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Urban Food Policies: Decentralized Cooperation and African Cities

Andrea Magarini Yota Nicolarea Egidio Dansero Maria Bottiglieri

KEYWORDS

decentralized cooperation, urban food policies, food geography, urban food Africa, Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP)

ABSTRACT

The article introduces Urban Food Policies (UFP) in the field of decentralized cooperation as a relatively new field of work, exchange and action-oriented research within and between cities, and local authorities in the global North and South. Indeed, a plethora of cities have been implementing actions with different implementation mechanisms indicating that UFP can generate positive stimuli, new perspectives, and reciprocal benefits. The article examines a number of ongoing international projects to then focus on the relevant programs developed in Italy and on the African continent, looking into aspects of governance, outlining essential features of decentralized cooperation and of these ongoing development projects, and concluding with potential prospects in this area.

Introduction: Cities between Decentralized Cooperation and Urban Food Policies

The relationship between urban and rural areas can affect the long-running processes necessary for a balanced development of urban and rural communities. Among the drivers of this relationship, food is undoubtedly the most symbolic, involving a complex network of actors, places, flows, and resources which, altogether, make up a food system. This context is fueling a widespread debate, which has been steadily gaining momentum over the past 15 years, based on the principles of food sovereignty, and has been institutionalized through the concept of food and nutrition security at the global, regional and city-region levels (Morgan, 2009; Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999).

New food policies are emerging worldwide at the urban scale. These are innovative, voluntary actions, "flexible tools" capable of providing a space for cooperation, consultation, and regional and local networking among the (local) public and private sectors, and civil society. Since they are relatively independent processes, they are fully legitimated to provide local responses to issues arising from cities themselves and therefore to achieve the "retour de l'administration à la maison", as Ousmane Sy put it.

This paper argues that urban food policies represent a new and promising opportunity for decentralized cooperation and territorial partnerships between cities. The background is a well-established decline of decentralized cooperation processes, due to politically driven agendas and decreasing or stagnating transfers of resources. The paper looks at an emerging leadership stemming from cities which, strengthened by locally developed initiatives, has produced an international drive capable of aligning several promising actors from institutions, research and civil society, behind objectives of sustainability. On this basis, in the wake of the Expo 2015 in Milan, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) emerged, an agreement which has global relevance for these very policies. Through food policies, cities can play an important role in revamping and remodeling decentralized cooperation processes with new approaches, content, relations, and an international outlook.

¹ Sy O., Reconstruire l'Afrique. Vers une nouvelle gouvernance fondée sur les dynamiques locales, Paris, Éditions Charles Léopold Mayer, 2009.

The paper introduces urban food policies as a tool for food and nutrition security between cities and rural areas and as an institutional outcome under the principles of food sovereignty and the right to food. Relevant experiences developed in Italy and the African continent are outlined to describe selected policies from different geographic and cultural contexts, thus contributing to a broader perspective on the situation in Africa. The paper moves on to present essential features of decentralized cooperation and ongoing development projects on these issues, and concludes with interesting possibilities that may unfold in the transition from urban food policies to decentralized cooperation processes.

The authors are scholars whose work has long focused both on urban food policies and on decentralized cooperation. Such work includes an active and constant involvement in research and development projects, in local implementation activities in the global South, and, most recently, in the development of two urban food policy frameworks in Milan and Turin, in Italy, while following and participating in the international debate on the topic. This experience suggests that there are strong connections between the new kind of urban policy based on local food system planning and the cooperation of non-state actors between North and South.

1. Urban Food Policies and Governance

In order to rethink decentralized cooperation through urban food policies, the governance framework must be considered as a whole. It is important to operationalize such policies in ways which can overcome some of the critical points of decentralized cooperation between municipalities, such as the dispersion of resources, the reduced scale of interventions, the low incidence, and the excessive politicization on the one hand, and the risk of prevalence of technicalisms on the other (Alain, 2005; Bontenbal, 2009; Nganje, 2015; Pillet, 2012). Balanced and integrated food governance in both urban and rural territories would help raise policy-makers' awareness and interest and, ultimately, would help influence broader policy frameworks. At the same time, it is useful to see in what food-related ways citizens and local stakeholders can contribute to local policy-making.

