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Chapter 27

The Taste of Inclusivity: A Food-Led Strategy for Cardiff's Urban Transformation



Zeinab Sattari

1 Introduction

Ongoing changes in the three sectors of social institutions, namely, the market, the state, and civil society (Steurer, 2013), have always transformed cities, with an increasing pace since the industrialization period. The market produces and exchanges economic resources and includes entrepreneurs and businesses. The state is a territory for governance, which includes local and national legislators, while civil society unveils the interests and demands of citizens and includes families, NGOs, and independent educational centers. Some institutions have the characteristics of two or three sectors. The market has been changing remarkably since the emergence of capitalism and neoliberalism. The state shifted from top-down governance to post-modern approaches, such as inclusive and bottom-up governance, while civil society experienced cultural innovation. These changes have always influenced the physical features and quality of life in cities. Postmodern urban planning aims to avoid the undesired transformations by proposing clear strategies which lead to sustainable and inclusive cities (Ernst et al., 2016).

Although there is growing attention towards the health and security aspects of food in planning, the potential of food systems as multi-dimensional and inclusive planning tools in urban transformation is largely unnoticed. Food systems are a combination of stakeholders and actions around the food value chain and consist of three major sectors, namely, production, service, and consumption. Change in any sector can influence the agency of social institutions, and consequently the quality of life and physical structure of the city. The global population is expected to increase to over nine billion by 2050, and is expected to mostly live in urban areas, which means that providing enough healthy food for everyone (food security) will become critical (Beddington et al., 2012). Following the recent rapid urban development,

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food production has disappeared from cities. This process poses an excessive threat to the food security inside the city and excludes urban stakeholders from playing a key role in the production of their food. Food processing and service sectors have also changed at the local to global scales. As a result, cities have become arenas for a new socioeconomic culture characterized by large supermarkets, products with unknown sources, and countless food chains. Food consumer behavior has mostly shifted to a demand for larger quantities and (if possible) higher qualities in recent decades. Access to this desired food might influence urban health and well-being, market performance, and state expenses.

A strategy for the inclusive transformation of urban food systems can engage and empower all food stakeholders and regulate food production, service, and consumption. This would likely lead to the stronger agency of each institution, learning from various stakeholder experiences, and contributing to quality of life and equality in cities. Therefore, this book chapter seeks to examine a novel approach to urban planning by providing a food-led strategy for transforming the city of Cardiff into an inclusive place.

2 Inclusive Urban Transformation and Food Planning

Cities resemble living organisms in that they continuously change in their requirements, relationships, and forces during various periods of time. These changes usually result in the transformation of urban features, including physical and institutional structures. Physical changes gradually alter zoning patterns, land-use distributions, and urban landscapes. Changes in institutional arrangements can influence governance and economy in the short term, and culture, livelihood, and behavior of the urban population in the long term (Maassen & Galvin, 2019).

The current agenda of urban transformation focuses on reducing polarization and increasing inclusivity in decision-making and implementation. At the end of the last century, many urban governance forms shifted from dependency on state power to inter-institutional cooperation. This resulted in urban empowerment in the form of a decentralized state, public–private partnerships, and active local institutions in decision-making (Baker et al., 2007).

2.1 Inclusive Food Planning

The American Planning Association (APA) brought the matter of food systems into action through guidelines outlined in the “Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning” (APA, 2007). These guidelines aimed to combine culture, politics, science, and economy with the food and city contexts. Food systems involve resources and stakeholders—the institutions, groups, and individuals within urban areas—but their transformational capabilities are usually understudied and unused.

Urban institutional sectors propound the governmental and socioeconomic importance of food in inclusive urban planning. The governmental importance of food involves considering the preferences and benefits of various groups and individuals when deciding about food security, social justice, inclusion, food safety, and land-use management. The socioeconomic importance of food builds upon various aspects, including the potential for sustaining health and well-being in cities, creating and enhancing social bonds, and enabling ethnic groups to represent themselves and create a dynamic multi-cultural community. The dining table, metaphorically, can function as a significant socio-political arena for gathering together individuals and groups with various preferences to share food and time.

