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URBAN FOOD
GOVERNANCE
PERSPECTIVES IN
CHANGING AFRICAN
AND SOUTHERN CITIES

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Abstract

The key urban food governance question in African and other Southern cities is understanding the role that appropriate infrastructures could play in delivering positive outcomes in the urban food system. This discussion paper looks at urban food governance needs in African cities and reflects on the governance actions required in order to respond to wider food system changes and challenges. It argues that food in the African city is a public good and discusses the role that a state (and city government) should play in enabling access. The paper finds that the normalization of food poverty, the absence of agency, the limited political weight of urban areas, and resource constraints, mean that citizens are unlikely to mobilize to contest food poverty and insecurity, and this absence of civic action means that the state is unlikely to see urban food issues as political, requiring a proactive city or state level response. Shifting the focus from food projects to seeing food as a lens to understand the role that infrastructure plays in food system outcomes opens up new areas for urban governance in planning, health, retail and other areas where city governance actors have a direct mandate.

Keywords

urban food system governance, Global South, food security

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Introduction

As a concept and practice, urban food system governance encompasses multiple framings of both the food system and governance (Smit 2016). In some instances, it entails proactive steps to obtain a particular outcome from the urban food system: the exclusion of fast food outlets or urban agriculture policy, for example. In others, the aim of governance processes is to restructure or reclaim the food system through local food systems, alternative food retail (such as farmers markets), and preferential procurement. In yet other cases, urban food system governance is about city-level governance actors taking back control of the urban food system and enacting pro-poor policies that see food as a public good and are implemented to enhance food system outcomes. Other types of urban governance approaches include urban food policy programmes (Hatfield 2012), urban food strategies (Moragues et al 2013), food policy entrepreneurship (MacRae and Donahue 2013), and food policy councils (Brouillette 2012).

The question of how cities can engage in and act on their food systems needs to consider wider ecological systems, the agricultural production system, food value chains, and non-governmental actors working through or via the city. As the preamble to a recent book on the role of civil society and social movements in urban governance states “as global food systems face multiple threats and challenges there is an opportunity for [urban] social movements and civil society to play a more active role in building social justice and ecological sustainability” (Andrée et al 2019: i). Cities are one of the entry points to challenge wider food system related issues and concerns.

There has been a marked increase in urban food governance studies in recent years including a focus on urban-rural linkages (Vorley and Lançon 2016), the city region food system (CRFS) (Blay-Palmer et al 2015), the supermarketization process (Reardon et al 2003), the nutrition transition (Drewnowski and Popkin 1997, Popkin and Slining 2013), and the absence of urban food issues within the Sustainable

Development Goals (Battersby 2017, Fukuda-Parr and Orr 2014). Most urban food system governance interventions have emerged in the Global North. MacRae and Donahue (2013), for example, describe the pace and spread of these structures across Canada, and provide useful insights into the different types of urban food governance arrangements. Central to many of these structures, both in Canada, but also the United States (Harper et al 2009) and Europe (Morgan and Sonnino 2010) has been a form of governance with different scales of cooperation between government and non-governmental groups.

The governance approach applied in most urban food system governance structures in the North is broadly described as pluralistic (Koc and Bas 2012). While the weighting between total state control and complete civil society control may vary (MacRae and Donahue 2013), pluralistic urban food governance seeks to engage across the state and non-state spectrum. This pluralistic, state/society governance model has served these nascent urban food governance structures well. It has enabled engagement with the private sector, brought food system and other governance actors and different skills together, and enabled new ways of acting in a governance and policy space. Others have stressed the merits and challenges associated with these types of structures (Harper et al 2009). They have been seen as essential vehicles to democratize the food system (Winne 2009) and as a vehicle to liberate urban consumers from increasingly globalized food systems (McMichael 2005).