1.1. Urban Food Policies as a New Space for Political Action between Cities and Territories

If urban-rural linkages are to be considered an important driver for good governance, they require strong public action, so that urban administrations can take over the leadership in guiding other relevant actors towards developing new public policies that make the food systems of cities more equitable and sustainable (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999).

Food systems are often designed to feed cities through a complex network of food cycle phases, which consist of production, transformation, logistics, distribution, consumption, and waste management. All these elements imply that the food system as a whole can be considered as an urban infrastructure (Calori and Magarini, 2015), at the same level as other sectors such as social services, transport, healthcare, and waste management. These are all the sectors in which established policies already exist at the local level. Food generally does not fall within these areas of action, although food systems allow intercepting various urban competencies to be governed in a systematic and integrated way (Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015).

Urban food policies can be established through the promotion of agreements between institutions, civil society and the private sector by backing up a strong public-private partnership strategy within a single development platform (Morgan, 2009). Very often, the initiative is taken over by the city's mayor, who by nature is the community leader and not just the elected administrative manager of the city. Similar experiences have been undertaken in Europe, North America, and Latin America through the creation of Food Councils, which represent all the actors involved in the food system: urban administrations, producers' representatives, researchers, the private sector, and civil society. A wide variety of actors is crucial to determine how to deal with the high complexity of food-based systems and outline new food policies that can act effectively for good governance (Blay-Palmer, 2010).

1.2. Urban Food Policies Geared towards the Right to Food

International experiences on urban food policies are generally built upon the interpretation of local institutions' breadth of action with regard to the food system. Analytical representations often show food at the center of the food system, with the different elements arranged radially. However, if instead of food, the "Right to Food" and citizens are placed at the center and surrounded by the local policies contributing to the different dimensions, the vision changes completely. The element that typically contributes to building a local food policy geared towards the right to food is the approval of a Food Charter which recognizes citizens' right to food through value remarks.

Through the lens of the right to food, a charter helps revisit local public services and existing administrative activities which allow cities to fulfill their duty to respect and fully enforce the status of "citizen". From the operational point of view, a Food Charter guides every future food policy to enforce the right to food for its citizens (Bottiglieri, 2015).

The first Special Rapporteur on the right to food at the High Commission of the United Nations (UN) affirmed "the importance of local food security and local nutrition programs" (Ziegler, 2003), mentioning a number of local measures necessary to achieve this purpose, such as education on nutritional needs, school feeding programs (canteens for all), breastfeeding, the access to family gardens, and the nutritional surveillance of vulnerable groups. In the same vein, his successor (De Schutter, 2014) identified the key to change at the local level, the urban and civic level in particular, stating that it is essential for cities to assess their food dependencies, identify weaknesses, criticalities and strengths and, when possible, develop a range of measures to procure their own food.

1.3. Food Sovereignty through the Legal Autonomy of Local Institutions

Food sovereignty can also be conceived of as a legal concept that can be applied to multiple scales, from the central state to local governments (Buonomo, 2015).

Discussing the "local" dimension can be reductive, by highlighting the concept of "local food autonomy" which can expand the areas of action of a local authority to act on its own food system. The concept of autonomy is matched by the principle of subsidiarity, which is present in different forms in every legal system. According to this principle, an entity at a lower level is assigned with more autonomy in carrying out a task which is defined by

a higher-level institution. The principle of autonomy applied to local food systems can differ depending on each institution and legal context. In fact, there is no generic description of local food autonomy, but each local authority enjoys a specific food autonomy that differs from that of others. Depending on the degree of decentralization that every constitution assigns to local authorities in a given country, each municipality has the power to determine its own purposes and goals on food issues and, in particular, to decide which actions to enact on the local food system (school canteens, spatial planning, waste management, water management, food education, access to food, healthcare and public health, environmental policies, etc.).

