For decades, the challenges of urbanization have featured prominently in various policy agendas. The approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have reinforced the paradigm that places cities at the heart of development, following the adoption of a stand-alone goal (Goal 11) to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

The terms ‘rural-urban linkages’, ‘city-region food systems’, and ‘territorial food systems’ are often used interchangeably in international policy fora, academia, and other discussions on how rural and urban spaces relate to each other in food systems. However, the issue of what can be considered ‘uniquely rural’, and the rights of rural communities tend to be omitted. The long-held urban-rural dichotomy reinforces an inequitable development model, which puts industrial and ‘urban growth’ pressure on rural areas and on small-scale food producers to feed increasingly urban populations. The development model itself, however, is not questioned.

URA N B I A S I N T H E D E V E L O P M E N T A G E N D A

The ‘urbanization’ of the global development agenda is clear in the preparations of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to take place in Quito in October 2016, and its proposed bi-decennial policy outcome: the New Urban Agenda. Habitat III is the first global summit to take place since the adoption of the SDGs. At the time of writing, it is expected that the New Urban Agenda will recognize food and nutrition as key issues in urban development, but not food sovereignty nor the human right to adequate food and nutrition, and that there will be no coherence or cross-fertilization with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Civil society has criticized Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda for the lack of follow-up to the commitments made in Habitat II (1996), and the corresponding human rights obligations, as well as neglecting previous commitments to balanced rural and urban development.

The Habitat III process is emblematic of global policy shifts across the UN system and at the national level, as human rights have been largely dropped from policy documents and discussions. Member states and UN institutions continue to reinforce weakened language and commitments, and increasingly push responsibility onto the corporate sector via language that uses ‘inclusion’, ‘access’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘social responsibility’ in lieu of the human rights obligations of states. Even though the SDGs have weak human rights commitments, it is clear that they cannot be realized without respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights and without the full integration of civil society in decision-making processes.\(^1\)

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Special thanks to Joseph Schechla (Habitat International Coalition-Housing and Land Rights Network, HIC-HLRN) and Anne C. Bellows (University of Syracuse) for their support in reviewing this article. This article was originally written in English.

\(^2\) For more information on the SDGs, please visit: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300.

\(^3\) The New Urban Agenda Zero Draft (2016) of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) is available at: www.habitat3.org/zerodraft.


\(^5\) For a critique on the SDGs, please see article “Moving Toward People-Centered Monitoring of the Right to Food and Nutrition” in this issue of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch.
Habitat III is representative of another global trend. Many international processes often fail in the promotion of the need for balanced local development in terms of economics, planning and social development. Overall, many of the ‘urban’ centered processes that engage with space, land, ecosystems, resilience, etc., have conceptualized and elevated urban development and urbanization without meaningful consideration to rural areas, except insofar as they accommodate urban priorities. This one-sided agenda leans towards a vision of urbanization where rural areas are void of smallholders and rural communities, as they become incorporated into a mechanized, ‘transformative’, profit-seeking, and extractive approach to rural resources as faceless commodities, including food, water, energy, biodiversity and mineral resources. These discussions have been completely delinked from other important standard-setting processes, such as the negotiations of a Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas at the Human Rights Council and other relevant processes at the CFS. As outputs of international agendas continue to omit human rights obligations and issues that are fundamental to food sovereignty, it has become imperative to work at other levels. Small-scale food producers produce the majority of the world’s food; therefore strategies are needed to discuss the role and inclusion of rural communities and rural areas in development processes, while ensuring that the voice of rural communities are heard.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS NEED LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The most pressing and important change is needed at the local and territorial level. Sub-national governments should play a strong role, despite the reluctance of some national governments. Food systems in territories of all sizes include both formal and informal markets, layers of intermediary marketers, distributors and processors, as well as many small-scale producers, local processing, and agricultural and food system workers. These rural and urban food systems are poorly understood by local or regional governments that often lack the mandate, jurisdiction or technical capacity to manage them. However, there is hope: In order to address economic or environmental food system shocks and the systemic lack of access to fresh, healthy foods, a number of local governments have had to rethink how their food systems are managed—and more importantly, by whom. Across the globe, more and more local governments—city, metropolitan and regional—are paying attention to issues of food and nutrition as a result of increasing public health and nutrition pressures (communicable and non-communicable diseases), and in response to the demands of food movements.

