

# 6 Current urban food governance and planning in Africa

*Warren Smit*

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the governance of urban food systems in Africa, and sets the scene for the following five chapters, which look at particular aspects of the governance of urban food systems in each of the case study cities. Understanding the existing governance of urban food systems is an essential precondition for attempting to improve governance processes so as to contribute to enhanced urban food security. A particularly important aspect of governance with regards to urban food systems is urban planning. Problems with governance and urban planning processes are arguably a key contributor to the high levels of food insecurity in African cities. As Porter *et al.* (2007: 116) suggest, there are complex processes and rules shaping food systems in Africa, and “we need to know more about how these formal and informal regulatory systems operate if we are to improve access to markets and thus enhance urban food supplies and also secure income and livelihoods.” The New Urban Agenda, adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2016, similarly recognises the need for strengthening governance, strengthening food system planning and “improving food security and nutrition” in urban areas (UN 2016: 11).

In this chapter, drawing on reviews of the food and governance literature on Africa and on fieldwork in Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, I provide a broad overview of the impact of governance and planning processes on urban food systems in Africa. First of all, I discuss the concept of “governance”. I then discuss the linkages between urban governance/planning and urban food systems in Africa, with a focus on four key aspects of governance of urban food systems: the governance of the production of food in and around cities, with a focus on urban and peri-urban agriculture; the governance of food distribution; the governance of formal and informal food retail; and the governance of food safety, both in terms of the safety of the food itself and the safety of food production and preparation processes. In general, governance and planning processes have an ambiguous impact on urban food systems and urban food security, and governance and planning processes in relation to food need to be made more effective (although it should be noted that urban governance dynamics and urban food systems vary considerably from country to country, and also within

countries). Finally, I identify some potential ways we can approach improving the governance and planning of urban food systems in Africa.

### **Urban governance of food systems**

Governance can be defined in various ways. Many definitions, for example those of the World Bank, are closely linked with normative notions of “good governance”, and arguably focus too much on what those organisations think should happen rather than on what actually happens in reality (Doornbos 2001; Pearce 2003). Many scholars have found it more useful to use the concept of governance in a more analytical way, for example, as “the range of political, organisational, and administrative processes through which stakeholders (including citizens and interest groups) articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, take decisions, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences” (Bakker *et al.* 2008: 1894).

One of the key characteristics of using a governance lens is the recognition that there is a wide range of actors involved in governance, such as various government organisations, political parties, traditional leaders, civil society organisations – for example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups – and the private sector (Devas 2001). Using a governance lens is essentially about understanding these actors and the relationships between them. The distribution of power can be conceived of as being dispersed amongst these different actors and “exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault 1976/1998: 94) by individuals such as “planners, policy analysts and researchers, and politicians” (Richardson 1996: n.p.). Power is not evenly distributed, however, as there are particular “centres” or “nodes” with concentrations of power (Lindell 2008). These governance nodes impact on cities and towns through a range of “formal” and “informal” decision-making and regulatory processes. Formality/informality should be regarded as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, with different levels of formality and informality often overlapping, but I use the terms to refer to the respective halves of the continuum. As Devas (2004) notes, informal governance processes are, in practice, often more important than formal governance processes.

The actors involved in urban governance have very different interests and agendas, and there are few processes for reaching consensus or resolving competing interests. The net result is often chaotic. As Lindell (2008: 1896) notes of the governance of market places in Maputo, Mozambique, “governance appears to lack any semblance of coherence and to be more fragmented, disjointed and split by deep antagonisms. The key actors continuously challenge each other’s legitimacy to ‘govern.’” The governance and planning of urban food systems is particularly complex as urban food systems are generally not thought of as an explicit object of governance, and the impact of governance and planning systems on urban food systems is usually unintentional (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000). The governance of food systems is also complex and challenging because of “the interdependencies of actors and their activities, as well as their different

framings of the problem of food insecurity” (Pereira and Drimie 2016: 25–26). It is only in recent decades, mainly in the global North, that actors in urban governance have begun to explicitly think about urban food systems and how to promote urban food security.