There is a danger that “Northern” views and arguments about urban food governance are uncritically inserted, or worse, imposed (and adopted) in cities and regions in the Global South. The city-region food system (CRFS) approach is a case in point. One of the most prominent representations of the connections between food and cities is embedded in the New Urban Agenda (NUA) of Habitat III (UN-Habitat 2017). Within the NUA, food is seen as part of the city but the framing is largely embedded in a problematic city region food system discourse (Battersby and Watson 2019b). As a form of territorial planning, CRFS thinking emerged

in the 1990s (Rondinelli 1990), and is liable to the same criticisms and shortfalls associated with territorial planning (Battersby and Watson 2019b, Painter 2010, Scott and Storper 2003). The problems with the CRFS approach have been largely disregarded in current global governance arrangements such as the New Urban Agenda.

CRFS has recently been advocated as a relevant governance approach in a number of Southern cities. Pilot sites applying components of the CRFS approach include Lusaka and Kitwe in Zambia, Dakar in Senegal, Colombo in Sri Lanka, Medellin in Colombia and Quito in Ecuador (Blay-Palmer et al 2018, FAO et al 2018). However, these case studies have simply sought to understand components of the food system in these cities, with a predominant focus on mapping the city region food system and sustainable food production considerations. The actual governance of food system processes across the city regions and the intersections between governance and wider city operations and functions are less considered. Given the vastly different context and scales of development between Northern cities and those in the South, questions need to be asked about the transferability of such pluralistic urban food system concepts and urban food governance processes. Are these modes of urban food governance what are actually needed at this time in Southern cities?

This discussion paper questions urban food governance needs in African cities and reflects on the governance actions required in order to respond to wider food system changes, challenges, and observable negative outcomes. It begins with a short review of pluralistic food system governance (Koc and Bas 2012) and then discusses how these models are assumed to have relevance to African cities (and Southern cities more broadly). The paper then presents a short reflection on why pluralistic urban food governance processes may not gain traction in the South. This leads to the question of where African cities can and perhaps should engage the food system. Evidence from urban food system surveys, carried out across Southern Africa, is used to pose specific urban food governance questions. A different approach to African (and Southern) urban

food system governance is proposed. Here infrastructure deficits and factors external to the food system provide insights into the challenges faced by urban residents in their attempts to access affordable, safe, and nutritious food. The paper argues that food in the African city is a public good. If food is indeed a public good, then what role should a state (and city government) in the current stages of development play in enabling access to this good? The paper concludes by arguing that the normalization of food poverty, the absence of agency, the limited political weight of urban areas, and resource constraints, mean that citizens are unlikely to mobilize to contest food poverty and insecurity, and this absence of civic action means that the state is unlikely to see urban food issues as political, requiring a proactive city or state level response.

Food System Governance Processes

In cities in the Global North, pluralistic governance is often associated with the emergence of processes such as food policy councils (FPCs). In part, these are a reaction to the absence of food-focussed governance initiatives driven by city governments (Emanuel 2013). FPCs seek greater levels of inclusivity and ways to counter inequalities within the food system (Harper et al 2009). As Andree et al (2019: 1) suggest, “the past two decades have seen an uprising of movements that challenge industrial food systems by experimenting with a variety of alternative ways of producing, harvesting, foraging, processing, distributing, consuming, and, ultimately, governing food. These movements seek to reinforce, build on, and scale-up innovative, place-based initiatives.” Despite the pluralistic nature of such interventions, there is a distinct politics involved. FPCs involve gathering local collaborative knowledge and experience from multiple stakeholders in order to assert change on the structures and functioning of the urban food system (Schiff and Levkoe 2014). More generally, FPCs adopt collaborative governance approaches, meaning that they often work alongside or in partnership with

other actors such as governments and/or the private sector as “co-producers of governance outcomes” (Andrée et al 2019: 3).

The types, scale, and focus of local food system governance processes differ considerably (Haysom 2015, MacRae and Donahue 2013). In a review of over 170 local food governance groups in the USA, Haysom (2015) identified 12 core areas of focus, while the dominance of a particular focus varied across governance scales. Actions at the urban scale dominated these governance structures. Some local food governance structures are established in order to influence government policy, while others seek to influence food system actors and processes such as industry policies and practices. In a comparison between various food governance structures in Canada and the US, Haysom (2015) noted that collaboration with the state is a dominant trend in Canada while more oppositional and contested governance approaches were evident in the US.

