, 2015; Deakin, Borrelli and Diamantini, 2016). Other entities have started food governance processes aimed at building urban food policies, such as in Bergamo (Forno and Maurano, 2014) and in Turin, where the Municipality, the Metropolitan City, the Universities and the *stakeholders* have engaged in the elaboration of a Local Food Agenda (Dansero *et al.*, 2016), in the mapping of the system (Dansero *et al.*, 2015; Bottiglieri *et al.*, 2016) and in designing a food governance structure (*Food Commission*) (*ibidem*), in a complex path that is still open and uncertain.

A field of action for geography. – While on the one hand, among the innovative elements of research and reflection on (urban) food systems, there is the interdisciplinary perspective and the overcoming of the sectoral views which have for too long characterised the approaches

regarding food issues, on the other, it seems important to us to question, here, the potential role of geography, in a close and inescapable connection with the other disciplines. In the international debate on *food studies*, and particularly on *alternative food networks*, *Urban Food Planning* and the relationship between food and cities, geographers occupy a prominent place, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. By cross-referencing bibliographies of articles on these topics, featured in major journals of various social disciplines, there is a frequent use of quotes from representatives of departments particularly active in this field. The main focus is on the Cardiff *School of Geography and Planning* (Kevin Morgan, Roberta Sonnino, Terry Marsden, Moya Kneafsey), where these themes have been conceptualised and studied ahead of the rest of Europe and probably with the most systematic critical perspective.

In general, the literature on *food studies* utilises and deals with often implicit theoretical and analytic frameworks, that have much to do with the conceptual tools of geography and spatial sciences. These theoretical tools are used in political and civil discourses both in analytical terms and in a prescriptive perspective, as conceptual supports of the goals the food system should be reaching. Although in rhetoric, that has now entered common language, terms have often become mere slogans, such as *km0* in Italy, the scientific debate seems to be well aware of the need to avoid, in food system policies and rhetoric, acritical concepts such as «local» (Hinrichs, 2003; DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Born and Purcell, 2006); region (Kneafsey, 2010; Donald *et al.*, 2010); «city-region» (Donald and Blay-Palmer, 2006), *foodscapes* (Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015) or *foodsheds* (Wascher *et al.*, 2017), or more generally «alternative geographies of food» (Wiskerke, 2009) (see the chapter by Bagliani *et al.* in this monograph). In addition to concepts, even geographic research methods are often used in the research and in the considerations on food systems at different levels, as demonstrated by many examples of mapping of the system, its flows, its resources and its networks (Dansero, Pettenati and Toldo, 2015), or by the dissemination of approaches aimed at reconstructing the spatial configuration of networks formed by material flows and information related to food (e.g. Cook, 2011). The community of geographers also plays an active role in the aforementioned scientific and political networks involved in reflecting on the urban food systems and their policies. Since the geographic debate on these issues appears strongly dominated – especially in the scientific sphere – by Anglo-Saxon geography, British in particular – and although it is important to reflect on national geographies such as the French one – it is essential for the community of Italian geographers to reflect on how the conceptual schemes and operational indications developed in those contexts can adapt to the characteristics of the Italian food systems at different levels. In the national scientific debate, these issues have seen a strong impetus over the last few years, particularly in 2015, in conjunction with the organisation in Turin of the annual conference of the *AESOP - Sustainable Food Planning* (the authors of this article were amongst its promoters) and with the flourishing of organised events, exploiting, also in critical terms, the attention generated by the Milan EXPO and the concurrent signature of the MUFPP. In some cities, moreover, geographers are very active in the processes of building *Urban Food Strategies*, in close contact with agronomists, anthropologists, economists, nutritionists, social psychologists and sociologists and other experts actively involved in *food studies*. This is the case with the group that fostered, promoted and co-ordinated this monographic issue, and is engaged in Turin in research-action paths aimed at promoting and building active, broad, inclusive and established food policies. Especially on paths of this sort, where research is directly involved

in broader policy processes, it is imperative to ask how geography might not only be useful to politics, but also be more active in identifying problems, in a fruitful exploration and criticism of recurring concepts, speeches and practices, recalling the goal of a geography «*in* politics», suggested by Francesca Governa (2014).