In this context, a growing number of social movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) that have traditionally focused on rural areas, have started to look into ‘urban’ food sovereignty and the right to food and nutrition at the level of cities, regions, and territories. The role of local public policy-making is paramount in these emerging discussions. Key areas include public procurement and access to domestic markets; access to natural resources, agroecology, secure land tenure and the preservation of agricultural lands; social protection and assistance; and in general, the management of the commons. Addressing food system change and coherent policy-making involves challenges that are at once social, environmental and economic, and cross-sectoral. It is common knowledge today that the most effective solutions often require an inter-agency, inclusive approach. However, national ministries are often siloed by mandates that place agriculture into the rural (for instance, agricultural ministries) and food security into the urban (social development, health and education

6 For more information on the Declaration, please see insight box 1.2 “Peasants’ Rights to their Seeds are at the Forefront of Human Rights” in this issue of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. For more information on the draft Declaration, please visit: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RuralAreas/Pages/3rdSession.aspx. See also a series of briefings on peasants rights published by FIAN International: www.fian.org/library/publication/publication_of_a_series_of_briefings_on_peasants_rights.


ministries). International agencies are similarly divided into rural and urban mandates. But this false dichotomy may be changing, as mayors and civil society actors are today prioritizing food policies and operationalizing urban-rural linkages. A few countries are also responding with policies that support greater territorial autonomy and self-governance.

**URBAN FOOD POLICY PACT**

Despite the links to communities and potential for participatory governance evolving at the local level, local and territorial governments are often excluded from international policy-making, thus undermining the importance of their authority. Examples include the lack of inclusive engagement with local authorities in the reviews of progress on the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and in the governance of food systems at the CFS. An emerging strategy within many CSOs is to work directly with global associations of local and territorial governments such as United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) as well as national associations of local governments, to engage in dialogue about policy alternatives and, in some cases, design policy commitments.

Signed in October 2015, the Urban Food Policy Pact (Milan Pact) is a mayor-led initiative that seeks to create a stronger governance framework for local food systems. The Milan Pact represents a process that reaffirms the role and responsibilities of local governments to take action and fulfill their mandates to respect, protect and fulfill human rights. It promotes participatory decision-making directly with civil society and small-scale food producers, covering thematic areas such as governance, social and economic equity, sustainable diets and nutrition, food production, supply and distribution, and food loss and waste. These commitments represent a critical step forward in understanding the role of local governments in upholding and operationalizing human rights obligations across territories.

While it is far from perfect, many of the 120 cities that signed the document are moving forward in creating participatory spaces of governance and dialogue with communities in creating food policy, while others are engaging in specific areas of intervention (e.g. food loss and waste reduction, public space for food production, public procurement, etc.). In discussions on how to monitor the impact of the Milan Pact, CSOs are asking how to best operationalize these commitments.

There is much excitement around the renewed discussions on urbanization and food systems, and many cities are now eager to move forward with the Milan Pact. On the one hand, it is seen as an opportunity to take advantage of the political uptake and push for changes that support the realization of human rights and food sovereignty. On the other hand, these changes need to be upheld beyond a political term. Furthermore, governments should coordinate initiatives with civil society in order to address the needs of both rural and urban communities. The Milan Pact is not the final solution: It is a tool for building political will, supporting local processes and inclusive decision-making—as well as opening up new spaces for advocacy.

In order to promote meaningful change in food policy at any level, civil society participation is fundamental. The extent to which human rights are operationalized at the local level is directly related to state accountability, government effectiveness and governance at the local level. This was highlighted in a report issued in August 2015 by the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and entitled Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

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9 For more information on the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), please visit: www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf.
10 For more information on United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), please visit: www.uclg.org.
11 For more information on Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), please visit: www.iclei.org.
Any new policy calling for integrated territorial development must be accompanied by implementation guidance, inclusive planning across urban and rural sectors and governments, and institutional capacity-building on operationalizing international human rights and accountability. Clear policy mechanisms should better support small-scale food producers and the local economy.

Following Goal 11 of the SDGs, discourse around the New Urban Agenda will be most likely be framed by inclusive, balanced and integrated territorial development, in accordance with the call for national urban policies, spatial strategies, environmental protection, climate change, governance and financing. However, it remains to be seen whether food systems and small-scale food producers will receive the focused treatment needed to have meaningful ‘territorial development’. Thus far, policy discussions within Habitat III and other fora have been mainly dominated by governmental and technical approaches, with heavy involvement and input of the private sector. Civil society perspectives have been less well addressed or integrated. The current narrative also remains too restricted to limited conceptions of urban space and insufficiently addresses the important linkages and interactions within territories, including rural and peri-urban areas. As a result, policy discourses have sometimes perpetuated false solutions to issues of food security, territorial planning or urban-rural linkages, environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resource governance. While urban and territorial approaches to food systems are certainly relevant and important, the discourse needs to be formed by the initiatives of social movements and small-scale food producers and thus create a space to better define and mobilize territorial food systems, economies, and real development.