Some have suggested that localized food governance processes are transferable to Southern contexts (Haysom, 2015). However, recent evidence from African urban food system studies suggest that this is a flawed assumption. Four main factors constrain the emergence of these governance processes in African cities. Firstly, the objective of many Northern food policy councils (and other local food governance structures) is to facilitate change in the urban food system. This is a far cry from the needs of poor urban residents in African cities. For the urban poor, the urban food “question” is about how to access food in an often unaffordable food system (Crush and Frayne 2010, Frayne et al 2010).

Second, Northern food system governance is linked to the agency and voice of the various stakeholders. The ability to actively engage in democratic governance processes is often absent in African cities. Colonial histories, post-independence self-sufficiency programmes, structural adjustment, and neoliberal economic policies have resulted in the normalization of food poverty. Eating is more about access to key staples than the nutritional benefits of food and diversifying local diets. The normalization of food poverty (and poor diets) perhaps explains

the absence of protests and civic actions, including “food riots”, in many cities, despite high levels of food insecurity (Battersby and Watson 2019a, Crush 2016, Frayne et al 2010).

Third, food system issues are generally not the direct mandate of local governments but the domain of national governments. The result is that cities have no fiscal resources to engage these issues even if there is a desire to do so. When cities do engage in urban food questions, the mandate is often narrowly construed as support for urban agriculture programmes (Crush and Riley 2019: 52) or welfare support - the traditional twin track approach of increasing production and, when access is constrained, social protection (Crush and Frayne 2010: 9). The absence of a direct food mandate, coupled with the lack of civic challenge directed at local government inaction, further limits food system responses from government.

Finally, international development agencies and NGOs remain focused on production and are deeply embedded in a “produce more” approach to food security rather than enabling greater and more equitable food access, enhanced utilization and price and supply stability (Lang and Barling 2012) which re-affirms the national government scale of action.

There is one example of a Southern city successfully adopting a food system mandate: Belo Horizonte in Brazil (Gerster-Bentaya et al 2011, Göpel, 2009, Rocha and Lessa 2009). However, a central consideration in Belo Horizonte was an emphasis on localizing a national mandate pertaining to the realization of the right to food and wider programmatic activities linked to the country’s Zero Hunger (Fome Zero) strategy (Rocha and Lessa 2009). Food is therefore seen as a tool to enable development, and to ensure health and well-being. By viewing food as an essential public good, the city has a direct obligation to respond to the identified need. The actual programmes implemented in Belo Horizonte are diverse, but the primary focus is on improving food access (Rocha and Lessa, 2009). A central feature of the Belo Horizonte strategy was the systemic approach to food governance,

connecting food programmes to wider urban activities and processes.

Urban Food Governance and Planning

Aligning themselves with the establishment of contextualized local food governance structures, some planning researchers have started to consider the intersection between the urban food system and urban planning, and the role that planners play (or do not play) in the urban food system (Morgan and Sonnino 2010, Morgan 2009, Pothukuchi 2000, Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999, Sonnino 2009). Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design (FSPUD) offers further evidence of these emerging links (Donovan et al 2011)

The role of planning as an area of key importance in urban food systems governance has generally been absent from urban food discussions. However, planning plays a far greater role in the functions of an urban food system than is commonly assumed. As Pothukuchi (2000, quoted in Roberts 2001: 3) argues, “inaction in the food planning environment does not have neutral consequences, but often generates negative outcomes.” In the Canadian context, this view is reinforced by Roberts (2001: 7) who notes:

More than with any other of our biological needs, the choices we make about food affect the shape, style, pulse, smell, look, feel, health, economy, street life and infrastructure of our city ... One way or another, these choices account for about 20% of all retail sales, 20% of all service jobs, ten percent of industrial jobs, 20% of all car trips, 20% of chronic diseases, 25% of fossil fuel energy and air pollution, 40% of all garbage, 80% of sewage ... the list goes on. Given the overarching importance of food in urban life, planners need to put food closer to the top of their planning menu.