Conclusions. – Those relating to food have been defined as «(un)disciplined geographies» (Cook *et al.*, 2006, p. 656), precisely because they are hard to tackle with strictly disciplinary and sectoral approaches. Therefore the selection of the contributions collected in this monographic issue, which adopts a predominant geographic-territorial cut, hosts reflections that examine different themes and come from different disciplines (economics, sociology, urbanism) as well as non-academic institutions. The choice that guided the construction of this volume was to present a manifold, systematic, albeit non-exhaustive, reflection on the food-city relationship in a perspective of urban food policies. This perspective sheds new light on a field of research and action – considering the role of geography as a civic and political commitment (Dansero *et al.*, 2007) – as yet unpublished or still treated very little, at least by the Italian Academia, where new and consolidated specialisations (such as urban and peri-urban agriculture and the related spaces, or alternative agri-food networks) can find a wider framework of meaning and consistency.

In this context, the monograph, following this introduction, opens with a framework that recalls and deepens theoretical and operational reflections on the urban food systems (see the contribution by Bagliani *et al.*) and continues with a first section expressly aimed at the conceptualisation of urban food policies from international experiences, particularly the Anglo-Saxon one (retraced by Roberta Sonnino), and also considering the French debate (as retraced by Caroline Brand). In a literature so strongly focused on the cities of the North, an analysis is then made of the debate in the cities of the global South, especially in Africa (see Bini at al. contributions).

A second section follows, dealing with some of the issues that arise in the planning of urban food systems, that can contribute to the construction of new food geographies. First of all, urban agriculture, which in the paper by Chiara Tornaghi (current co-ordinator of the AESOP Sustainable Food Planning) is understood to be an important opportunity to rethink not only the relationship between city and food, but more in general between city and urbanism, which is the subject of reflections by Silvia Pili and others on the specifics of metropolitan agriculture in the Mediterranean cities. Then, further insights are made on the relationship between food and landscape, which Giacomo Pettenati hypothesises may be involved in the process of de-territorialisation, typical of the dominant food system, and which he explores with the aim of understanding whether and how the conceptual category of landscape emerges in the debate on the relationship between food and city. The theme of *food procurement*, one of the most important levers available for public administrations to drive the market and contribute to sustainability goals, is at the heart of Alessia Toldo's specific contribution that deals with school catering.

This section is closed by three interventions that focus on one of the most central and controversial issues of food geography, the *Alternative Food Network*s. In the first contribution, that approaches AFNs at a national level, Filippo Randelli, Benedetto Rocchi and Sabina Gianpaolo propose a methodology that goes beyond the traditional and reductive dichotomy between conventional and alternative, moving from the assumption that sustain-

able agriculture transformation is obtained primarily with their interaction and co-evolution. Then there are two papers on case studies at different levels, and featuring different disciplinary perspectives: Francesca Forno and Simon Maurano study these processes by analysing the spread of AFNs within the Bergamo territory, gathering insights on the strategies of action and perceptions of the current crisis; finally, Filippo Barbera and Joselle Dagnes propose a socio-territorial analysis of AFNs in relation to other productive-distributive channels with the theme of quality as an important analytical tool to better understand alternative chains.

These contributions, in their diversity of topics, disciplinary approaches, and investigation methods, contribute to reveal the «need for geography» that characterises Urban Food Planning, and that is often expressed, more or less explicitly, by policy makers, activists and citizens. In this context, the consideration on food and its relationship with the land becomes a consideration on the relationship between power, economics, society, culture and the environment, and on a new relationship between rural areas and cities. The focus on the multiplicity and trans-scalability of the phenomena and the spatial distribution of flows and networks, which distinguishes our discipline, plays a key role especially in reflecting on the meaning, the possibilities and the limitations of the study and the planning of food systems on a local scale, in a context where food economies and policies are heavily influenced by global rules and forces.

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FOOD AND THE CITY AND URBAN FOOD POLICIES: A SPACE FOR GEOGRAPHY? - Food is becoming more and more an urban issue. This paper aims to explore the complex relationships between food systems and urban areas, trying to define the potential role of geography in studying these relationships and supporting urban food policies. The first part of the contribution explores the characteristics and the scales of food systems in urban areas, posing questions about the existence of «local food systems» and about their relationships with global food networks and flows. The following paragraphs are focused on cities as spaces of action for food policies, defining the field of urban food polices and urban food strategies, in an international perspective. The last part of the paper reflects on the role of the geographical approach in contributing to the debate on urban food systems and in supporting food policies.

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