Urban governance actors can impact on urban food systems, and thus on urban food security, in a variety of ways; for example, through the governance of: the production of food in and around cities; the functioning of urban and peri-urban transport systems, which impact on food distribution; formal and informal food retail; and food safety. These four areas of governance are discussed in the following four sections of the chapter.

### **Governance of urban and peri-urban agriculture in Africa**

Urban governance can have a big impact on the extent and nature of agriculture in and around cities. The importance of urban agriculture varies considerably between cities and countries in Africa, and is often quite limited (Crush *et al.* 2011; Zezza and Tasciotti 2010). Part of the reason for many African cities having fairly low levels of urban agriculture is that most African national and local governments have been intolerant of urban agriculture, seeing it as incompatible with their “modernist” visions of what cities should look like (Simatele and Binns 2008). The attitude of local government in Lusaka is typical of many local governments in Africa; at the time, they viewed urban agriculture as a rural activity “whose practice within the city boundaries is inappropriate and detracts from the modern image of the city” (Simatele and Binns 2008: 2).

In cities where urban agriculture is tolerated, organisations of urban farmers can play an important role in promoting and supporting urban agriculture. In Dar es Salaam, for example, the activities of urban farmers’ associations include “joint production on communally held property and serving as a loan or finance agency for their members” (Schmidt *et al.* 2015).

Some cities, such as Cape Town and Ndola, have developed urban agriculture policies which attempt to support low-income households’ participation in urban agriculture. Local government support is potentially important in enabling low-income households to be able to engage in urban agriculture, through the provision of “inputs, extension services, credit/financial access, production and marketing infrastructure, and knowledge” (Frayne *et al.* 2014: 187).

Controls over land use in peri-urban areas are often laxer than is the case in central urban areas. Many functional urban areas in Africa include large expanses of peri-urban agricultural land, and African cities are often characterised by “unregulated peri-urban land development” that has a negative impact on peri-urban agriculture (Kombe 2005: 113). The ability of local government to control such sprawl is often limited by peri-urban areas being in customary ownership and under traditional authorities (e.g. Gough 1999). The net result is the gradual displacement of peri-urban agriculture. For example, in Ghana, “as urbanisation increases, farmers are being pushed unto less favourable lands, farther villages or restricted to unauthorised public spaces in order to continue

production. The absence of urban green belts reduces farming to flood plains and along public drains” (Kuusaana and Eledi 2015: 462).

### **Governance of food distribution**

The distribution of food is essentially about “how food for consumption is physically moved to be available, in what form, when and to whom” (Ericksen 2008: 239). The key determinants of food distribution include “transportation infrastructure, trade regulations, government transfer programs, and storage requirements” (Ericksen 2008: 238).

At the urban scale, the key determinant of food distribution is the urban (and peri-urban) transport system, the key elements of which (provision and maintenance of roads, managing traffic, ensuring roadworthiness of vehicles) are the responsibility of local (or other levels of) government. In general, urban transport infrastructure in African cities is inadequate. A study of 14 cities in Africa found that “to a greater or lesser extent in each of the cities, the networks of paved roads and associated traffic control facilities are deficient” (Kumar and Barrett 2008: 37). Systems and procedures for ensuring vehicle safety are also largely inadequate (Kumar and Barrett 2008). Although difficult to quantify, it is clear that “in sub-Saharan Africa, limited infrastructure and transport service has occasionally disrupted food production and circulation” (Pirie 1993: 12). There have been a few documented instances where inadequate availability of functioning vehicles and inadequate maintenance of roads have significantly hindered the distribution of food (e.g. Good 1988). The limitations of transport infrastructure in and around African cities can also increase the cost transportation and thus also increase the cost of urban food (Gollin and Rogerson 2010).

### **Governance of food retail**

Most of the food retail sector in most African cities can be classified as being at the “informal” end of the formality/informality continuum. There are usually a wide variety of different types of informal food retail outlets, such as large traditional market places (which might have thousands of traders), various types of informal shops and kiosks, and street food vendors (see Chapter 7). Urban governance can impact on informal food traders in various ways, for example, through processes for assigning land uses, allocating trading space and through the provision of infrastructure and services, such as water, electricity and refuse removal.