These perspectives highlight the intersection of food access and the planning and operation of the city. The high levels of food insecurity in many

African cities (Battersby and Watson 2019a, Frayne et al 2010) are a direct result of a disconnect between planning and food system functioning. The links between food system functioning (largely seen as a market responsibility in African, and Southern, cities), and city or state-led planning, are seldom considered by both urban governance actors, and development agencies supporting African governments. For example, recent EU funding calls targeting key development challenges call for agriculture and rural development interventions but the urban is absent from these calls, as is urban food security (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/find-calls-funding-topic_en). Similarly, most international donor calls do not include urban food security as a key focus. The urban food security and urban food system research that has been conducted in recent years has instead used food as a lens to engage the broader funded topics of urban poverty or inclusive growth. Food is not viewed in the same way as other essential urban services, such as access to housing, water and energy.

Food as a Public Good

Viewing food as a public good invokes notions of a duty of care and state-centred obligations that require action from key state actors, coupled with processes to be embedded in policy and governance. These processes and actions supposedly enable the progressive realization of the right to food. In this paper a more theoretical approach is suggested, drawing on the concept of the foundational economy (Froud et al 2018). The notion of the foundational economy helps deepen debate on the roles of the state in enabling access to essential public goods such as food. While the foundational economy perspective has Northern roots, it offers a useful entry point for discussion on urban food governance in Southern cities.

The foundational economy has been described as the “mundane goods and services necessary to everyday life: pipe and cable utilities, transport networks, supermarket retail and food processing,

community-based health, education and welfare” (Leaver and Williams 2014: 220). Much of the existing work on the foundational economy focuses on the points of production. However, in the urban context, Hall and Schafran (2017) suggest that the focus needs to shift to the point of consumption. This focus on consumption of so-called “mundane goods” (i.e. goods that are essential to life, but whose production is beyond the scope of the individual or household) is linked to the notion of public goods. As Hall and Schafran (2017: 7) argue “if we prioritize consumption of these life-sustaining systems that most people cannot self-provision, it forces us to rethink some of the important tenets of alternative economic thinking.” They stress further that “a foundational urban systems approach does not develop an a priori idea of a particular politics or scale and apply it to all systems. It starts with the necessary system itself and develops a bespoke political economy and scalar strategy for each system in a geo-historically specific way” (Hall and Schafran 2017: 7).

Food, and the systems that deliver it, are an essential service, much like water, energy, health provision, and education. Infrastructure is a key determinant in the quality of access to these essential services. While they can all be privatized and subject to competition and market forces, the high levels of inequality and poverty in most African cities mean that most urban residents, and particularly the poor, will always only have partial access to the food system if the “market” is the intended vehicle to facilitate access. From a governance perspective, what systems – philosophies even – are required if everyone is to have a right to these services, and what does this mean for city governments? Pieterse et al (2018) suggest that the infrastructure developed in African cities in the next 20 years will define Africa’s future for the next 100 years. This raises important questions about governance and access to public goods. Froud et al. (2018: i) describe “the reciprocal relationship of the individual and society and the importance of public works, including the sustaining of urban infrastructure” and how cities have always been the sites of experimentation for different forms of governance. Are African, and Southern, cities potential sites of new forms of

governance? Right now, certainly not. However, the extremely high levels of food insecurity do raise serious governance questions about the efficacy of current economic models based on a “presupposition in favour of competition and markets through structural reform which aims to make labour markets more flexible and introduces large scale privatization and outsourcing. In all of this, foundational services and the infrastructures that enables them to be provided are subordinate” (Froud et al 2018: 2)

Given the high levels of food insecurity in African cities, what can the central or local state do to reduce the unequal outcomes of a market that is not enabling access to an essential “mundane goods”? A different view of governance is certainly required. While pluralistic governance approaches may have some relevance, they are inappropriate for African cities, specifically given the absence of agency and urgent need to wider systemic food system interventions. The city and wider state both need to embrace the wider governance remit of food as a public good. The centrality of mundane goods in urban management, particularly when access to such goods is increasingly unequal, confirms the need to focus on issues of consumption rather than production.

Linking Food System Outcomes to Food Security

This section of the paper draws on data from recent research carried out by the Hungry Cities Partnership (HCP) in three African cities: Cape Town, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; and Maputo, Mozambique. In addition, findings from another recent African urban survey, the Consuming Urban Poverty (CUP) project (Battersby and Watson, 2019a), are used to reflect on the food retail component of the urban food system. The HCP research uses the food insecurity metrics developed by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) project (Coates 2007, Coates et al 2013, Swindale and Bilinsky 2006), including the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence Scale (HFIAP) and the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS).

