Rural policies in urban areas: the European case

Planning for the Global Urban Agenda

Shaping Ecodistricts in Tokyo suburbs

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978-88-85745-15-5 (electronic version)
Published by Politecnico di Torino (Italy), June 2018

Accessible on: *http://www.biblio.polito.it/risorse/catalogo/isbn_del_politecnico_di_torino*

Layout by Giorgia Greco
Cover: photo by Giorgia Greco (2018)

Acknowledgments

This book study is the outcome of research programs and didactical activities developed at the Politecnico di Torino and at The University of Tokyo, and of their collaboration in the framework of the joint project UNI-NUA - Implementing the United Nations' New Urban Agenda. Universities in action".
The On-Site Workshop "Planning for the Global Urban Agenda. Shaping Ecodistricts in Tokyo Suburbs" (March 2018) was organized in collaboration with the Nishi-Tokyo City Urban Planning Committee. Department of Urban Engineering, School of Engineering, UTokyo devoted the Urban Project Studio to such topic, and then shared preparatory materials and outcomes.
The School of Planning and Design of the DIST Inter-University Department of Urban and Regional Studies and Planning of the Politecnico di Torino supported the PoliTO students' participation, on the occasion of the launch of the "Planning for the Global Urban Agenda" Curriculum of the MSc in Territorial, Urban, Environmental and Landscape Planning.
The research staff mobility was made possible by the financial support of the UNI-NUA Project by Politecnico di Torino and Compagnia di San Paolo. Coordinators: Claudia Cassatella and Akito Murayama; research group: Giancarlo Cotella, Kaoru Matsuo, Marco Santangelo, Akiko Iida, Fumihiko Seta, Takahiro Yamazaki.

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FOREWORDS

Politecnico di Torino

With a history of over 150 years, Politecnico di Torino was the first Italian technical school founded on the wave of the scientific innovation that gave rise to the most prestigious polytechnic schools in Europe in the mid-19 century. This long history has turned Politecnico di Torino into one of the top twenty European technical universities for education and research in Engineering and Architecture, with 33.000 students and a teaching staff of more than 900.

In 2017, The School of Planning and Design of the Politecnico di Torino (of the DIST Inter-University Department of Urban and Regional Studies and Planning) launched a new Curriculum, completely taught in English: "Planning for the Global Urban Agenda". Since its establishment in 2001, the Master of Science in "Territorial, Urban, Environmental and Landscape Planning", within which the new Curriculum has been created, is one of the most prominent place for training planners in Italy, attracting around 60 students a year. The MSC is characterized by international exchanges, lectures by visiting professors, students' outgoing and incoming mobility, and specific agreements with Schools in and outside Europe.

A curriculum in English language might certainly increase the opportunities of such exchanges, but internationalization is not simply a matter of language. It means dealing with different cultures, places, practices, and – coming to planning issues – institutional and legislative frameworks. Identifying which are the challenges, which paradigms, methods and solutions can be transferred and which one cannot.

The United Nations' New Urban Agenda gave us an inspiration and, at the same time, a shared topic for starting conversation with other schools all around the globe. The collaboration with the University of Tokyo happily came in this moment. In fact, in the framework of a Joint Project for the Internationalization of the Research, "UNI-NUA - Implementing the United Nations' New Urban Agenda. Universities in action", a joint on-site workshop for graduate students, also involving PhD students and young researchers, has been organized. The Joint Workshop allowed for an interesting comparison of approaches, applied on a case study, and, thanks to the University of Tokyo, the experience offered stimuli and interactions with the reality of a complex urban system.

Furthermore, the Joint Workshop allowed an intersection among research and teaching, practical experiences, creativity, and an international atmosphere that are all ingredients that our School, and Politecnico di Torino in general, is more than keen to provide for its students also in the coming years.

