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THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF FOOD SECURITY: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF URBAN FOOD STRATEGIES



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Conceptualizing Food Security

- Debate polarized around two narratives
 - Food security as an issue of *national* self-sufficiency or self-reliance (productivism)
 - Food security as a matter of access to appropriate food for poor *households* (“livelihood security” model)
- Recent literature raises the need for an approach that bridges the gap between supply-led (macro-) and demand-led (micro-) perspectives to address the “New Geography of Food Security”

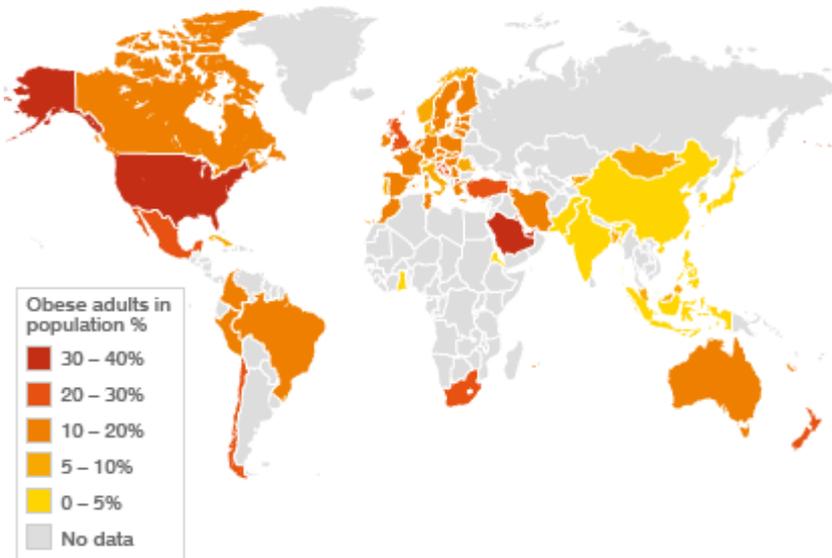
The New Geography of Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity as a bimodal problem of malnutrition
- Access to healthy food as a physical *and* financial issue— *When money is tight, the first things that drop out of the diet are usually the healthy foods, like fruits, vegetables, and lean sources of protein, which are nearly always more expensive* (General Director of the WHO, 2008)
- Widening socio-economic inequalities (food riots)
- A range of ecological pressures on the food system are linking security and sustainability

The New Geography of Food Security

- Food insecurity as a structural and “bimodal” crisis of both over- and under- consumption

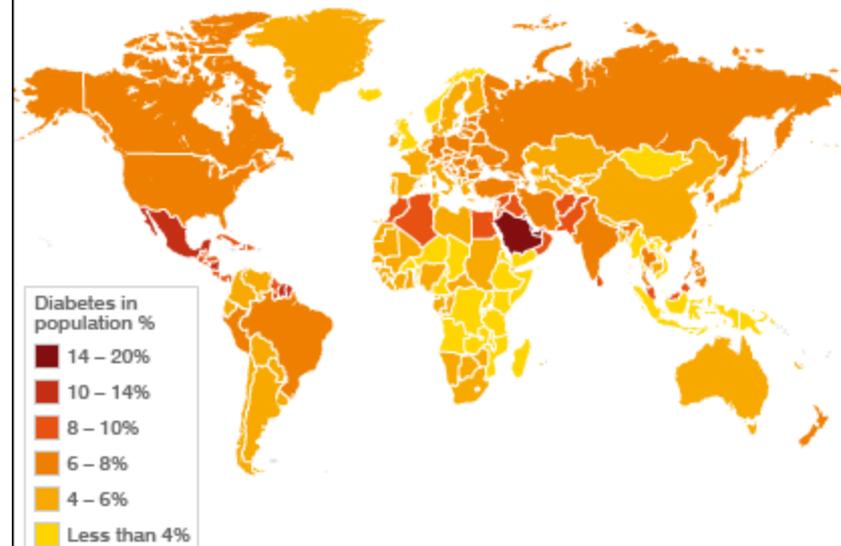
THE GLOBAL OBESITY PROBLEM



An obese adult is classified as having a Body Mass Index equal to or greater than 30

