Recovery from the pandemic

Planning the reterritorialisation of agricultural activities

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13. Recovery from the pandemic: planning the reterritorialisation of agricultural activities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has triggered society's reflection on the vulnerability of agriculture and food systems. Transport issues disturbed food distribution (Clapp & Moseley, 2020; Cullen, 2020). Some farmers engaged in international markets even had to destroy food due to the impossibility to export it (Aday & Aday, 2020). Seasonal foreign farmworkers stayed away, resulting in the need for local labour to harvest (Aday & Aday, 2020; Larue, 2020). Consumers feared food supply shortages and were hoarding consumables. People in countries relying on food imports suffered uneven food prices with the disordered market (Clapp & Moseley, 2020). Overall, the pandemic's disruptive effects on goods and human flow raised questions about the resilience of food systems.

Public and private stakeholders responded to the pandemic in a timely and innovative way by finding solutions at the local scale. Farmers sought local markets instead of selling food to international consumers. Consumers sought new channels to access food, such as expanding home gardening and direct purchasing from local farmers. Governments and non-governmental organisations developed initiatives that facilitated producers to sell locally (Nemes et al., 2021). Such initiatives helped counter global food system vulnerability in the face of the crisis by bringing back food production and supply to the local scale, which we call the "reterritorialisation of agricultural activities" (RAA). The RAA consists of local food production and its diversification activities oriented towards local consumers (e.g., farming, local processing, transport and logistics, local sale, community-supported agriculture).

RAA creates a closer link between consumers and producers and has been recognised as a solution to mitigate negative impacts on the global food system in terms of product quality, climate, water quality and food security

(Feagan, 2007; Wiskerke, 2009; Morgan & Sonnino, 2010). While RAA has been invoked for some time, the pandemic is likely to amplify RAA's value in maintaining a resilient food system. We claim that the RAA provides a promising perspective to go beyond responding to the pandemic and its recovery. However, in the pervading context where the food system operates on a global market scale, RAA initiatives may be hindered by the lack of economic competitiveness and inadequate infrastructure support. Planning, meaning public intervention based on systematic thinking with embedded governance models involving broad local stakeholders, is essential to support the RAA and facilitate recovery.

This chapter discusses planning the RAA as a solution beyond pandemic recovery. We first point out the changes in the agri-food system taken by the pandemic, then outline planning strategies as a recovery method for the RAA. Finally, we raise future perspectives on the research field associated with RAA planning.

2. PANDEMIC AS AN ACCELERATOR FOR THE RETERRITORIALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Before the pandemic, researchers asserted RAA's potential to bring multi-benefits to society. It is promising to eliminate environmental impacts by reducing food miles and to consolidate the local economy by keeping the added value locally. It may also strengthen social relations by re-linking consumers and producers and reinforce local identity by a territorial embedding of agriculture and food cultures (Feagan, 2007; Wiskerke, 2009; Allen, 2010; Morgan & Sonnino, 2010). Although RAA was already identified as a way forward by early adaptors, Covid-19 has brought to light its benefits for society with a much larger audience. Four perspectives can be identified on the pandemic's effects on the RAA.

2.1 Supply Chain Actors Provided a Rapid and Creative Response to The Local Market

Covid-19's outbreak and the following measures disturbed food supply chain actors, e.g., the shutdown of conventional sales channels, supply disturbance due to transport issues, surge in local market demand. Farmers, processors and retail players in both local and non-local supply chains acted rapidly in response to such disturbance. Local supply chain actors adapted by reorienting their marketing channels and increasing production capacities (Chiffoleau et al., 2020; King et al., 2022; Schreiber et al., 2022). For example, when open-air markets were ordered to close in France, producers' drive-through

and online sales were rapidly developed; local associations developed online order tools for local farmers that could not supply to canteens, restaurants and markets (Chiffoleau et al., 2020). Farmers increased production capacity to reply to the spike in local consumers' demand (Schreiber et al., 2022). New actors turned to the local market. In some countries, large retailers introduced local products and dedicated shelves for local food to meet customers' expectations (Chiffoleau et al., 2020; Nemes et al., 2021). The practice of the RAA was largely improved during the pandemic and was proved effective against unpredictable market fluctuations.