Such autonomy can in turn be broken down into a new framework of principles and approaches that local authorities can translate into new urban policies: political autonomy, which is manifested in the freedom of citizens to choose their own representatives (in charge of decision-making on the main issues related to food) and to self-determine their own institutional purposes; normative autonomy consists in an institution's ability to issue legally binding rules; functional autonomy enables a municipality to choose the most technically viable solutions to pursue its purposes; organizational autonomy consists in a local authority's ability to have its own organizational structure to manage the various local public services related to food; and financial autonomy involves the possibility of identifying autonomous sources of income and managing the related expenses.

When examining the local dimension, it is necessary to be aware of the risk of the so-called "local trap" (Born and Purcell, 2006), which means considering *a priori* that "eating local food is more ecologically sustainable and socially just". Much of the attention is not so much on the local scale in itself, but rather on the strategies of the players who, at that scale, act to make food more or less sustainable and fair.

2. Ongoing Initiatives

In different parts of the world, more and more initiatives on food issues have been developed. As mentioned above, these actions represent a new era of urban leadership. It is therefore interesting to look at the international context and the food policies developed by cities (Calori et al., 2017; Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015).

2.1. International Networks

The international debate on these issues has been developing with ever greater intensity over the last 15 years through facilitating networks by the UN (World Health Organization –WHO–, Food and Agriculture Organization –FAO–, and United Nations Development Programme –UNDP) and a large, globally active, technical-scientific community.

The first seeds of this movement were already evident in the Agenda 21 in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, but it was not until the 2000s that the need to act with actual urban policy actions emerged in many parts of the world (Blay-Palmer, 2009). In 2001, the FAO launched the multidisciplinary initiative "Food for Cities" (FAO, 2011). In 2013, the Bonn Declaration was the first convergence of mayors on the need for urban food policies. The following year, the "Global Call for Action on City Region Food Systems" of Medellin (2014) highlighted the convergence of a key group of technical and institutional players (Forster, 2015).

The most recent and important step in this ever-evolving, polycentric debate came with the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), an international pact signed in October 2015 between cities around the world, precisely on food security issues and food planning, as was well articulated in the Action Plan annexed to it. The Pact currently involves 134 cities worldwide, representing a network of urban governments and international organizations that have shared the will to work on urban food policies through institutional processes in cities and international advocacy. The MUFPP conveys the idea of the richness, plurality and complexity of policies, projects and pathways affecting every city in the world, both in the global South and North, with regard to local food policies. This know-how is the best assumption and the basis for building decentralized cooperation on urban food policies. This renewed sharing of values and practices within the MUFPP has the merit of rediscovering both the value of cities in helping define local responses to global issues, and the contribution to the implementation of the New Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) through a dialogue amongst cities.

The goals for the fight against hunger (Goal 2) and for building sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11) are just amongst the most obvious ones. However, through urban food policies within urban and rural contexts, it is possible to touch upon all 17 goals.

Figure 1: The 134 Signatory Cities of MUFPP



Source: authors' processing on data from www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org.

2.2. Urban Food Policies in the Context of the Global North

Urban food policy initiatives first emerged in cities like Vancouver, Toronto, New York City and Bristol where two major themes have led urban administrations to act to make food systems more sustainable, and address urban obesity and food accessibility (Blay-Palmer, 2010). Since these initiatives, many other cases around the world have come to light, predominantly in Europe, and have been able to take action on the de-intermediation from producers to consumers (Calori, 2009), enriching the debate with an array of experiments and acting on a multitude of themes relevant to all food systems such as waste, food accessibility, urban agriculture, and civic participation.

Malmö, Vancouver, Milan, Melbourne, Belo Horizonte, Shanghai and many other cities have included the reduction of waste and the valorization of organic waste in their food policy goals, through the development of public-private partnerships. Many policies focus on food accessibility: London, Toronto, San Francisco and New York City have acted on the accessibility of healthy food. Many cities have launched urban farming initiatives and programs to support production in urban and peri-urban areas. Examples of

such programs can be found in Vancouver, Toronto, Paris, Nairobi, Barcelona, Shanghai, and Dakar.

