

CITY FOOD POLICIES



Food policies must be based on a systemic vision.

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Historically, food has been a pivotal factor in the political construction of Europe, as Common Agriculture Policy has been one of the pillars of the European Union. Therefore, as food and drink industry is the largest EU manufacturing sector in terms of turnover and employment, it is not a utopia to think that sustainable food systems could become major assets of the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The present globalization movement was encouraged because it allowed to prospect an efficient worldwide based food production system. However, such system, handled today by private operators, is causing increasing problems. On one hand because it is based on intensive methods of production that are harming the environment and endangering subsistence farming. On another hand, because the resulting model of diet, despite it apparently solves starvation, is accentuating nutritional imbalances and food related pathologies among the populations. These and other reasons have been invoked

to induce cities to come back to local food sourcing (both urban and peri-urban agriculture), in order to match citizens' basic food needs and also to re-appropriate urban food logistics management.

To handle such complex issues, however, cities must revise their usual competences, and need for that, to build up a vision in which the food issue shifts from its mere definition to a more systemic understanding. Indeed, food is not only a sum of calories and nutrients necessary to make our body working, but it is embedded in a whole system that influences our quality of life and includes all activities and infrastructures necessary to grow, harvest, process, package, transport, market, consume, and dispose food and all food-related items. This life-cycle thinking approach allows to build a model of food lifespan from origin to plate that makes possible to identify all food-related activities and infrastructures in and out the city and to design an organization chart that connects all actors and stakeholders involved in the food supply chain, giving them a role and a responsibility.

It is very important that urban planners and city managers understand that such a model is not self-standing. This is because "food systems" run within and are strongly influenced by cultural, social, economic and environmental contexts, all relationships that allows to make synergies between food

planning policy and other mainstream urban policies about more usual issues such as mobility, education, health, etc.

Indeed:

- food consumption is an integral part of all our lives including its history and culture;
- food is affecting our health and wellness, including nutrition, obesity and food safety;
- food environmental impacts are becoming an increasing concern;
- food also requires human resources that provide labor, research and education;
- food is a pillar of the economy, at local and global level.

The cases studies that are presented in the second section of this essay illustrates some of the integrated food systems planning approaches used so far, each of them being implemented with various methods and vision.

Not all the cities concerned by this study have developed a long term vision nor they have developed governance tools to achieve specific food policies. And even when they have done so, they have been aware that the interest of such exercise is mainly to engage all stakeholders to produce and assume ownership of a consensual road map in which are embedded specific priorities defined according to the local context.

To analyze the multiplication of such programs of action, it is useful to identify common patterns and processes of reflection. Several networks are currently working on the definition of sustainable food policies, which must be understood as statement of intents, according to the adoption of principles that guide decisions to achieve rational outcomes or new models of food governance. The latter are intended to regulate the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors.

Within the 2015 Milan Universal Exposition, all participating countries are showing the best of their technology, to "guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone, while respecting the Planet and its equilibrium". This event is an exceptional showcase to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue about the relevance of city food policies promoting social and ecological resilience. For the city of Milan, hosting the event it is an opportunity to use all the knowledge and research of participants and visitors of EXPO to engage a thorough reflection towards its own city food policy.

All the effervescence surrounding the projects of 2015 EXPO of Milan , the Food Chart and the Milan Food Policy Pact demonstrate the growing interest for the question of sustainable food systems and the strong belief that the leverage for change has to be implemented at urban scale, in relation with surrounding Regions. This awareness has emerged from the blooming of numerous networks, programs and projects, as Eating City, that have been launched mainly to develop a broader, shared understanding of sustainable food production and consumption by linking together the collective expertise of researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The role of these networks is fundamental to share information, to develop campaigns, to organize meetings. They also share information about all the initiatives driven by the members (food charters, strategies and action plans) and also in other countries (international inspiration). In some cases , stakeholders also try to clarify the food sustainability issue and give concrete insights about key issues in order to get involved cities in action plans.

At this stage, these networks have an essential role to play, to gather stakeholders in multi-disciplinary approaches, to share knowledge, identify critical points and define priorities, design new solutions in order to establish food policies able to frame and foster action plans.

Among more institutional networks such as Resilient Cities, the network launched by ICLEI, the World Mayors Council on Climate Change and the City of Bonn in 2010. It is promoting the question of urban resilience and involves over 1,000 metropolises, cities, and urban regions committed to promote global sustainability through local action. It has included, since 2013 a specific focus on food policies, mainly through the angle of urban agriculture strategies. It is now evolving towards a call for global action : "City Region Food Systems and Sustainable Urbanisation" launched in London in February 2015.