2.2 Local Labour's Importance for Agriculture was Revalued

Cross-border immigration restrictions dramatically aggravated the shortage of seasonal farmworkers in regions such as North America and Western Europe (Larue, 2020; Schreiber et al., 2022). Such farmworkers are necessary for labour-intensive sectors such as market gardening (Aday & Aday, 2020). The restrictions on their access affected production capacity and subsequent food markets, for example, the rise in price for specific products (Chiffoleau et al., 2020). The phenomenon alerted the significance of local labour in the agriculture sector. In France and Spain, the governments called on local populations to work in the agriculture sector in order to help harvest fruits and vegetables during the lockdown in spring 2020 (FAO, 2020). Awareness of local labour's importance in the agriculture sector being regained, it might be challenged by the fact that farming is not a desired profession for the young generation nowadays.

2.3 Lifestyle Changes Enabled Re-linking of Urban and Rural Areas

RAA and the lifestyle changed by Covid-19 may help rebuild the rural–urban linkage. First, the lockdown disruptively changed people's everyday work–life patterns. For a moment, people had to stay and work at home with restrictions on travel distance. Such experiences may generate higher expectations of living in close contact with nature, food and agriculture as consumers and gardeners. In the meantime, remote working and online gathering developed during the pandemic made such a lifestyle possible. Second, Covid-19 prompted consumers to turn to local food supplies for food security, with a rationale to support local producers, the economy and the environment (Chiffoleau et al., 2020; Nemes et al., 2021). In parallel, cooking at home became an obligation when restaurants and canteens were closed, making people more engaged in thinking about the food's quality, freshness and origin (Nemes et al., 2021; Sgroi & Modica, 2022).

The lifestyle changes brought about by the pandemic may consequently increase awareness and recognition of the value of land, farming and local, high-quality food. The "harvest camping" project initiated in the Netherlands is an example of how initiatives were developed for non-farmers to engage in farming under Covid-19 and continued after the pandemic. People working in festivals who were without jobs due to Covid-19 organised young people to stay at a camp, harvest with farmers (who had no other farm labourers) during the day, have dinner with products from the farm they were harvesting on and have discussions on food systems (Corré, 2020). This initiative continued after Covid-19 in 2022. An investigation in France made by Chiffoleau et al. (2020) shows a trend that increasing numbers of people desire to produce food by themselves, with some wishing to work in agriculture at a professional level, or at least to experience farming activities. This trend might continue after the pandemic and affect the way that people live by combining (part-time) food production and distance working.

2.4 Public Awareness was Raised in Engaging Issues of Agriculture and Food

Not only private actors but also public actors reacted to mitigate the shock brought by the pandemic through supporting RAA-associated initiatives. Governments at different levels launched initiatives to assist local producers during the pandemic. For instance, local governments made digital maps of local producers' information to facilitate direct purchasing during the pandemic; governments helped farmers to sell food by developing farm boxes and free school meals programmes (Chiffoleau et al., 2020; Nemes et al., 2021; King et al., 2022). Experiencing the pandemic, governments at different levels are likely to be more aware of the RAA and their responsibility in agriculture and food issues. For example, the French state government launched the Recovery Plan, with considerably enlarged funding to support RAA-associated initiatives and food planning projects. The rise in political awareness of the RAA by the pandemic may have long-term effects on territorial policy-making in favouring the RAA.