In Italy, there are two cases that fully adhere to this international debate. The city of Milan, which hosted the Expo2o15 on food issues, has developed its own food policy, launching an analysis and interpretation of the urban food system that has identified ten issues on which to initiate a public debate between the local administration, food start-ups, civil society, and the research community. Milan's Food Policy Guidelines have also been defined for the period 2015-2020 to ensure healthy food for everyone, promote the sustainability of the food system, educate on food, and fight against waste.

Similarly, in Turin, the city's good food practices, which can have an impact on the food system, have been analyzed (Bottiglieri et al., 2016). The Metropolitan City of Turin together with the University of Turin have created and promoted the initiative "Feeding Metropolitan Turin", a wide-ranging participatory process in which all relevant players have been involved to define the principles and contents of food policy at the metropolitan level.

2.3. Urban Food Policies in the African Context

The theme of urban food policies has also influenced an increasing number of cities in the global South. In fact, as noted by Kevin Morgan, "the most damaging effects of the new food equation are being wrought in the cities of the Global South, where the noxious interplay of poverty, hunger and climate change is most apparent" (Morgan, 2015).

By looking at African cities through the lens of the food system, a wide range of themes and issues has been identified on which cities have started reflecting and working. What has emerged are urban agriculture programs developed in many cities throughout the continent (FAO, 2012) to ensure an acceptable level of food security, adapt and combat climate change, efforts to ensure access to land, the management of migration from rural areas to cities, access to water for food and urban agriculture, and urban planning initiatives.

Despite high urban growth rates and high levels of urban food insecurity, there is a lack of analysis of food systems in the whole of Africa. These gaps in knowledge, which is necessary to restore the complexity of the elements that act within a city (Battersby, 2012), are identified in the processes implemented in secondary cities, such as the impact of inadequate transport systems and food distribution, of supermarkets in urban areas and of food imports (Smit, 2016).

In view of these shortcomings, several partial responses have emerged across the continent which could be linked to decentralized cooperation mechanisms between cities.

African cities can find solutions within the MUFPP on the issues affecting the continent's urbanization process. The MUFPP therefore represents the international framework within which to further develop local applications that meet the needs of each regional context. The FAO, in the context of the agreement, is facilitating the dissemination of the Pact and contributing to speed up its implementation in Africa through decentralized cooperation mechanisms (Giordano *et al.*, 2017; FAO, 2016).

The 20 African signatory cities of the Pact are spread out across the continent and include cities from English-speaking, French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries. In order to stimulate the dissemination and exchange of good practices, the first edition of the Milan Pact Award was launched in 2016. Four African cities (out of 33) were candidates for sharing their good practices: Nairobi (urban agriculture legislation), Dakar (horticulture and healthy school meals), Lusaka (women's empowerment), and Arusha (horticulture for a sustainable diet).

In September 2016, a forum was held in Dakar, amongst the signatory cities of francophone African countries, in order to foster the development of a sub-regional network of cities, with the attendance of representatives from Dakar, Abidjan, Brazzaville, Douala, N'Djamena, Niamey, and Nouackchott. The debate within the forum brought forth issues concerning the African region which the MUFPP guidelines do not take sufficiently into consideration. In particular, the economic fragility of African cities and the support for local production are two themes on which further initiatives should be developed. During the Dakar Forum, cities produced a statement defining the actions of the Pact on which they intend to work jointly. More specifically, they aim at

enhancing participation for all actors in the food system (log.fram. MUFPP 2) and identifying improved technologies for food storage and infrastructure for peri-urban transport (log.fram. MUFPP 28). These cities also aim at raising their citizens' awareness of a more sustainable diet and developing policies and practices to improve food distribution and food storage.

Figure 2: Matrix Displaying the Issues Affecting the Food System in 43 African Cities