SOURCE: World Health Organization, 2005

ESTIMATED PREVALENCE OF DIABETES IN 2007

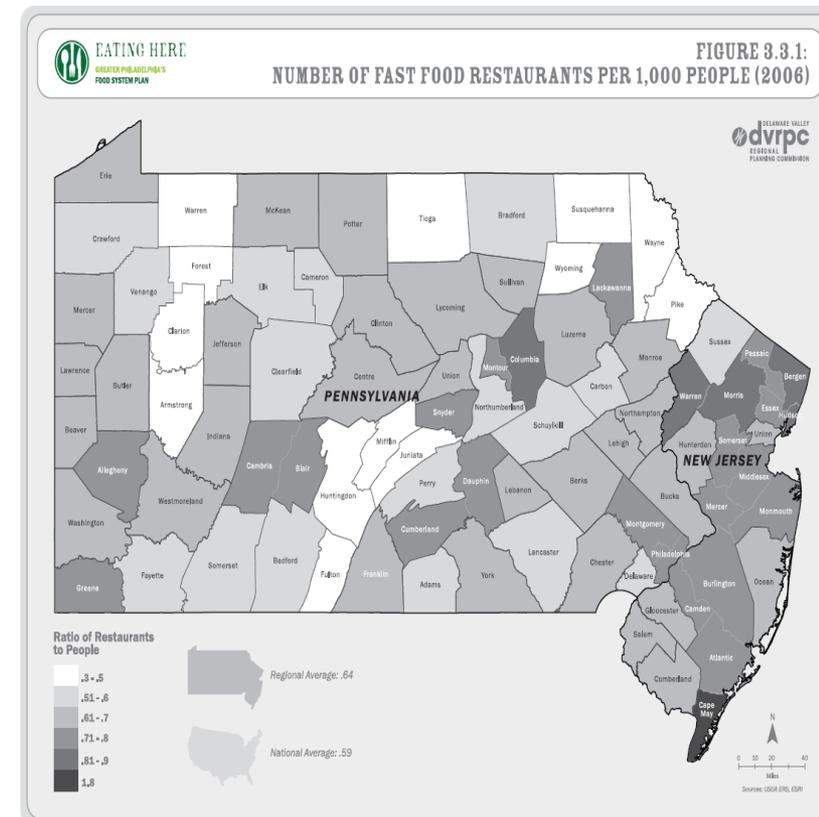
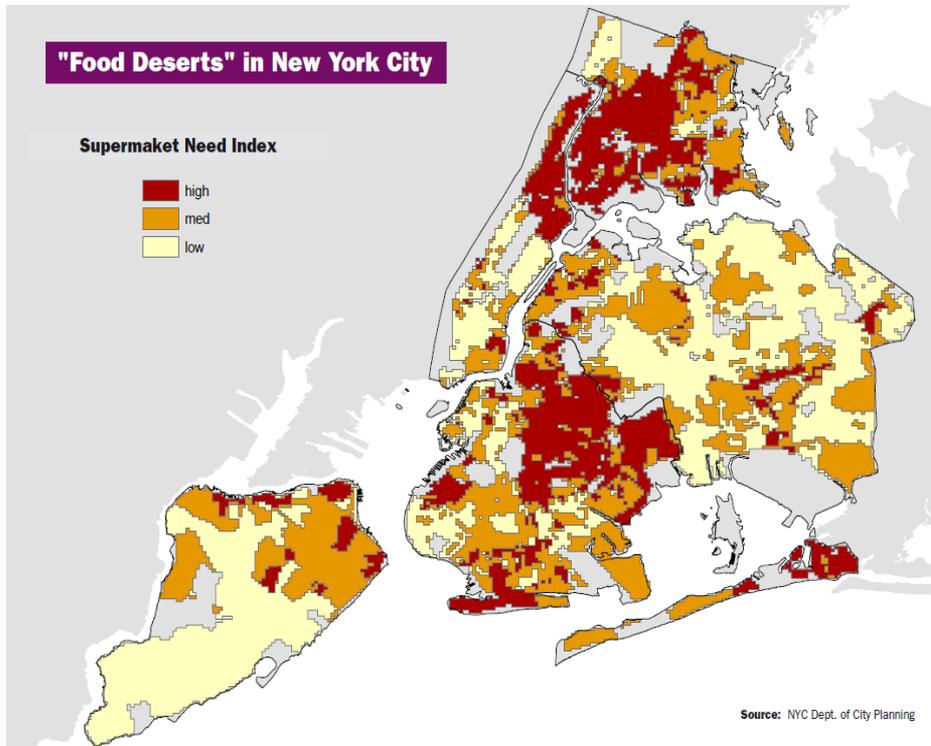


Map shows type 1 and type 2 diabetes
Obesity and type 2 diabetes are causally linked

SOURCE: Diabetes Atlas, 2006

The New Geography of Food Security

- Lack of direct access to food production and dependence on the market especially a problem in cities