Moragues-Faus and Morgan (2015) suggest that food planning can contextualize the connections between the state, the market, and civil society. Following that, the multi-functional character of food can enable inclusive food planning by using a multi-stakeholder engagement approach. Campbell (2004) addresses a major struggle in food planning, namely, the “epistemological, political, socioeconomic, spatial, and organizational” conflicts in decision-making (Campbell, 2004: 341). Such conflicts occur in various situations, including when there are different power positions and levels and contradictory preferences among stakeholders, as well as when the stakeholders lack a mutual agenda and discourse. For instance, compared to civil society the state usually has a stronger financial and legal position in planning. Also, and in contrast with the priorities of the civil society, the market might prioritize economic growth over quality of food in outlets.

2.2 Urban Transformation Embedded in Food Policy

Urban transformation is a general agenda which requires a specific approach in planning and implementation. As discussed, the multi-functional nature of food systems enables urban planners to use food governance to connect various social institutions and regulate structural changes in the city. According to Moragues-Faus and Morgan (2015), food can lead to an inclusive and holistic governance strategy for urban transformation. This will likely have a positive influence on urban consumption patterns, help secure food production and business and maintain (or increase) public health, preserve ecological connectedness in the city, and bring more democracy and justice into governance. The food-led strategy for urban transformation will be a continuous and long-term process, specifically in terms of cultural and behavioral changes; therefore, it requires ongoing observation and sustainable decision-making and implementation systems. In conclusion, food systems can create an inclusive transformational strategy, yet, there is a gap in understanding the mechanism of such planning.

3 Research Context and Methodology

In order to understand the mechanism of developing a food-led strategy for inclusive urban transformation, this section introduces a case study in Cardiff City, the United Kingdom. Various food and planning stakeholders in Cardiff were interviewed in semi-structured conversations. The interviews aimed to identify the existing food conditions in the city, as well as its main drivers, potentials, and barriers which could contribute to a food-led strategy for an inclusive transformation. Afterwards, the existing policy documents containing Cardiff food regulations were reviewed to understand the current food regulations in Cardiff.

Employing an inclusive approach in data collection, we selected 11 food and planning experts for the interviews. The market stakeholders consisted of an operator and manager from a farmer's market, the head chef and manager of an Indian restaurant, and the head of commercial services at Cardiff University. The state representatives, who worked at the executive levels of Cardiff Council, represented the Sustainable Development Group, the City Operations Department, and the City-center Management Team. Finally, civil society stakeholders consisted of a principal health promotion specialist from Public Health Wales and two professors at Cardiff University, one of whom was an expert in human geography. The other was a professor in urban planning and connectivity.

After transcribing and anonymizing the interviews, the resulting texts were analyzed at three stages, namely, data reduction, categorization, and conclusion. First, unrelated information to the research was excluded from the texts. Then, the texts were categorized and coded through thematic content analysis. At this stage, keywords were used to discover stakeholders, potentials, barriers, and key factors of planning for the food strategy. Finally, various stakeholder responses were compared to identify the main themes, mutual viewpoints, and conflicting ideas.

Several policy documents, at the national and city levels, were reviewed to find relevant strategies for Cardiff urban planning and food policy. Eight documents were found to contain explicit or implicit discussions related to food regulation and urban transformation. The documents included: Food for Wales, food from Wales; Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA); Tackling Poverty Action Plan; Healthy Eating in Schools; Cardiff Livable City; Cardiff Food and Health Strategy; Cardiff Local Development Plan (Deposit Plan); Public Health Retail Criteria; and Premises for Eating, Drinking and Entertainment in Cardiff City Centre.

The policy documents were inspected by using a combination of content analysis and function analysis approaches. For analyzing the contents, the food-related and transformational strategies were identified and their purposes were summarized into themes, such as sustainability, profitability, equality, and inclusivity. After that, the function of those strategies was explored in relation to interviewee ideas about a food-led and inclusive urban transformation.

4 The State of Food in Cardiff City

In Cardiff, food production encompasses three main activities, namely, home-growing, managing allotments, and community gardening. However, the majority of the food consumed in the city is sourced from farms outside of the city and from around the world. Reflecting the global trend, food services in Cardiff strive to provide people with “whatever they want, whenever they want it” (state stakeholder). This included large supermarkets as well as food outlets and chains across the city. Notably, Cardiff boasts one of the highest numbers of independent cafés per capita in Europe, showcasing a vibrant food culture (as highlighted by a civil society stakeholder). In recent years, there has been a gradual increase in local, multi-cultural, and healthy food options, particularly evident at the farmers' market (Figs. 1 and 2), and in public institutions such as schools and hospitals.