2.5 Questions Remain in the Perpetuation of RAA

We presented that the pandemic contributed to the RAA in terms of accelerating changes and raising awareness. That being said, the perpetuation of RAA initiatives is questionable. Evidence shows that consumers' demand for local food increased sharply during the first lockdown but fell with its end (see, for example, investigations in France by Chiffoleau et al., 2020). Their research shows that many consumers returned to their purchasing habits before the

pandemic. Farmers' invested economic models were weakened and they had to reorganise their outlets and all their business organisation. This is also likely to apply to other countries due to the determinant roles of price and convenience in food spending and the generally higher cost of local food than mainstream food (Hobbs, 2020; Sgroi & Modica, 2022). Research in Italy also presents that many consumers' habits tended to return to those they had pre-pandemic; still, people tended to continue the habits of food growing established during the pandemic as the connection between people and land was rebuilt (Sgroi & Modica, 2022).

Economic issues further challenge the perpetuation of RAA initiatives in engaging social justice issues. Along with the raised interest in purchasing local food during the pandemic, the low-income population also has been suffering from the lack of access to high-quality food due to the economic decline (Clapp & Moseley, 2020; Nemes et al., 2021; King et al., 2022). With the post-Covid food price rises, more consumers may prioritise price over quality when purchasing food. Observations in the US and France indicate that post-pandemic organic food consumption slowed its growth or even decreased after several years of continuous increases (French Ministry of Agriculture, 2022; Oller, 2022). It may also indicate why self-growing has become popular as a way of accessing quality food at affordable costs. In such circumstances, local governments must take systematic actions to support and promote the RAA in integrating issues of local and high-quality food accessibility, farmers' long-term viability and inhabitants' increasing interest in self-food growing.

3. PLANNING THE RAA: A SOLUTION TO THE PANDEMIC RECOVERY

RAA's benefits have been proven during the pandemic but can only be achieved and perpetuated in a well-settled context (Born & Purcell, 2006; Stein & Santini, 2021). For example, small traffic volume by truck over shorter distances may cumulatively generate more carbon footprints than larger traffic volume by cargo ships and trains (Stein & Santini, 2021). Local governments in some countries with raised awareness of RAA have started exploring how to create a context that supports RAA by developing "food planning". As an emergent type of local policy, food planning means a local policy framework that addresses food system activities to shape local food systems (adapted from Candel, 2020). Here, "planning the RAA" refers primarily to RAA-associated components in food planning policies.

Planning may facilitate the continuation of RAA and, in this way, may facilitate the pandemic recovery. Potential policy instruments for RAA planning are identified by the literature (e.g., Sonnino & Spayde, 2014; Doernberg et al., 2019; Sibbing et al., 2019; Filippini et al., 2019; Candel, 2020) and local gov-

ernments' food planning practices. They are classified into three action fields: farmland preservation and access to land; transition of farming practices; and structuring the local food supply chain.

3.1 Farmland Preservation and Access to Land

Local food production relies on available and accessible farmland for producers. A major challenge is the availability of appropriate farmland in competition with other land uses, such as urban development, natural reserves and renewable energy farms. Another challenge is new farmers' access to land, which generally refers to their lack of capital and competitiveness with existing farmers (e.g., farmers tend to sell land with priority to neighbours) (Korthals Altes, 2020). Access to land is also an issue in RAA initiatives in urban areas. Urban agriculture (e.g., collective food gardens, community support agriculture) provides multifunctions to the city, not only for food production but also for leisure, biodiversity, education and social functions. Land use for farming is an issue that has attracted increased awareness from local stakeholders due to Covid-19. Likewise, with its multifunctions proven to be important during the pandemic, urban agriculture may be more fostered after the pandemic, which also contributes to the healthy cities programmes (Duhl & Sanchez, 1999).

Planning the RAA is about guaranteeing available, appropriate, secure and accessible land to rural and urban producers. Land-use planning, if applicable, can be leveraged to preserve farmland and remove regulatory barriers for RAA. For example, appropriate farmland for RAA can be preserved with priority by land-use planning. In urban areas where traditional land-use regulations may exclude agriculture as a legal use, land-use planning can be adapted to remove legal barriers for RAA. Local governments can also dispose of publicly owned land for RAA with permanent or (in a more innovative way) temporary tenure (Lehtovuori & Ruoppila, 2012). Developing community food gardens in disadvantaged areas can be a strategy to facilitate the low-income population to get affordable food through self-growing (Horst, 2017).