The New Geography of Food Security

- Strong urban dimension of food insecurity
Policies and resources dealing with poverty, exclusion and inequalities in cities remain highly inadequate. As a result, urban diets are affected and malnutrition has become a major concern (FAO, 2011)
- Social unrest (urban food riots) has turned food security into a matter of national security

The New Geography of Food Security

- Emergence of a range of interrelated ecological pressures
 - Water availability
 - Soil degradation and loss
 - Very high levels of food losses and waste
- *Sustainable food security* as a new research and policy agenda (Sonnino et al., 2014)

Sustainable Food Security

- Need to account for “the deeply inter-locking nature of economic, social and environmental systems to promote more cross-sectoral approaches to decision-making” (Misselhorn et al., 2012)
 - “Whereas the productionist paradigm assumed that the Earth was limitless, the new era’s policies must assume the connections between environment, social justice and health” (Lang, 2010)

Urban and Regional Governments as Food Policy Actors

- Innovative strategies emerging at the municipal and regional level
 - Attempt to create new local spatial, socio-economic and ecological “fixes” (Marsden and Sonnino, 2012)
 - Paradigm shift or niches that fail to make a dent in mainstream food security approaches?
- Comparative analysis of the shared discursive elements of 15 urban food strategies

Urban and Regional Governments as Food Policy Actors

- Three central questions:
 - What type of foodscape do these documents envision, and why?
 - Does the rescaling of food governance coincide with the emergence of a new approach to re-localization?
 - What are the measures and intervention areas that cities prioritize to address the dynamics of the new geography of food security?

Urban Food Strategies: The Governance Context

- Widespread awareness of the role of cities in facilitating sustainable food transformations
 - Strong connection between food and the urban environment (Oakland); power of citizen food movements in changing demand (NYC, Toronto)
- No autarkic approach to change
 - Documents raise the need for support at higher governance scales (re-orientation of farm subsidies, NYC; new regional tax policies to incentivize fresh food production, Philadelphia)

Urban Food Strategies: A Holistic Approach to Sustainability

- Centrality of “freshness” and “healthiness” but in relation to other sustainability goals
 - Toronto: “*A health-focused food system* nourishes the environment, protects against climate change, promotes social justice, creates local and diverse economic development, builds community”
 - Los Angeles: “*Good food* prioritizes the health and well being of our residents while also contributing to enhance the urban environment, create a thriving economy and protect and strengthen regional biodiversity and natural resources”
 - Philadelphia: “Local and healthy food movements as economic development strategies”

Urban Food Strategies: Re-localization in the Context of Sustainability

- Localization as a means to an end, not an end goal – it is not defined, but described in relation to sustainability objectives
 - *Our strategy addresses ways in which we can localise our food production and increase consumption of food produced from within 50-mile radius, but only as part of a sustainable food system. The distance travelled by food, while significant, is not the only measure of food's environmental impact, and factors such as the energy intensiveness of production and storage are amongst other crucial factors (Brighton and Hove, 2012)*

Urban Food Strategies: Re-localization in the Context of Sustainability

Sometimes, both the local food movement and its detractors have become absorbed in debates expressing the same compartmentalized thinking that characterizes the dominant food system. [...] The issue is not so much which single food choice is “best”, but how can we accelerate progress towards a comprehensive health-focused food system where the goals of affordability, environmental protection, local farm viability, land use planning and others, can be reconciled. One of the functions of this food strategy project is to promote this kind of dialogue (Toronto, 2010)

The Regionalization of the Local

- Distinction between “local/urban” and “local/regional” food system (NYC) – emphasis on the latter
 - *While the benefits of urban agriculture are significant to individuals and neighbourhoods, poverty and hunger [...] exist on such a massive scale that supporting urban agriculture should only be viewed as a supplement, not a replacement, strategy to solve food insecurity and improve food access (Los Angeles, 2011)*