Multi-dimensional poverty (MDP) status is measured using the Lived Poverty Index (Dulani et al 2013, Mattes 2008).

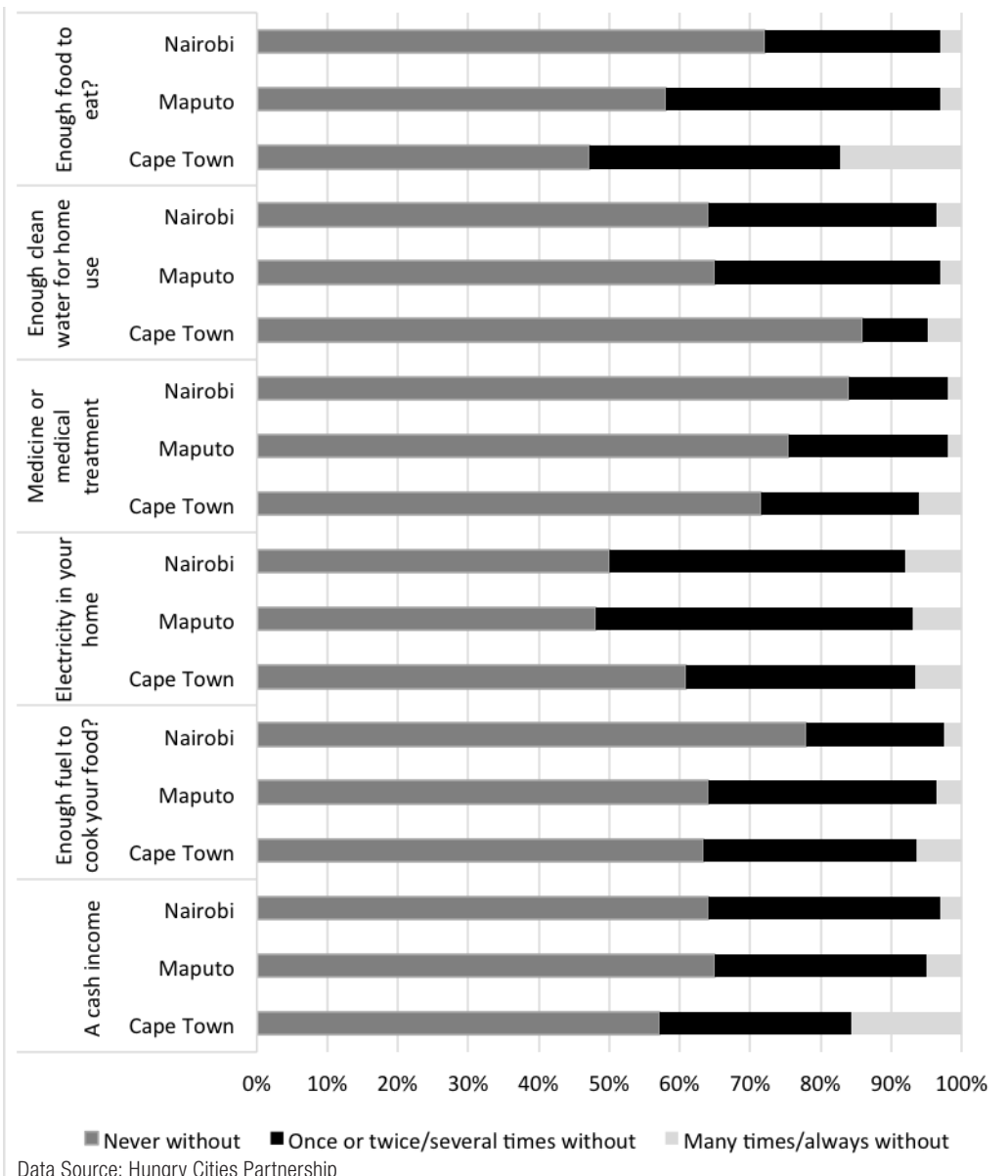
Household Food Insecurity

Until recently, household food insecurity was seen as a predominantly rural phenomenon, with mild (or lower) levels of food insecurity being experienced in urban areas. Following the 2008 African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) research this view began to shift. AFSUN investigated the state of food insecurity in poor areas of eleven African cities and found that 80% of the households