City	#urbanagricolture	#climatechange	#landtenure	#trade	#migration	#water	#urbanplanning	#analysis	#policy	#foodpoverty	#economy	#foodsystem	#waste	#finance	#devolution	#riot	#biological	#school	#seed	
City	#	#	#	#	#	*	#	#	#	#	#	#	*	#	#	#	#	#	#	_
Accra	-																			9
Maputo																				8
Cape Town	_																			7
Dakar																				7
Johannesburg	_																			7
Antananarivo	_																			6
Freetown	_																			6
Gaborone																				6
Lusaka																				6
Monrovia																				6
Niamey																				6
Cairo																				5
Harare																				5
Kampala																				5
Khartoum																				5
Kinshasa																				5
Kitwe																				5
Nairobi																				5
N'Djamena																				5
Ouagadougou																				5
Tunis																				5
Windhoek																				5
Addis Abeba																				4
Arusha																				4
Brazzaville																				4
Bulawayo																				4
Douala																				4
Durban																				4
Kumasi																				4
Tamale				'																4
Yaoundé																				4
Abia State																				3
Abidjan															_					3
Algiers															_					3
Baidoa															_					3
Bamako																				3
Dar Es Salaam									-						-					3
Lagos															_					3
Luanda				_													-			3
Nouakchott																				3
										_					_					2
Banjul City																				2
Blantyre City																				
Qardho	36	15	14	12	11	11	10												1	1

Source: Magarini A., Calori A., EStà, 2016.

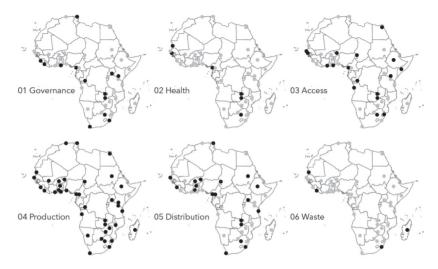


Figure 3: Issues on Milan Urban Food Policy Pact in 43 African Cities

Source: Magarini A., Calori A., EStà, 2016.

Among the cities that have adopted a food policy with a systemic approach, Johannesburg appears to be particularly interesting. On the one hand, this logistics and socio-economic hub, serving the whole of Southern Africa, offers economic opportunities. On the other hand, there are 1.9 million people considered poor, out of a population of 8 million inhabitants at the metropolitan level. In 2013, the city committed to increasing the level of food security through the expansion of easy-to-access food distribution systems, using economic incentives and peri-urban agriculture programs. As part of multilevel governance, urban and intersectoral actions have been integrated to those carried out by the province, Gauteng, through training courses for farmers (Malan, 2015).

Although the city of Maputo has grown rapidly, most of its green areas remain intact and are protected under urban legislation. In 1980, the Maputo City Council established a peri-urban green belt for horticulture, equipping the area with irrigation systems. This area is cultivated by 13,000 farmers who have land use rights and can therefore use the land in micro-credit operations within a union of 200 agricultural cooperatives, helping improve the purchasing power of families and, hence, their food security (McCordic, 2016).

Access to land is a major issue for urban food policies. Horticulture can be promoted within a legislative framework which should be guaranteed by municipal governments in urban expansion plans, allowing access to credit needed for investments in the food system. Kigali has allocated 40% of its surface to urban development, protecting the remaining 15,000 hectares of the most fertile soils for agriculture. To limit hydrogeological disruption, Antananarivo has allocated free land areas to vegetable cultivation which now involve 43% of the urban surface, acting as a buffer zone to protect the city from flooding (FAO, 2012).

Water access is one of the most important issues to ensure food security for urban citizens. This depends on the presence of wastewater treatment systems (World Bank, 2012). Several cities such as Ouagadougou, Kinshasa, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Lilongwe, Maputo, Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg have acted on this issue by deploying urban masterplans for access to water and wastewater disposal, keeping water capture infrastructures separated from those intended for disposal.

The examples described above represent some of the initiatives that African cities are working on. The MUFPP may serve as a framework within which a cooperation mechanism between cities can be activated. Acting in an integrated and systemic approach will help rebalance the territorial dynamics between cities and their hinterlands, which are crushed by strong demographic growth and climate change effects across the continent.

3. Decentralized Cooperation

From the geographic point of view, decentralization refers to cooperation between municipalities or regions in a country which are distant from each other but close enough in terms of issues, processes and policies, allowing local authorities worldwide to be able to self-determine their own local governance, with mutual support, with the aim of promoting local autonomy and improving the living conditions of local populations (Carrino, 2005).