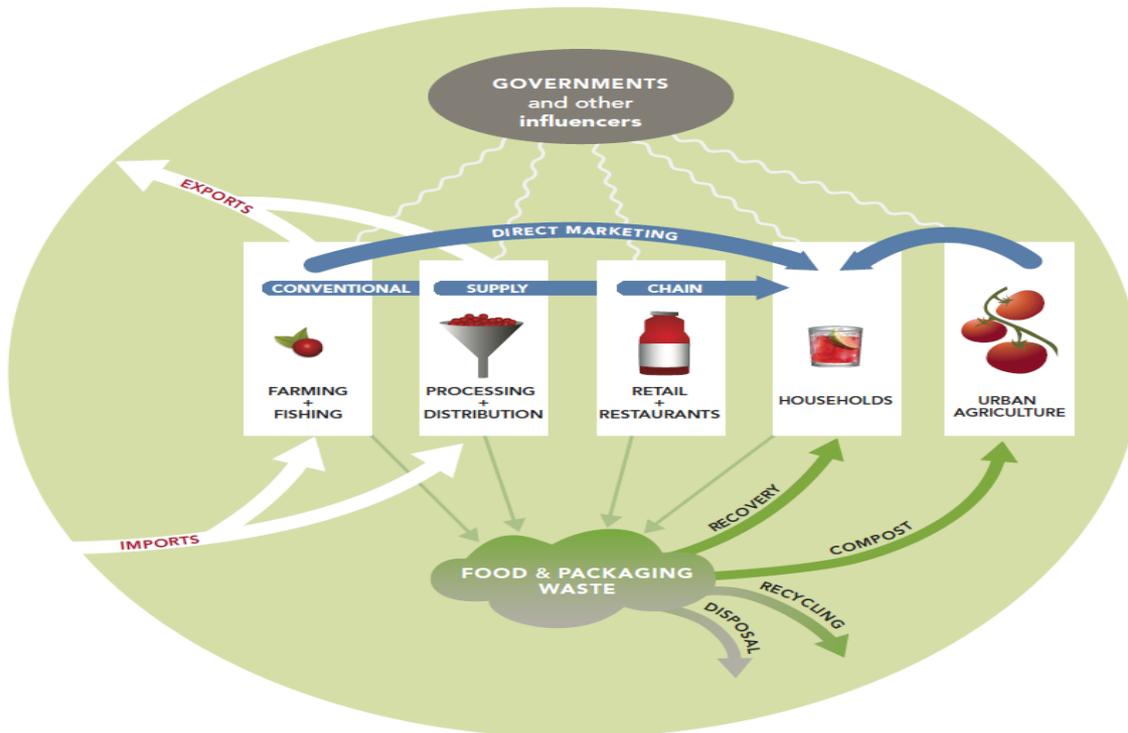
Envisioning a Regional Local



- North American strategies use “foodshed” to develop “the broadest” definition of local food (San Francisco) – one that takes into account quality attributes such as production methods, fair farm labour practices and animal welfare (Los Angeles)

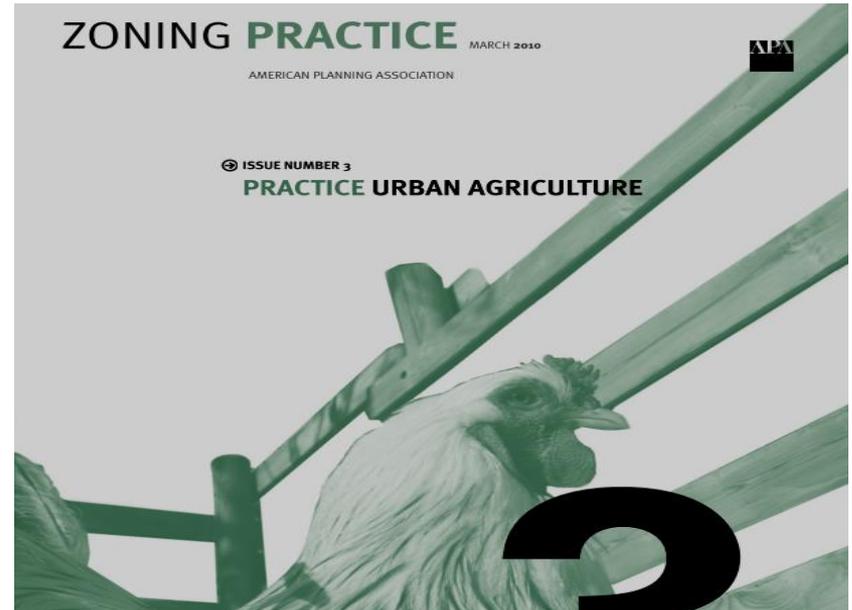
Envisioning a Regional Local

- *At present [...] the model is a chain in which food is produced outside the city, brought in, sold, consumed and the waste and packaging disposed of, generally outside the city again. [...] There is considerable scope for [...] creating a closed loop system [that] would attempt to reconnect the city to the food it consumes and reduce the environmental impact of food consumption (Manchester, 2007)*



Regionalizing the Local: The New Connectivities

- Two main implementation tools extolled for their integrative potential:
 - Supportive land use ordinances
 - Public procurement