The state of food consumption in Cardiff was not widely known by research participants. A market operator described it as a culture characterized by a “big chain mentality” while several other participants highlighted the presence of unhealthy food options. Some food institutions have attempted to increase awareness around social food responsibility, which relates to selecting sustainable, healthy, and local options.

There was a growing concern among various interviewees about the influence of Brexit on the labor force in food systems and the accessibility of food for everyone.



Fig. 1 Cardiff local market with growing attention towards multi-cultural and home-made food (photograph by Ngan Phan)



Fig. 2 “On the streets of Cardiff we have some great assets, we have got the farmers’ market which is a fantastic asset in three parts of the city; and that is a really great job of bringing people together as [a] community.” (a civil society stakeholder) (photograph by Ngan Phan)

Accordingly, Brexit could add to the issues caused by 10 years of austerity after the global financial crisis in 2008, which cut local government’s capacity to engage in securing food.

The existing food regulations, influencing Cardiff, consisted of one strategic plan for urban food systems (Cardiff Food and Health Strategy) and several general food security and hygiene regulations. The data about existing food conditions and actions in Cardiff revealed a slight progress in food planning, but this was not cohesive among urban institutions. As one state stakeholder pointed out:

Overall, I think when you think about something as important as food, it is chaotic [in Cardiff]. It is like you would not have that for educational attainment or for any of other areas, but actually for something as important as food, there is no public strategy or health strategy coherently for the city.

Numerous institutions, such as National Health Service (NHS), universities, and Sustainable Food Cardiff, were identified as potentials partners for fostering collaboration in food planning and guiding the city’s transformation.

5 Multi-Stakeholder Engagement in Cardiff's Food-Led Strategy

The interviewees identified several food stakeholders in Cardiff, categorized here into four main institutional groups:

- **State sector:** This group comprises the Welsh government, various Cardiff Council departments (specifically the City Operations, Sustainability Team, Planners, Case officers, City Centre Management, Business Improvement District, and Economic Development) and other local authorities.
- **Market sector:** This sector includes local food markets, catering businesses, event operators, food suppliers, food producers, street food traders, and other related businesses.
- **Civil society sector:** The civil society sector encompasses Cardiff University and other research institutions, Public Health Wales, Sustainable Food Cardiff, as well as press and media.
- **Other individuals:** This category includes individuals involved in public and private land ownership, as well as those who create links between individuals and institutions.

Most of the listed institutions have not been actively involved in both food planning and urban decision-making. Some were involved only in urban planning, unaware of the food potentials in urban decision-making; others were never involved in planning procedures despite their valuable experience and knowledge about food. Emphasizing the need for collaboration between food operators, a market stakeholder commented that, "It is just easy when you work with partners. Any [city] council could be a partner if they want. Organizations like us in this city or any city can come in and create something. We co-exist." Another market stakeholder added that "These [food actors] need to be connected and there is a conversation going around that. So, part of the challenge is how we bring these different groups together and who does that. That is interesting and you should be talking to [each other]. Talk!" (market stakeholder).

The participants had various suggestions for multi-stakeholder partnerships for food planning. First, participants believe that the state should lead the process of planning and implementing the food strategy. It was suggested that Cardiff Council collaborates with top food operators as well as university researchers to make the main decisions. A cooperative plan led by the state can join various food services, support food businesses in providing healthy and sustainable food, as well as facilitate the legal requirements. Research institutions and other civil society actors can work with the state to train people and businesses on improving food options.

Policy analysis for this study showed that policy documents touched on the concept of inclusivity in their strategies. For example, the *Cardiff Liveable City* acknowledged the importance of a fair, just, and inclusive society, but neglected to mention how various institutions can create such a society. The *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*

suggested creating a partnership between key actors in food systems (e.g., a think-tank). The *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* aimed to improve equality in the country by including individuals, from the community and from any socioeconomic background, to fulfill their potentials and needs. The *Food for Wales, Food from Wales* suggested a collaborative partnership among institutions for supply chain efficiency.