Local authorities in the global North are working to support local authorities in developing countries in implementing local policies that can meet all of their people's needs (Bottiglieri, 2012). In this type of cooperation, actions aim to improve not only the local system of the developing country, but also that of the country promoting the initiative (Mezzasalma, 2008). Local European authorities can engage in decentralized cooperation because such activities are set out in a regulatory framework consisting of European and national legislation. In this sense, the European Commission has developed and supported projects and provided funding through different programs, while, in the Italian case, the new Italian law on development cooperation (law 125/2004), favors the term "territorial partnerships" rather than "decentralized cooperation". Although the new law became operational at the beginning of 2016 and it is still early to evaluate its impact on decentralized cooperation activities, its focus does not seem to be on relaunching and reinforcing such activities. Instead of making progress, it seems that the new law has taken some step backwards. Indeed, local authorities are only allowed to "implement" national development co-operation initiatives, while the previous law (law 89/1987²) also provided the opportunity to make proposals (Bottiglieri, 2017). As of this writing, the new Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, introduced by the new law 125/2014, has just issued the first call for projects for local authorities, a novelty compared to the previous law.

After a shrinking phase mainly linked to the economic crisis, which hit hard the finances of local Italian authorities, it will be interesting to see if the new law will accompany a reboot or a renewed leadership of territorial partnerships with local communities in the global South. In fact, local Italian authorities were considerably active in the field of decentralized cooperation during 1990s and 2000s, with regions playing a key role in legislative and programming activities.

² The previous law 49/1987 recognized the role of local governments (regions, autonomous provinces and local authorities) and the organized civil society (NGOs, associations, etc.) in international cooperation activities. The concept of decentralized cooperation would not be fully defined until March 2000 in the Guidelines and Implementation Procedures, presented by the Directorate General for Development Cooperation – Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to areas of intervention, the document defined ways of implementing projects based mainly on providing technical assistance to the corresponding local authorities, with the aim of strengthening their capacity for intervention in the management of basic services to citizens and meeting the needs of the territorial or sectoral sphere of their competence.

3.1. Decentralized Cooperation in Local Food Policies

These considerations show the field of action for decentralized cooperation activities that individual cities may undertake and promote in the area of local food policies. Since 2000, the "Cotonou Agreement" between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (EU-ACP, 2000) group of states recognizes both local governments and non-state actors as fully-fledged actors and partners in international cooperation and development processes.

Up to now, numerous projects have been developed and actions promoted by different local authorities around the world, with a focus on Africa as a preferred region for this institutional drive. Various programs and projects have been made available using resources from local authorities and through projects financed by European funds for international cooperation. The links created amongst the cities of the global North and South could facilitate an active exchange between cities. Several Italian cities have already established relations of exchange and twinning with African cities, some of which (*) are MUFPP cosignatories: Milan with Dakar* 1979 (Senegal) and Algiers* 2015 (Algeria); Turin with Maputo* 2015 (Mozambique), Praia* 2003 (Cape Verde), Tunis* 2015 (Tunisia), and Ouagadougou 2003 (Burkina Faso); Genoa with Pointe Noire 2006 (Congo-Brazzaville), Kaolack 2006 (Senegal), and Polokwane 2011 (South Africa); Bologna with Saint-Louis 1991 (Senegal); Palermo with Bukavu 1998 (Congo-Kinshasa), and Bizerta 2000 (Tunisia).

A promising field of action is that of local food services: catering in schools and in the care sector, food and nutrition education in schools, granting public space for food sale and trade, assigning public spaces for the creation of urban food gardens, and activities promoting local food excellence through the organization of fairs and cultural events. As a matter of fact, connecting processes, informal dialogue or structured collaboration and exchange on specific issues and projects are already underway. It is no coincidence that cities wishing to set up an urban food strategy have started discussions with those which have already embarked on a similar process. In this respect, some long-established initiatives should be mentioned, such as the exchange of knowledge and collaboration between the cities of Milan and Dakar on urban gardens, Turin and Louga on street food, and Rome

and Kigali on horticulture. Other initiatives may involve food movements, such as Slow Food, which are active at the interlocal and transnational levels (Dansero *et al.*, 2012).