were food insecure (Frayne et al 2010). The recent HCP survey focuses on the city as a whole. Just under half of Cape Town’s respondents were either severely or moderately food insecure (Crush et al 2018). Some 60% of Maputo respondents and 58% of Nairobi residents were also severely or moderately food insecure (Owuor 2018, Raimundo et al 2018). These high levels of food insecurity point to deep systemic challenges in the food provisioning systems of these cities.

The LPI provides insights into income poverty and other drivers of poverty that have a direct impact on food security. Figure 1 presents the results

FIGURE 1: Lived Poverty Index Results



from the LPI analysis for the three HCP cities (Cape Town, Maputo and Nairobi). Across the three cities, between 35% and 48% of households reported constrained access to income. Over a third of respondents in Maputo and Nairobi reported constrained access to water, essential in providing safe and nutritious food. Perhaps the most serious aspect of multi-dimensional poverty across all the cities was limited access to electricity, at an average of 47%. Electricity is vital in food preparation and preservation since, without it, refrigeration is absent, which affects how households orientate their food purchasing behaviour. For example, processed foods and foods that have been reworked to ensure longer life (such as dried fish or vegetables) would be preferable, both of which increase food costs. Without access to refrigeration, the benefits of bulk discounts, food safety, and food variety are not accrued. In the wider food system, if traders and neighbourhood retailers do not have access to electricity, their stocking practices and supply cycles are impacted.

Insufficient access to fuel to cook food (over and above electricity) affected over a third of households in Cape Town and Maputo. Nairobi fared slightly better with 22% reporting constrained access. Constrained access to medicine or medical treatment averaged just under a quarter (23%) of respondents in all three cities.

High levels of food insecurity are often accompanied by very low levels of dietary diversity, as households rely on a limited number of key staples. In all three HCP cities, for example, the average Household Dietary Diversity Score was below five food groups, where a score of six or less is seen a proxy indicator of under-nutrition. Calls for nutrition education, part of the more conventional nutrition intervention responses (Oldewage-Theron et al 2006), disregard the wider food system (see Hunter Adams et al. 2019). These dietary challenges are about far more than bad food choices.

Connecting Food Access to Urban Infrastructure

Consuming Urban Poverty research has shown how key governance actors see the link between urban food access and infrastructure in terms of supermarkets and malls (Battersby and Watson 2019a, Teppo and Houssay-Holzschuch, 2013). This formal market focus dominates planning and policy positions. Food system perspectives considering the needs of poor households are absent. The urban poor rely heavily on the informal food retail environment and approved, as well as unapproved, municipal market spaces. This reality is ignored by most policy-makers (Battersby and Muwowo 2019, Battersby and Watson 2019a, Hayombe et al 2019), leading to draconian responses, often seeking to erase these economic actors from the urban food system (Skinner and Haysom 2016, Skinner and Rogan 2019).

The lack of access to robust and basic infrastructure means that food choices are determined by what the infrastructure can service. Given the rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and current debates on its relationship to food system challenges (Thow et al 2018), there are real concerns about the state's capacity, both in terms of facilities and resources, to respond to the increasing health-related challenges. The solution is not as simple as suggesting that improving infrastructure would improve food security outcomes. However, it does play an essential role in the food security outcomes. Infrastructure limitations determine both the type of food sold and the strategies adopted by food retailers in their stocking practices (which includes all food retailers, from street vendors to market operators, to wholesalers, to supermarkets). In all of the HCP and CUP studies, there is a clear trend in how and where food is accessed. In wealthier households, most food is accessed via supermarkets on a weekly or monthly basis (Battersby and Watson 2019a, Crush et al 2018, Raimudo et al 2018, Opiyo et al 2019, Tawodzera and Chigumira 2019). Supermarkets are only accessed by the poor to purchase staples in bulk on a monthly basis (Crush et al 2018). The informal food retail sector