Whatever happens, or does not happen, within the Habitat III process, the CFS, and even the ongoing follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is critical that civil society and grassroots organizations continue to push their expectations in terms of process and outcome at all levels of government. To achieve the needed policy changes it is key to continue to work across sectors to build stronger food system advocacy based on the full and progressive realization of human rights obligations and food sovereignty, and to ensure accountability to human rights obligations and actually follow-up (implement, monitor and evaluate) the policy commitments in all government spheres, including the local.

INSIGHT 4.1  "Peoples’ Markets or Corporate Supply Systems? Negotiating in the Committee on World Food Security"

Mamadou Goita, Nora McKeon and Nadjirou Sall

‘Connecting Smallholders to Markets’ is the unfortunate title of an important policy discussion in the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS).16 It reflects the dominant conviction that small-scale producers are backward people trapped in self-subsistence who need to be ‘modernized’ and hitched up to corporate value chains. Nothing could be further from the truth. Around 70% of the food consumed in the world is produced by smallholder producers and workers. Most of it is channeled through local, national and regional markets. Only 10 to 12% of agricultural products

15 Mamadou Goita is Executive Director of the Institute for Research and the Promotion of Alternatives in Development (IRPAD) in Mali.
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Nadjirou Sall is Secretary General of the West African Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers’ Organizations (ROPPA) and President of the National Council for Dialogue and Cooperation of Rural People in Senegal (CNCR).

16 The debate began with a High Level Forum on June 25, 2015 on the overall issue and concluded on June 9, 2016 after two days of negotiations on policy recommendations. The outcome document will be adopted during the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Plenary Session from October 17–21, 2016. For more information on these negotiations and all of the documents cited in this article, please visit: www.cfs-fao.org/ working-groups/connecting-smallholder-markets.
is traded on the international market (9% of milk production, 9.8% of meat production, 8.9% of rice, and 12.5% of cereals). The idea of ‘connecting smallholders to markets’ is misleading: globally more than 80% of smallholders operate in domestic markets, which are the most important for food security and nutrition. As advocated by the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), the autonomous space mandated to facilitate and coordinate civil society and social movement interaction with the CFS, “[w]e want these markets to be recognized, supported and defended by appropriate public policies.”

There is a rich variety of domestic marketing arrangements that do not obey the logic of dominant corporate value chains—including indigenous barter markets in Latin America, weekly markets in Africa and Asia, and farmers’ markets in Europe and North America. However, little has been done thus far to collect and capitalize on this experience. The CFS discussions are offering a welcome opportunity to start doing so. The severe lack of data on these markets and how they function makes them ‘invisible’ to policy makers, who privilege support for ‘modern’ supply systems. The CSM has started to fill this data gap with an 18-page annotated bibliography of case studies and articles. The CSM has also clarified just what distinguishes these markets from corporate value chains and international supply systems:

- They aim at satisfying the needs of the local, national, regional food systems first;
- In addition to food provision, they also perform multiple cultural and social functions and act as an arena in which political and cultural power relations can be addressed;
- They are controlled by the producers, consumers and local authorities of the territory concerned and are structured according to a logic of interdependence and solidarity among the actors;
- They contribute to the local economy by redistributing, within the territory concerned, the wealth generated by the production, processing and marketing of products;
- They are inclusive, since they offer space for all actors to exchange their products; and
- The diversity of food products in these markets—in contrast with the focus on single products in international commodity chains—reflects the diversity of the food systems of the territory.

The CSM had proposed to call them ‘territorial markets’ because they are all situated in and identified with specific areas, from the village up to the national or even regional level. The point was to avoid the trap of limiting the understanding of these markets to the purely ‘local’ and ‘informal’, and thus downplaying their significance as the dominant modality of food provision worldwide. The term, however, evoked skittish reactions on the part of diplomats accustomed to associate it with sovereignty and frontiers, so the CSM dropped it in favor of agreement on the content. The final negotiated text incorporates practically all of the points to which the small-scale producer organizations themselves attached importance:

Local, national, and regional markets and food systems: Globally more than 80% of smallholders operate in local and domestic food markets. These highly diverse markets, in which most of the food consumed in the world transits, can range from

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19 For more information on the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS), please visit: www.csm4cfs.org.
Keeping Seeds in Peoples’ Hands

INSIGHT 4.2 From the Bottom Up: Building the Detroit Food Policy Council

Malik Yakini

Detroit is a city with a history steeped in the struggle for human rights and racial equality, with the highest percentage—83%—of Black residents in any American city, and emblematic of the inequalities perpetuated through the capitalist system. Presently it is also a city struggling with bankruptcy—a result of unsustainable and unequal economic and social policies at the federal state level. Public funds are very thin, as there is no strong tax base in Detroit with nearly 40% of households living with income below the poverty level. Amounting to over 10%, Detroit’s unemployment rate is not only twice as much as the average in Michigan state, but also the highest in the top 50 largest cities in the United States.