However, so far, all these initiatives have not been embedded into a wider framework for urban food policies. In opposition to this trend, the FAO presented a city-city cooperation mechanism to the signatory cities of the MUFPP, which is reminiscent of the structure and approach of decentralized cooperation as described thus far (Giordano et al., 2017).

As discussed previously, Italian cities have started moving towards explicit, grounded and structured urban food policies. For this reason, and due to differences in the level of urbanization and its related challenges, decentralized cooperation between Italian cities (and those of the global North in general) and African cities (and others in the global South) is less asymmetrical than traditional fields of intervention, in which urban history and accumulated experience, as well as economic power and social conditions, weigh heavily, however mutually enriching the exchanges may be.

The recent initiatives (MUFPP, New Urban Agenda, and Agenda 2030) are expanding the number and types of actors involved in the international debate, from technical experts to politicians, enabling new players to take part in the understanding of both problems and possible solutions (Bini et al. 2017). This new political space for debate is the ground from which to draw further strength and drive for existing decentralized cooperation tools, encouraging the sharing of experiences and relationships between cities around the world. Such relations could also bolster new forms of diplomacy for economic growth which various European countries have been promoting, by activating the entire web of national mechanisms that further extend the number of stakeholders in the field: city-to-city cooperation mechanisms, city twinnings, partnerships for international projects with bilateral, triangular and multilateral partners constitute a new space for the participation of other actors.

Moreover, the practices which make up the framework of urban food policies are highly internationalized, with transnational and inter-local relations. In this regard, municipalities can act as platforms for these practices by connecting the global North and South with an extraordinary wealth of experiences and actors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the global South are becoming increasingly important actors in promoting food sovereignty in their home countries. The meeting point between NGOs and policy-makers also represents a sharing of experiences accumulated in two different areas, the first being predominately in rural areas and the second at the urban and national scales. If the development of cities also depends on a positive relationship between urban and rural areas, these two groups of actors can help shape strategies and policies at the metropolitan scale, which can in turn enhance territorial cohesion and sustainable city development.

3.2. Practices of Territorial Partnership for Decentralized Cooperation in the Field of Urban Food Policies

Urban food policies and decentralized cooperation are both means for effective change, not just merely special projects or occasional activities. Indeed, they share the same characteristics as they are citizen and human-rights oriented, cross-disciplinary, trans-local examples of solidarity, exchanges and collaboration among the world's cities, and they build on territorial partnership. Urban food policies and decentralized cooperation do not only have common methodologies and approaches, but also similar content and goals, for example, the fight against hunger and obesity, ensuring equal opportunities and access to food and land, a sustainable access to safe, nutritious, diverse and culturally acceptable food (especially through local public services), and the sustainable management of food waste.

Within the field of urban food policies, there are many practices of territorial partnership for decentralized cooperation with a common vision. Some examples of decentralized cooperation projects in local food policies are:

Citizen participation. From 2011 to 2013, the project "4Cities4Dev3" built the basis for a solid partnership among four European cities (Turin, Riga, Bilbao and Tours) and several communities in seven African countries (Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ethiopia and Madagascar) by organizing their own local events to raise awareness among citizens: Eurogusto in Tours,

³ http://www.4cities4dev.eu

two editions of "Taste Master Festival" in Riga, *Terra Madre* in Turin, seminars and activities for schools, a "travelling exhibition" and screenings of films on Slow Food Presidia during European festivals. All this contributed to engaging the attention of the public and the media for three consecutive years on the need to share experiences and good practices on food security (Bottiglieri *et al.*, 2016).

Urban agriculture. Since 2005, the Milan Municipality has supported the Dakar Municipality in the development of a plan for "micro-gardens". The cooperation of all the actors involved has led to the creation of more than 134 production centers, different central purchasing offices and 12 training centers (which have trained more than 7,000 people) on micro-gardens. Water management. One aspect often covered by decentralized cooperation initiatives is the support of urban water management (DESA, 2008). Since 2003, the city of Leuven (Belgium) has supported the city of Nakuru (Kenya) to improve its solid waste removal and water supply in low-income areas of the city. Similarly, since 1996, the city of Toulouse (France) has been involved in decentralized cooperation with the city of N'Djamena (Chad) to jointly define the N'Djamena "Water Quality Monitoring Systems", reorganizing N'Djamena's own hygiene and health service, including the provision of staff training and support in developing an action plan to improve solid waste management in the African city. Likewise, the city of Thann (France) supported two Cameroon municipalities (Mbam and Inoubou) in water management at a cross-municipality level.