The findings also revealed suggestions for Cardiff's food strategy, including changing production, service, and consumption through multi-stakeholder engagement, which consequently can facilitate the transformation of the city into a more inclusive place. Accordingly, food production needs to focus on using public and private open spaces for growing and rearing food. Community gardens and allotments as well as private yards and balconies have potential for this aim. When production is impossible inside some urban areas, local food from nearby farms can suffice. A certain level of horticultural knowledge should be created and maintained in communities for this aim, supported by legal and financial assistance. Furthermore, food services need to provide healthy and sustainable options for Cardiff residents in food outlets (e.g., shops, restaurants, and cafés). The existing vibrant café culture can play a crucial role in promoting the availability and desirability of healthy, local, and environmentally friendly food options throughout the city. Such change requires strong financial and educational support from the state and civil society, respectively. To bring about a change in food consumption requires a change in food choices, which mostly depend on people's knowledge about food as well as their socioeconomic power. Awareness should be raised among various generations about the source of their food and the influence of food on their health and well-being. All institutional sectors need to engage in providing educational and financial support for improving the food consumption culture.

Research participants expressed high expectations regarding the transformative results that could be achieved by implementing the Cardiff food-led strategy. These results have the potential to improve inclusivity within the city, and encompass the following aspects:

- Flexible growing and rearing permits: Participants anticipated the introduction of flexible permits for growing and rearing food in new dwellings. This would provide opportunities for more residents to actively engage in food systems and contribute to local food production.
- Increased local and urban food products: The participants believed that promoting the production and consumption of local and urban food products would empower the local economy. This focus on local sourcing can enhance economic resilience, support local businesses, and foster community connections.
- Multi-functional and connected green infrastructure: The establishment of a multi-functional and connected green infrastructure was seen as essential to increase residents' access to green and open spaces for residents. This development would enhance the availability of recreational areas and contribute to overall well-being.
- Cultural innovation and inclusive decision-making: Participants envisioned a cultural innovation embedded in inclusive decision-making processes and responsible consumption. This would involve engaging diverse stakeholders in shaping

food-related policies and practices, as well as fostering a culture of sustainable and mindful food choices.

- **Balanced power distribution among institutional sectors:** The participants emphasized the importance of achieving a balanced power distribution among several institutional sectors. This would promote the agency of food operators and create inclusive partnerships within the city, enabling collaboration and shared decision-making.

The Cardiff food-led strategy faces several governance and socioeconomic barriers that could hinder its planning and implementation. The most significant governance obstacles included the financial barriers, the conflict of interests between various food stakeholders, and the absence of former urban food-led strategies. Moreover, no specific department in Cardiff Council devoted their focus on food regulations. These barriers might pose a risk to planning and implementation of a comprehensive food strategy. The main socioeconomic barrier was the prevalence of the unhealthy and non-local food culture due to the accessibility and affordability of such food. Changing to healthier and more sustainable options required significant financial resources, training, and a long-term plan. With constant changes in institutional structures (new people in powerful positions), securing such a long-term plan is likely to be challenging.

6 Conclusion

This chapter introduced a food-led strategy for an inclusive urban transformation. The multi-dimensional nature of food can involve and empower various social institutions in food systems. Moragues-Faus and Morgan (2015: 1558) discuss that a food-led governance can transform cities into “spaces of deliberation,” which bring different stakeholders together to provide urban justice and sustainability.

The city of Cardiff was explored in this chapter to find potentials for developing the food-led strategy. The existing condition of Cardiff's food system consisted of insignificant local and urban production, a dominant trend of unhealthy cheap food, and, consequently, a poor consumption culture. Participants' concerns around the influence of Brexit on intensifying austerity measures related to food highlighted the importance of including urban food planning in governance planning and implementation. Several public policies and institutions tried to improve the state of Cardiff's food system through various actions, such as tackling poverty, encouraging healthy food options in public institutions, and supporting the production and consumption of local food. However, these actions were not completely successful due to lacking connectedness, cohesion, and comprehensiveness. The mentality of state-centered planning, which was also a dominant theme among the interviewees, usually results in a scattered and incomplete agenda for urban food because many food experts are excluded from policy-making. This finding aligns with Morgan's (2009) discussion, which emphasizes that food planning does not just belong to “professionals who are

striving to integrate food policy into the mainstream planning agenda” (state sector interviewee), it also includes anyone who is a food actor in any institution (342).

In conclusion, adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to developing the food-led strategy increases the likelihood of successful implementation by involving diverse social institutions with their respective requirements and priorities within the city. Such an approach can shift the perception of food from *what is the fastest and cheapest choice* to recognizing the importance of *who produces, provides, and consumes the food* and *what is the quality*. Moreover, decentralizing food and urban planning potentially become more feasible by granting legal and financial authorities to the market and civil society sectors. This shift in authority can lead to a transformative socioeconomic and governance shift in cities, fostering inclusivity and ensuring that decision-making processes encompass a wide range of perspectives.

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