This history and current situation has deeply influenced the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN). It was founded in 2006 to ensure that Detroit’s African American population played a leadership role in the burgeoning food justice movement. This network, dedicated to building community power and self-reliance, set its focus on urban agriculture, youth development, cooperative economics, community education and creating a more conducive policy environment.

DBCFSN affirms that regardless of a person’s economic standing, access to quality foods is a human right. That position was informed by an understanding of the importance of local to transboundary to regional and may be located in rural, peri-urban or urban contexts or span these contexts, and are directly linked to local, national, and/or regional food systems. This means that the food concerned is produced, processed, and traded within these systems. These value adding processes can help to create employment and contribute to local, social and economic development, when the benefits of value addition circulate within the local, national and regional systems. They can take place in structured arrangements or in more ad-hoc or informal ways, which provide greater flexibility for smallholders and fewer barriers to entry. They perform multiple functions beyond commodity exchange, acting as a space for social interaction and exchange of knowledge. Despite their importance, these markets are often overlooked in data collection systems, which impacts negatively on the evidence base for informing public policies.

Civil society registered some important ‘wins’ in the negotiated policy recommendations as well. These include invitations to governments to fill the data gap on these markets to improve the tools available for better public policies; develop hygienic and sanitary regulations for food safety that are appropriate to the scale and context of small-scale production and domestic marketing; promote public procurement in support of local food systems taking into account social, environmental, and nutritional benefits and not just the economic cost of the food; and provide for prices that adequately remunerate smallholders’ work and investments. Mention of ‘fortified foods’ was deleted from the draft text. However, the CSM did not succeed in eliminating reference to international markets, value chains and agribusiness on the grounds that these phenomena were irrelevant in a negotiation focused on smallholders and the human right to adequate food and nutrition. A schizophrenic vision of what is best for small-scale producers and food security and nutrition continues to prevail and civil society will continue to fight it on stronger grounds, thanks to the CFS negotiations.
how racism intersecting with class in the United States results in food insecurity and food injustice in many African American communities. The network also affirms that African American communities have the right to self-determination. We have the right and responsibility to govern ourselves and determine our own destinies. In areas where we are the majority, we should exert influence on, and when possible control, the politics and the governmental apparatus.

After criticizing the city of Detroit for the lack of a comprehensive food policy, in 2006 DBCFSN was appointed by the city council to create a task force to develop a food security policy for the city. For the following 18 months a committee of DBCFSN members worked to develop this policy, soliciting public input, particularly from Detroit’s food justice movement. That input was incorporated into a final draft that was presented to the city council and passed unanimously in March of 2008. The policy addresses current access to quality food in Detroit; hunger and malnutrition; impacts of an inadequate diet; citizen education; economic injustice in the food system; urban agriculture; the role of schools and other public institutions; and emergency response.

Perhaps, most importantly, the policy document called for the creation of the Detroit Food Policy Council (DFPC), which would be responsible for helping to implement the recommendations in the policy document and advising the mayor’s office and the city council on food related matters. After 18 months of research, consultations, and appointing members, the DFPC held its first meeting in December 2009.

Throughout the process of developing the city of Detroit’s Food Security Policy and the DFPC, we were acutely aware that we were creating a model of community level democracy. The DFPC has received widespread attention because, unlike many other U.S. food policy councils, it was founded from the grassroots rather than by academics or government officials. It has received praise because of its intentionality in designating six seats out of 21 for grassroots community residents.

Since 2009 the DFPC has grown, evolved and continued working for a more food-secure, food-just Detroit, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints in a unique experiment in community-level participatory democracy. It has continued to raise the consciousness of Detroiters about the role of food equity as the city redevelops. In these regards, the DFPC has been a success.

The DFPC has also had many challenges and has not, as originally envisioned, served as an advisory body to the mayor’s office or the city council in any significant way. The city’s current mayor and most of its city council members have little knowledge of the city’s Food Security Policy or the role of the DFPC. The last several years have been some of the toughest in Detroit’s history, including 18 months during which a state-appointed emergency manager ran the city, disempowering the mayor and city council, and filed for bankruptcy. Detroit’s elected and appointed officials have been faced with almost insurmountable odds.

Now that the powers have been restored to Detroit’s mayor and city council, and the city is emerging from bankruptcy, the conditions may again be ripe for the DFPC to exert more influence on Detroit’s political leadership and achieve real impact on the realization of peoples’ rights and sovereignty.

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28 For more information, please visit: www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net.

29 Among the many things that the DBCFSN has accomplished are the following: it obtained grant funding; established offices and hired staff; published two Detroit Food System Reports; published weekly columns in the Michigan Citizen newspaper; sponsored annual Detroit food summits; conducted a public listening session on the city’s process for selling public land; co-sponsored community listening sessions on the Detroit Urban Agricultural Ordinance.