Searching for New Connections: The Role of Planning

- Spatial planning to improve production and distribution of food (NYC, Philadelphia, Leicester, Manchester, Newquay)
 - “the development of on-farm processing facilities, the provision of sub-regional food distribution systems, the production of street markets, farmers’ markets and specialist markets, the maintenance of the High Street, tackling food ‘deserts’ and a host of other food-related issues” (London, 2006)

Searching for New Connections: The Potential of Public Procurement

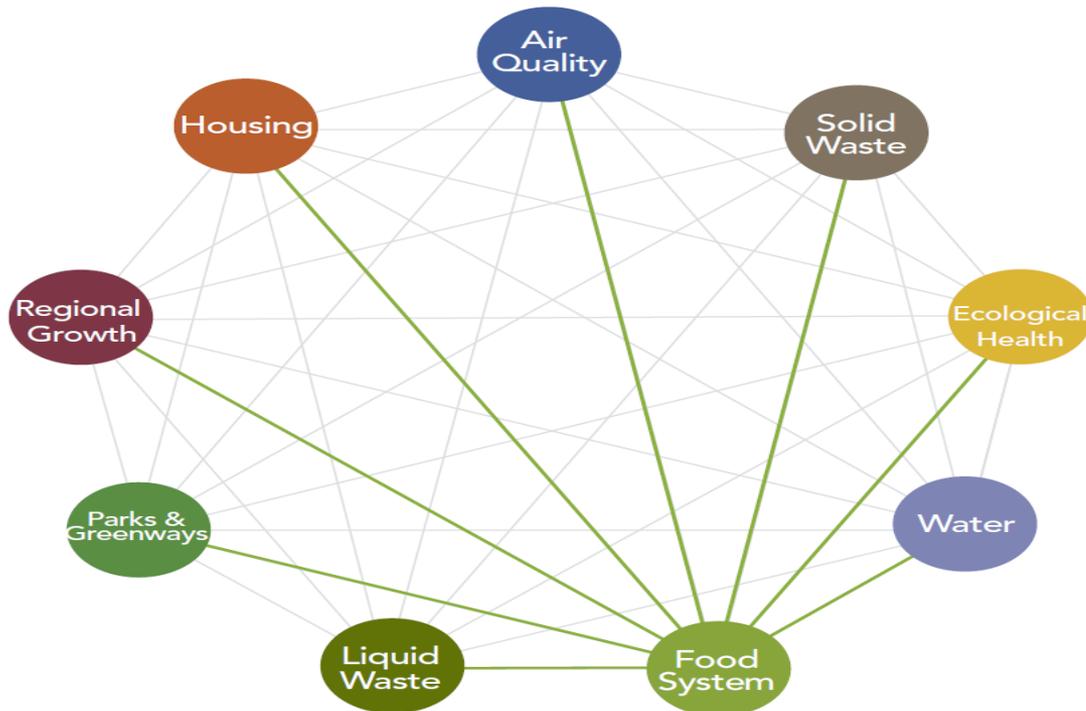
- Fostering a mutually supportive collaboration between urban and rural communities (Bristol, 2009)
- Capacity to make connections between “all food system stakeholders, ranging from the private sector to the public sector, from local food advocates to hunger relief organizations, from farmland preservation coordinators to economic development agencies” (Philadelphia, 2011)

Searching for New Connections: Infrastructural Development

- Emphasis on the role of alternative retail outlets, wholesale markets and “food hubs” (Los Angeles)
 - “transit-oriented planning of fresh food outlets” as one of the main innovations *to maximize multimodal access to fresh food by encouraging grocery stores, healthy corner stores, and outdoor markets at key transit nodes and within transit-oriented development zones* (Philadelphia, 2011)

Searching for New Connections: Policy Integration

- “Integrated, cross-sectoral approach to food policy” (Brighton and Hove, 2006) – links with Climate Action Plans, Regional Transportation Plans, Sustainability Strategies (Los Angeles, Newquay)
- Establishment of Food Policy Councils



Urban Food Strategies and the New Geography of Food Insecurity

- Literature on local food has so far failed to bring the “missing middle” into the food security debate
 - Too much emphasis on individual case studies
- Two empirical contexts for rethinking the relationship between food security and re-localization processes
 - Food exchange nodes (infrastructure)
 - Role of coordination (governance)

Urban Food Strategies: Some Conclusions

- Urban food policy discourses are bringing to the fore the vital role of physical infrastructure and policy integration
- Connectivities as both intervention sites and analytical lenses to understand and support a new agenda that fosters the multifunctional potential of food in relation to public health, community development, environmental integrity and land use