Interview with Giuliano Pisapia, Mayor of Milan :

1. The question may sound trivial, but why the Mayor of such a large city as Milan has decided to undertake the design of Food Policies for his city?

“Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” is the theme chosen for the 2015 Milan Universal Exposition, where such issues as healthy and safe food, combating hunger and waste, water as a common good or sustainable development will be discussed. All these Third Millennium emergencies not only concern the largest metropolitan areas in the world but also the future of Milan and Italy. Expo 2015 has just speeded up our involvement.

During six months, Milan will become geographically the centre of a global debate about food, in a planet shared by 9 billion inhabitants in 2050 that is looking after a fairer and more balanced sustainable development. The Universal Exposition will deliver to the world a Food Chart, true pact among States, International Institutions and individuals. But Milan itself, as the city of Expo, is going further. It is carving out a precise role that looks far beyond 2015.

Taking for granted that food is energy and driving force of development, Milan has proposed to other international metropolises an "city food policy Pact", that will be signed by the relative Mayors, within a big event organised on the occasion of the World Food Day, next October. The city of Milan is working at present on the contents of the Pact, within a network of more than 30 foreign cities. In the meantime, together with the Cariplo Foundation, it is working on its own Food Policy as part of the construction of its Smart City strategy for a more intelligent and sustainable city that will insure a fairer future for its inhabitants.

2. What are the expected outcomes?

The Food Policy will give the city of Milan a central role in the urban agro-food system governance, to achieve some major objectives. First of all, to reduce food wastage: every year a family throws away the equivalent of 450€ of fresh food, bread, fruits and vegetables, with consequent impacts on the environment. Also, to improve human health and food access, to increase urban agricultural ecosystem biodiversity, to reduce food systems' environmental impacts, to foster innovation for healthy and sustainable food production and distribution. Improving food education is a priority too, because most of the impacts are due to lifestyles and consumption patterns. All these issues are treated within the Milan Food Policy and will frame a systemic and holistic vision for healthy, tasty, fair and sustainable food, accessible for all citizens.

3. Which levers and which ways do you intend to use in order to proceed with the establishment and the management of Food Policy, independently from projects co-financed by European or national funds? In other words do you plan to create a permanent structure that will be able to monitor and manage this medium-long term process?

Also in light of Expo 2015, the rethinking of the overall urban food system is a central issue for Milan. This challenge does not mean only local food and peri-urban agriculture. A new and positive link must be forged between those who produce, distribute and manage the relationships with consumers. Food wastage must be overcome. "Smarter" logistics must be implemented. It is a modernisation tool, for the city and for the training of new generations.

The whole administration is currently working together with all the companies in which the Council has a share, in order to achieve the targets we set for ourselves: from waste management to food education schemes at school, not to mention combating waste, still in the schools, where it is a significant commitment: in the last year and half, the equivalent of a ton of food per day has been saved in the schools of Milan.

The exchange with the other Mayors clearly highlights how important is the need for a body in charge of the coordination of all the policies related to Food Policy.

4. Do you believe that the "City" should care about what its own citizens are eating, beyond free individual choices?

Sure I do. We need to raise awareness about what is at stake, in terms of social, health and economic issues. The public debate in Milan is mature enough to contribute to define targets and improvement actions.

5. Do you think that food can be considered as a Common good? And that food flows should be, at least, monitored by the City?

Expo is also an opportunity for the City of Milan to increase its own awareness and care of the commons, particularly about the sensitive issue of urban agro-food system. And the city administration can't help but be in the forefront.

6. Would it be useful that such policies were also represented at a higher institutional level? - for instance at a regional /national /European level; this to implement a new global food governance?

In the so-called "Urban Century", most of people will increasingly live in large urban areas. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities and in 2030, it will be 60%. Some of these large cities have a GDP that exceeds the one of numerous nations: Milan produces more than Colombia, Washington more than South Africa, London more than Indonesia.

Recent surveys reveal that the "New Face of Hunger", i.e. the deprivation of food, and above all of healthy food, will define unprecedented borders between neighbouring districts in all "averagely developed" cities. Therefore the management of all the agro-food related problems is becoming an explosive issue at a world-wide and local level - in the North and in the South of the Planet.

In a globalized world where mega-cities become more and more networked to build a sustainable development, great revolutions start at local level. Thus for food policies. Therefore, urban administrations can serve as aggregators to facilitate all the other stakeholders, reconciling the commitment of citizens, with the non-profit world, companies and other institutions. For practical policies.