

The New Geography of Food (In-)Security: Exploring the Potential of Urban Innovations

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Food insecurity is increasingly “bimodal”, encompassing issues of quantity and quality, under- and over-consumption in developed and developing countries alike. At a time when most of the world’s population lives in cities, food security has also assumed a strong urban dimension, raising new issues of physical and financial access to food. Finally, the recent emergence of a “New Food Equation”, marked by food price hikes, dwindling natural resources, land grabbing activities, social unrest, and the effects of climate change (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010), is bringing onto the global food security agenda a range of often interrelated sustainability concerns. Responses to this new geography of food (in-) security are increasingly emerging at the local level, particularly in industrialized countries, where municipal governments are recasting themselves as food system innovators. Based on the documentary analysis of 15 urban food strategies from Canada, the USA and the UK, the presentation will focus on three main issues: What are the shared features of the new municipal discourses on food? Are these narratives signalling a new paradigmatic shift in the interpretation of (and responses to) current food insecurities? More generally: what is the potential of urban food policies to become a significant counterforce to the complex socio-economic and environmental dynamics that are shaping the new geography of food (in-)security?