Market places are a particularly important element of urban food systems in Africa and are an important site of urban governance. The governance of market places can impact on the accessibility, affordability and quality of food. Market associations generally play an important role in managing market places in Africa, particularly in West Africa (King 2006; Porter *et al.* 2007). Market associations “control the selling space and can therefore exclude others and have wider effects on the vegetable production and marketing system” (Lyon 2003:

20). In Maputo, for example, “the market committees provide infrastructure (water, toilets, etc.), maintenance and security services, and organise cleaning in their respective markets. . . . The committees also act as the principal regulators in the markets” (Lindell 2008: 1889). Market associations can also influence the decisions of local governments; for example, the Market Traders Association in Kumasi, Ghana, successfully opposed plans of the local government to increase market fees by 300% (King 2006). Local governments also usually play a role in managing market places, partially because trader fees can be a significant source of local government revenue (King 2006). As most local governments lack adequate power to plan, regulate and provide infrastructure and services, though, this role is often limited to collecting fees (Meagher 2011).

Street food vendors play an important role in providing a variety of food for the urban poor (Dixon *et al.* 2007; Steyn *et al.* 2013), but, whereas traders in market places have some protection, as a result of numbers and some form of official recognition, street traders are much more vulnerable. There are frequently waves of evictions of street traders, for example, when there is a change of political power or when a major event is about to take place (Hansen 2004; King 2006; Potts 2007; Setsabi 2006). A number of scholars have seen this frequent intolerance of informal traders as similar to the widespread prevention of urban agriculture, in that it is driven by modernist conceptualisations of urban planning as being about correcting what politicians and planners perceive as the unruly and chaotic landscapes of the informal sector (Kamete 2013; Rogerson 2016).

Over time, the nature of food retail in African cities has been changing, with increased growth of “formal” retail outlets. In the past two decades, there has been rapid growth in supermarkets in Africa (Crush and Frayne 2011; Weatherspoon and Reardon 2003; also see Chapter 2). The implications of this transformation for urban food security are not well understood, but what evidence exists suggests that the shift from local production of food and a largely informal retail sector to formal supermarkets with international supply chains may result in decreased levels of food security (Minten 2008; Riley and Legwegoh 2014).

Currently, the roll-out of supermarkets is being driven by the private sector; Crush and Frayne (2011: 806) note that there is an “absence of regulatory controls on supermarket expansion in urban markets” in Africa. However, local government potentially has an important role to play in deciding where supermarkets are located, how big they are, how they are designed (for example, whether they are accessible to pedestrians) and whether they offer surrounding space for informal traders.

### **Governance of food safety**

The main determinants of food safety, and the safety of those involved in producing and processing food, are “the procedures and standards and regulations (or lack of) for food production, processing, and packaging” (Ericksen 2008: 240). Regulating food safety is therefore an important component of the governance of urban food systems (also see Chapter 12). Many food safety



regulations need to be enforced at a national level, for example, the formulation and enforcement of standards on the composition of imported and locally manufactured food. In this section, though, I focus on a particular aspect of the governance of food safety, namely the governance of the safety of food sold by informal traders.

Although street food can be healthy and hygienic (von Holy and Makhoane 2006), and forms a key part of the diet of many African urban residents (Steyn *et al.* 2013), the safety of street foods is often seen as an area of concern by local policy makers, as street foods “often do not meet proper hygiene standards, in large part because of weak regulatory systems, inadequate food safety laws, lack of financial resources to invest in safer equipment, and lack of education for food-handlers” (CSPI 2005: 25). Inadequate infrastructure is also a key problem; studies from a number of African countries (e.g. Cambaza dos Muchangos *et al.* 2015; Muyanja *et al.* 2011) have confirmed that street food can have a high risk of contamination where there is a lack of appropriate infrastructure. Typical issues include inadequate access to water and sanitation, inadequate refuse removal and exposure to flies, which can all result in contamination of food.