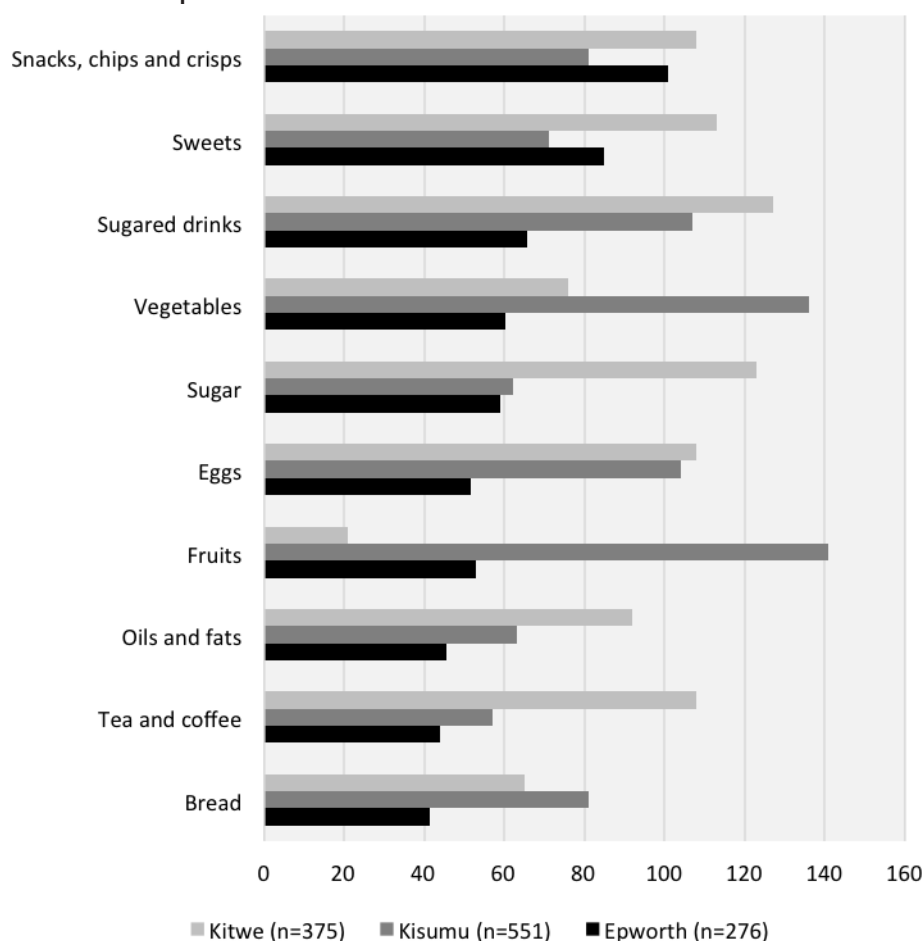
was the primary source of their food. Food from the informal sector and small neighbourhood shops is purchased by most households at least five times per week (Crush et al 2018). The informal food retail sector is effectively being used as the ‘pantry’ of the poor, and the street has become the kitchen.

The formal food sector, and more specifically the manner in which the large, consolidated and vertically integrated food industry, referred to as big food, by Monteiro and Cannon (2012), capitalizes on these infrastructure limitations through a product offering that is highly processed but has a long shelf life. The role that the proliferation of these foods plays in changing diets in poorer areas of cities needs to be better understood. However, diets are changing rapidly, particularly in areas where access to infrastructure is limited. Figure 2 shows the 10 key foodstuffs sold by vendors in the three CUP

cities of Kisumu, Kenya; Epworth, Zimbabwe; and Kitwe, Zambia. The preference for sugared drinks, non-perishable snacks such as biscuits and crisps, and processed and refined foods is clearly evident.

Foods that are considered healthier, specifically fruits and vegetables, are more expensive and their cost increases faster than for other foods. The main business cost, other than stock purchase, is transportation. High transport costs are directly linked to the need to frequently restock, largely as a result of poor infrastructure. Furthermore, spending on waste removal and security (despite their paying a licence fee or permit to authorities), highlights the limited services being provided by cities to retailers. The vendors build these additional costs into the price of food sold, which has a direct bearing on the food security outcomes of poor urban residents.