3.3. Toward a New Intra-African Regionalization

If cities represent new opportunities for the implementation of food policies, then defining networks between African cities can be an interesting bottom-up approach towards strengthening regional integration. Two examples of successful regional integration in the global South are Mercosur in Latin America and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Southeast Asia. It has been shown that in these successful cases, greater commercial integration has been followed by a rise in food security levels (Rouis and Tabor, 2013). However, in Africa, regional integration towards common market development –e.g. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and Economic Community

of West African States (ECOWAS)—, has been less successful since efforts to cut tariff barriers to imports did not follow a similar commitment to eliminating non-tariff barriers (common standards, certifications, etc.) (Gillson, 2010). Efforts to connect and promote cooperation among local authorities could strengthen these attempts towards regional integration. However, the abolition of barriers on the trade of goods and services does not guarantee the exchange of experiences and good practices in the development of food policies (De Castro, 2015).

Decentralized cooperation constitutes a possible framework for regionalizing food policies. Such a framework could link the local authorities of regions which are homogenous in terms of language, geography and economic interdependence. Building decentralized cooperation platforms for the North-South and South-South exchange of good practices is one of the goals of the MUFPP and of the African regionalization launched with the Dakar Forum (cf. supra, part 2.3). In addition, the signatory cities of the MUFPP could link Africa's experiences with those of other continents. The annual MUFPP mayors' summit could constitute a regional forum for the participating cities in Africa. The intra-African city-to-city cooperation mechanism that the FAO developed in 2016 among the signatories of the MUFPP is a step forward in this direction. In the coming years, it will be interesting to analyze its outcomes and evaluate its results (Giordano et al., 2017).

Initiatives which have involved local authorities around the world, such as the MUFPP, New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030, could be backed up by new decentralized cooperation programs, with the aim of promoting exchanges of experiences and good practices on urban food policies.

Conclusions

The emerging picture appears to be rich and one of significant international expansion. The challenges posed by urbanization and the rapid growth of cities are affecting both main and secondary cities alike. In comparison with other international North-South cooperation initiatives, urban food policies are characterized by similar challenges and approaches, overcoming the usual

North-South divide. Common challenges have arisen due to the scarcity of resources, poor social cohesion, and rural-urban migration.

Urban food policies require establishing forms of cooperation between actors in the food system, and cities and territories (core cities and city-rural areas). This cooperation process can benefit from the insights stemming from decentralized cooperation experiences and vice versa. Urban food policies also require the project- and policy-oriented analysis and mapping (in strict and broad terms) of territorial food systems, an original exercise for both the global North and South, adopting a territorial approach that looks at metropolitan and regional areas or, better yet, at territorial food systems. Considering urban food policies as a decentralized cooperation framework makes it possible to strengthen food sovereignty actions at the local level. Such policies are a powerful force of resistance, providing alternatives to globalizing agro-food networks.

Interest in decentralized cooperation has been decreasing, as it has been reduced to the mere governmental logic of an instrument of implementation. Similarly, without a unifying framework for developing a dialogue on common actions, decentralized cooperation runs the risk of disappearing among the different forms of international relations between cities. In this critical issue, the emergence of the MUFPP represents a great opportunity, as a new space for local action and decentralized cooperation in North-North, North-South and South-South networking on issues such as urban and periurban agriculture, street food, school catering, food education programs in schools, local food markets, etc.

The first mechanisms which have emerged in less than a year (e.g. African regional forum and city-to-city cooperation mechanism) must still be concretely implemented through practical initiatives. While all cities are potentially confronted with the full potential of urban food policies, those with a high international profile and a strong willingness to take part in decentralized cooperation can play a significant role in potential activities that can revive and give new meaning to decentralized cooperation.

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