Some, but not all, local governments are involved in enforcing standards of hygiene amongst informal traders (Muyanja *et al.* 2011). Even where local government does attempt to enforce health standards, this enforcement is often only partial. For example, in Abeokuta, Nigeria, food vendors are required to obtain an annual certificate from health authorities, but a survey found that only 31% of vendors had these (Omemu and Aderoju 2008).

Most recommendations for ensuring food safety focus on hygienic practices by food handlers (e.g. WHO 2006), and it is important for stakeholders in urban governance to raise awareness of this and ensure implementation (for example, through inspection and penalties), but it is arguably even more important to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and facilities are available. A study of street food vendors in Tshwane, South Africa, found that vendors generally followed “good basic hygiene practices” but that the overall environment in which they cooked and sold food resulted in the contamination of food (Oguttu *et al.* 2015: 204). Providing potable water, sanitation and adequate protection from the elements for markets and informal traders is therefore important for helping to ensure food safety.

### **Improving governance and planning of urban food systems**

It is only in recent decades, mainly in the global North, that actors in urban governance have begun to explicitly think about urban food systems and how to promote urban food security. There have been numerous attempts at the collaborative governance of urban food systems in the global North, such as setting up Food Policy Councils in an attempt to coordinate various governance actors in ensuring that urban food systems promote food security (MacRae and Donahue 2013) and implementing urban food strategies, generally focused on issues

of food quality, health and sustainability (Sonnino 2016). Urban food strategies in the global South are rare, but where they exist (for example, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil) they have a focus on ensuring affordable and healthy food for the poor. In the 1990s, the local government of Belo Horizonte launched a food security programme, the three main areas of which were: to prevent malnutrition by assisting poor households and individuals at risk; working with the private sector to ensure increased accessibility, affordability and quality of staple foods and fruit and vegetables; and increasing food production and supply (Rocha and Lessa 2009). There have been some tentative steps towards developing urban food system strategies in South Africa (Haysom 2015), but, in general, the governance of urban food systems in African cities still happens in an uncoordinated and unintegrated way, and urban planning is often used as a tool for clamping down on informality rather than promoting livelihoods and food security.

The New Urban Agenda has recognised the growing problem of urban food security and has called for “the integration of food security and the nutritional needs of urban residents, particularly the urban poor, in urban and territorial planning, in order to end hunger and malnutrition” (UN 2016: 17). In order to begin to do this in Africa, 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 particular, we need to know more about the roles that local governments in Africa do, and can, play. Local governments potentially have an important role to play in promoting urban food security, as in Belo Horizonte. Coordinating the roles of different actors involved in governing urban food systems will be important, perhaps necessitating something like the Food Policy Councils found in North America, but the frequently antagonistic relationships between governance actors in many African cities will make this challenging. An essential precondition for more effective governance of urban food systems is to bring different stakeholders together to engage with each other. Such processes need to explicitly recognise power dynamics and competing interests (Pereira and Drimie 2016). There are a number of examples of collaborative urban governance in Africa that are worth learning from, such as the example of the Kisumu Action Team in Kisumu, Kenya, which brought together a range of stakeholders (including local government, civil society and informal traders’ organisations) to develop an inter-sectoral strategy for Kisumu that included a number of planned interventions relating to food, such as the upgrading of market places and promotion of local food production (Onyango and Obera 2015). There is also a need to change urban planning processes and procedures to make them more pro-poor and more supportive of the promotion of urban food security.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the wide range of urban governance actors with very different agendas that impact on urban food systems in Africa. As a result, the governance of urban food systems is characterised by fragmentation and a lack

of coordination between governance actors. This means that key problems, such as inadequate infrastructure in market places, are often not adequately addressed, and the problems persist and grow over time. There is an urgent need to bring together urban governance actors to develop and implement coherent strategies for improving urban food security in a sustainable way. Examples such as the Kisumu Action Team show how it possible to bring together urban governance actors to develop holistic strategies that attempt to have a positive impact on urban food security and other urban challenges. It is only through collaborative governance processes that we can begin to develop well-functioning urban food systems in Africa.

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