C. Cassatella

The University of Tokyo

Department of Urban Engineering, School of Engineering, the University of Tokyo was established in 1962 to respond to various urban issues associated with rapid urban growth. Now the issues are changing as we entered the post-growth era. Around 120 undergraduate and 170 graduate students, including 50 foreign students, are currently enrolled in the two programs of urban planning and environmental engineering. Research topics in the Urban Planning Course include urban land use, landscape, community development, urban design, territorial design, spatial design, urban transportation, housing and urban analysis, urban information and safety system, and international development and regional planning. 17 professors are affiliated with the course.

Education in the Urban Planning Course aims to train students as physical planners with comprehensive knowledge and abilities in various engineering fields. Intensive studio works are provided where students learn how to plan and design sites, communities, cities and regions. Students are expected to obtain the abilities of recognizing (urban survey), analyzing (urban analysis and evaluations), envisioning (envision the future of cities) and creating (spatial planning and design).

Urban Project Studio 2017 for graduate students focused on the three distinct areas in Tokyo. Nishi-Tokyo City, a suburban municipality, contains "sprawled" urban areas with a mix of agricultural and residential land uses supported by minimum urban infrastructure. This kind of "urban sprawl" was considered as a failure of urban planning. However, the perception seems to be changing now shedding light on the positive side. Accordingly, we conducted a studio, with a support of Nishi-Tokyo City, to explore planning, design and system to shape low-impact ecodistricts by promoting appropriate development while conserving urban farmlands. The studio which started in October was supervised by Associate Prof. Akito Murayama and Assistant Prof. Akiko Iida with a support of Dr. Kaoru Matsuo and Dr. Takahiro Yamazaki. In parallel to the studio, we had a great opportunity to work with students and professors at Politecnico di Torino through web seminars and students' presentations. We were also delighted to have Associate Prof. Giancarlo Cotella supervise the studio with us for four weeks during his stay in Tokyo in November/December 2017.

On-site workshop in March was an intensive workshop where graduate students and professors from the two universities joined to further develop the proposals for Nishi-Tokyo. It was also a great pleasure to have Profs. Claudia Cassatella, Marco Santangelo and Giancarlo Cotella in the evening seminar on "Policies and Planning for Shrinking Cities: Learning from Torino, Italy". The seminar was a success with the participation of around 100 interested professionals and students.

The collaboration with Politecnico di Torino surely enhanced the globalization of our research and education within the common concept of implementing the New Urban Agenda. I would like to express my gratitude to all who were involved.

A. Murayama

The street coming from Tanashi Station and entering into the urban heterogeneous and fragmented texture of Nishi-Tokyo.

(photo: G. Greco, 2018)

Sight of the several tree nurseries in the southern district of Nishi-Tokyo City: Mukoudai-cho.

(photo: A. Murayama, 2017)

SECTION I

Planning for the Global Urban Agenda

SECTION II

Shaping Ecodistricts in Nishi-Tokyo

Rural policies in urban areas: the European case

E. Gottero

In the last decades the role of agriculture has changed greatly. Today it has gradually assumed not only social relevance but also an important meaning in productive terms. Innovative Urban Agriculture (UA) forms such as community, allotments or squatter and family gardens, are issues that have received much attention in research. However, these forms of UA are only one side of the coin. According to some European research (see, for example: Lohrberg et al., 2016), the Urban Gardening (UG) corresponds mainly to the social sphere of UA and it is appreciated for its educational, recreational and therapeutic benefits. Generally speaking it is viewed as a tool to improve quality of life and the physical and mental wellbeing of citizens. A less frequent and less "romantic" but not less noble dimension, is the economic side of UA. In fact, farmers are primarily entrepreneurs and for this reason they adopt a business model that sometimes does not coincide with public interest and aims, but mainly with productive purposes.

