

# City and Agriculture: Sustainable Projects for Most Inclusive Cities

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## ABSTRACT

Agriculture in the urban policies leads the scientific society to question the ability to include sustainable practices for guiding local communities towards shared paths of action and the implementation of spatial planning tools. The connection between places and food defines a geography of development on various scales, considering the transcalarity and comparison of the best practices as useful methodologies of research for supporting the rural issue and the essential rural dimension for local action. The innovative experiments gained at national and international level demonstrate how a PhD project and Third Mission experiences can interact together for defining an overall picture of actions that show phases and actors able to range from the support to urban agriculture. This paper aims at analyzing the cultural debate of reference, the policies in the urban and rural field, at comparing the different actions put in place, and at outlining new opportunities in terms of perspectives for the development of a more sustainable city with inclusive projects too.

## KEYWORDS

Agriculture, City, Food Policy, Foodscape, Inclusive Cities, Sustainable Projects, Urban Practices of Sustainable Development

## INTRODUCTION

The reference cultural debate investigates on the urbanization processes that are still creating cognitive and institutional conditions that open to new scenarios and recent interpretations of dialectics between the urban and rural issue with respect to the metropolitan contexts and to the territories' polycentrism of the Area Vasta.

In the expanded dimension of the contemporary city, the production of new forms of the spatial and functional organization has led the scientific research and the PhD's project to seek new forms for recomposing a new concept of sustainable city capable of enhancing the peri-urban areas, the urbanized countryside and the marginal fringes.

The focus on research investigates the new urban and rural models and the recent needs of the communities, paving the way to the implementation of active policies able to contribute to the dynamic transformation of the territory through practical actions of themes and interventions. (Martinelli N., D'Onghia V., 2019)

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The excessive fragmentation and the ecological depletion of the rural territories, in proximity to the city, has returned over time the growth of these ambiguous territories, not yet explored by project *visions* that display their intrinsic richness of values and opportunities for a third sector to be integrated into the countryside and the city.

Contemporaneity reflects on the instability of the peri-urban areas in the metropolitan dimension defining it as a social and environmental resource to be taken for the re-appropriation of services and public spaces within urban processes and relationships to experiment innovative project solutions linked to the agri-food system of urban areas. On the other hand, both planning and government of the territory appear to be distant from being able to effectively rule phenomena of settlement fragmentation and contingent issues related to the use of soils, collective and residence services. (Marinelli, G., Bedini MA, 2017)

The reading of the transformation processes of urban dynamics, of spatial relations and the role of agriculture become essential for the planning and transformation of the peri-urban area, trying to consider therefore the opportunity to integrate dynamics and actions necessary for the planning and activation of multi-scale approaches. (Cellamare C., 2011)

The methodological research system that has been used to investigate the dynamics of the peri-urban territories relies on the multidisciplinary dimension and on the interaction of contemporary issues, proposing the necessity of promoting projects characterized by the tension between the need to meet the new urban styles of the communities and the unexpected expanded dimensions of the metropolitan landscape.

The testing ground of the research is the metropolitan territory of Bari, considered to be of high agricultural value and affected by extensive processes of settlement fragmentation to the point of creating a discontinuity in the eco-mosaic of the environmental matrix.

The multi-scale approach adopted in this search field, identifies several territorial levels; from the macroscale useful for comparing the great processes of transformation and urban sprawl to the mesoscale of the metropolitan areas of international, national and regional policies and finally the microscale to determine the peri-urban space as an interface between urban and rural edges and the countryside wedges.

The interrelation between the reference cultural debate and the experimental approach, focused on some *best practices* and experiences of case studies, defines a deep reflection to activate connections within the territory and to innovate the approach of urban and rural issues towards other practices and visions useful to the territorial governance.

The approach used to rethink and to define the spatial dimension of the dichotomy between city and countryside has always been characterized by this interpretative and managerial dualism of urban-rural structures and by the induced economies between urban and productive systems.

The reconstruction of forms and models of sustainable agriculture in the peri-urban areas focuses on the improvement of the settlement quality of urban and rural contexts, on the *policy making* and on the territorial development as a new challenge to be met on the public action and on the ability to manage Local Urban Agendas.

The objectives of this research are aimed at spreading forms of peri-urban agriculture and food production on the basis of the increasingly widespread socio-economic changes of the communities, supporting the development of *partnerships* between the territorial bodies involved in the territory, in order to integrate policies with the relationship of cooperation between different actors, planning a correct agri-environmental development.

The role of the Third Mission carried out by the Research Bodies in the area encourages the direct application, enhancement and know-how of the territorial system and its resources, in order to play a role in the social, cultural and economic development of the territory, supporting the comparative outcomes of international practices of integration between urban regeneration and agri-environmental policies.

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