FIGURE 2: Top Food Items Stocked in CUP Cities



Data: Consuming Urban Poverty Project

Conclusion

Urban food governance in Africa, and the Global South more generally, needs to reflect on what actions are required to respond to wider food system changes, challenges, and negative outcomes. Northern-style pluralistic urban food governance structures are inappropriate and would not result in the necessary change in urban food system outcomes. In Africa, particular attention needs to be given to the relationship between cities and the food system. The key urban food governance question in African cities is better understanding the role that appropriate infrastructures could play in delivering positive urban food system outcomes.

The emergence of pluralistic governance structures in the North has been driven in part by the absence of city-driven food-focussed governance initiatives (Emanuel 2013). Locally or contextually focussed urban food governance structures, in which pluralistic governance predominates, seek to enact greater levels of inclusivity and ways to counter inequalities within the food system (Harper et al 2009). The mode of operating in these pluralistic structures sees actors working from both outside and inside the system, some as critics (Blay-Palmer et al 2016) and others in more collaborative ways (MacRae and Donahue 2013). However, the spaces for engagement and pluralistic food governance in Northern cities have emerged out of a specific set of processes and conditions. As Shurman and Munroe (2009: 158) suggest, “when environmental conditions are favourable, movements are better able to mobilize and more likely to achieve their goals than when those conditions are inhospitable.”

In African cities, the conditions for the emergence of such governance structures are inhospitable. The ability of actors to emulate the Northern example is also highly constrained, given the politics at play, and the everyday lived experiences of poverty and food insecurity, in many urban centres. This raises the question of what urban food governance could or should look like in African cities. Smit (2016: 84) stresses that “the governance of urban food systems in Africa is complex, with a range of governance actors with competing agendas”, and

that “we need to better understand existing urban governance processes and the competing interests of urban governance actors in order to be able to collaboratively design interventions to improve urban food security in Africa” (Smit 2016: 85). These sentiments reflect the complexity and challenges faced by African cities. African cities are at a particular development juncture, as the continent is increasingly urban and is expected to become predominantly urban in the next 15 years (UN-DESA, 2018). As Pieterse et al (2018: 151) succinctly state: “Africa is undergoing an internal city-centric reworking that mirrors the urban transformations of the continent and the world. This scalar recalibration assumes greater urgency for Africa because the urban transition of the next few decades will be formative of future developmental opportunities on the continent.”

Africa’s future rests in its cities and how these are designed, planned, and governed. Significant investment in African infrastructure is poised to commence. Using food as a lens to understand urban infrastructure provides a window into an alternative urban food governance agenda. Here the notion of food being a public good is instructive in posing new questions about both urban governance and infrastructure. What would the governance regime resemble if food is considered a mundane good, and the concept of the foundational economy is shifted from the point of production to consumption? Given the significant impact of food on most urban functions (ranging from greenhouse gasses to wastes, from road infrastructure to wages), it is an essential area of attention, that would require a very different social contract between state and society.

African city managers and politicians have a mandate to recraft the governance regimes and operational activities of their cities. In most African cities, however, planning regimes are effectively hangovers of colonial planning and governance (Watson 2014). Pothukuchi (2000) warns that food system governance and planning is not benign, and has negative outcomes. This is all too evident in the perpetuation of punitive approaches to informality (Skinner and Haysom 2016). Given the diversity of African cities, no universal urban food governance

approach would be effective. Instead, what is required is a contextually relevant response to the specificities of each city's urban food governance needs and challenges.

Urban food system governance in Africa should not be concerned with establishing urban ministries of food, or establishing a further layer of contested and politically fraught governance through pluralistic approaches. What is required is for food to become central to all facets of city governance in Africa's urban transition. As a mundane good consumed in cities, food access cannot be left to the vagaries of market forces and globalized food systems. These systems are increasingly dictating not only the look and feel of many African cities, but also the health outcomes of many urban residents. An alternative governance paradigm needs to adopt a more people-centred, pro-poor approach to city planning and infrastructure which sees food as a public good and enacts planning and governance processes to ensure access to this good. This paradigm is about food but also moves far beyond it.

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