Urban planning and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): problems and possible solutions

Today, in a context of great socio-economic changes, professional UA or Urban farming is an important asset of the contemporary city, especially in the Global North. Sustainable farming solutions can provide many benefits for the urban environment and can solve specific problems of the cities and of urban planning. Some examples are the role of Urban farming in terms of greening, functional restoration of the soil, soil de-sealing and recycling, reusing of abandoned areas, regeneration of brownfields, energy crops or maintain landscape features. However, this practice is not yet widespread and, sometimes, it is hampered by other land use forms, conflicting interests and planning limitations. Sectoral policies, although potentially very useful, have also introduced many limits in this development, especially in Europe. The total budget for the CAP 2014-2020 is around 360 billion euros, approximately 37% of total commitment appropriations for the EU-28. The CAP has preferred to support rural areas rather than firmly foster UA and sustain professional urban farmers. Although recently some Rural Development Programs (RDPs) interventions (especially "investment measures") have marginally involved urban farmers, the CAP has historically privileged the countryside, often forgetting about the city and the great "urban potential". Exploiting the proximity of the urban market high demand of food quality, short chains, landscape services, leisure and recreation activities and spaces could be an important and tangible asset, also in order to improve the farmers' income. In addition, if on one hand the CAP has showed poor propensity to support UA and poor ability to interface with planning frameworks and tools, on the other hand spatial planning has evidenced a lack of concreteness and knowledge. Urban planning has given increasing importance to urban development and conventional urban uses, rather than to encoding agricultural forms of urban uses. Thus, a possible solution is to define a new alliance between agricultural and

planning tools, based on an integrated vision of new urban demands, users and consumers. In Europe, several attempts are being made in this direction (see: Gottero, forthcoming; Rega, 2014).

Urban farming in Europe: limits and potential

According to many scholars and institutions, Urban farming can be traced back to three open questions. Firstly, why the CAP does not cover urban areas. There are many reasons why the CAP prefers the areas outside the urban boundaries. The most important ones regard the extensive distribution of funds and the political will to satisfy different economic categories such as farmers and their unions, Local Action Groups (LAGs), local authorities. This approach often neglects public interests. At the same time, the rift between town and country, the lack of clarity about the relevance of rural and urban linkages, as well as the gap between agricultural use and other competitive land uses, have widened unequal socio-ecological relations. No less important is the lack of clear and unambiguous spatial targets, especially in RDPs.

The second open question is which types of Urban farming the CAP should be financing. Also in this case, there is not a unique solution but many alternatives based on the concepts of multifunctionality and diversification. Thus, urban farming should be as much as possible near to urban needs, in order to operate in key critical socio-environmental issues of the cities such as environmental degradation, pollution, human health, quality of food, and so on. This does not mean only to foster concepts such as organic farming, traditional food, short chains, local products, but to focus also on innovative services, production and sales systems. For instance high-tech farms (hydroponics, aquaponics, vertical farming, rooftop farming), environmental farms that contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity, protected areas and landscape features, the enhancement of the city's green infrastructure, as well as farms able to integrate urban welfare system offering social and local services.

The last open question regards the building of a common language between spatial planning and agricultural policies. That is, how to integrate planning tools with rural development or vice versa. With regard to planning tools, encoding rural policies and local development tools (environmental stewardship schemes, local development plans, territorial agro-environmental agreements, agricultural parks, cooperation measures) is an operation being tested in some European countries. They are devices that could accept integrated solutions in the planning frameworks. It is not so easy to replicate this model in the current CAP framework. Fostering site-specific tools, supporting pilot projects, as well as new spatial criteria to define eligible areas, are difficult to apply in order to recognize urban values and dimensions of agriculture.

The first draft of the CAP for 2021-2027 seems not to accept urban instances yet. Nevertheless, these are problems shared by several international institutions at different levels. For example, FAO and United Nations have in different ways and for different reasons repeatedly highlighted the importance of agriculture in urban environments (see, in particular: UN-Habitat, 2015). Therefore, it may be the task of each European Member State's spatial and landscape planning, at national and regional level, to claim these values and equip themselves in order to tackle these problems. The tools are available: it is time for planners to use and apply them.

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