3.2 Transition of Farming Practices

Planning the RAA requires a transition of farming practices considering the environment, healthy diet and local demand–offer balance. Such transition is first about the diversification of food production types. Globalised market-led food systems may lead to massive production of the same category of products, whereas RAA means meeting the needs of local consumers for a diverse range of food products. The importance of such diversification in guaranteeing territorial resilience was further proved by the experience of the pandemic (King

et al., 2022). Second, the transition is about a shift to farming practices with better environmental performance. RAA implies a higher relationship between food production and territory, corresponding to the responsibility of producers and consumers for the environmental impact of agricultural production.

Associated with land access strategies, local food production diversification and sustainable farming can be facilitated by connecting desired farming activities with land strategy. For instance, local governments can designate publicly owned land for designated farming practices (Vandermaelen et al., 2022). Local government and partners can provide knowledge, technical aid, communication with peers and subsidies that farmers need to enable the transition. In an integrated way, sustainable farming, nature maintenance and high-quality food production can be connected. For example, grassland with natural protection requirements can oblige farmers to do extensive farming, while extensive livestock farming helps maintain the grassland and produce high-quality food. In the meantime, the local sale of high-quality food provides a solution to make this sustainable transition economically viable.

3.3 Structuring the Local Food Supply Chain

Food goes through several middle stages before reaching local consumers, i.e., processing, packaging, transportation and distribution. Lack of suitable infrastructure in such middle stages may hinder food from reaching consumers through the local food chain. For example, livestock farmers have to send animals to other territories because no local slaughterhouse exists, and collective catering for local organic food is difficult if no local organic processing centre exists. Shaping the RAA requires well-planned middle stages, which also aims to shape a cost-efficient local food system so that local food can be more affordable.

Planning the RAA can take approaches to facilitate producers' initiatives through putting together the information in order to increase the visibility to consumers and professional buyers (e.g., canteens, restaurants). Local governments can help develop a collective food infrastructure to support RAA, such as local food processing facilities, logistics, local food hubs (e.g., a centrally located facility for local food storage and distribution) and local collective sale sites. Land-use planning can facilitate the organisation of such infrastructure by the consideration of site selection, accessibility and services. It can also help to remove regulatory barriers for diversified farming activities (e.g., on-farm processing, on-farm direct sale, farmers' market). Local government and other public institutions can also promote RAA by leveraging the purchasing power of collective catering with sourcing from local producers.

4. CONCLUSION AND NEW FIELDS OF ENQUIRY

In conclusion, the pandemic's impact implies that food systems, when highly dependent on globalised chains, are vulnerable and may not be able to withstand unpredictable risks (Clapp & Moseley, 2020; King et al., 2022). Therefore, the pandemic recovery refers to not simply a return to a normal state before the pandemic but rather the regaining of a secure food system by reinforcing resilience and sustainability. This chapter has discussed planning the RAA as a solution to the pandemic recovery. The pandemic has brought opportunities and challenges to the transition towards the RAA. As opportunities, the outbreak of Covid-19 has accelerated the RAA's development, proved the RAA's importance and put it in front of a much wider public and private audience. As challenges, the pandemic has shown the unstable status of the RAA as consumers turned back rapidly to their normal purchasing habits and left RAA behind. Planning the RAA is a way of shaping a resilient food system and promoting the pandemic recovery by achieving local economic recovery, helping perpetuate RAA initiatives and building a future-resilient food system.

Planning approaches have been identified through action fields; however, planning the RAA is still new at the local scale. It refers to a still complex system of multi-scale and multi-sector policies and a juxtaposition of different crises (e.g., geopolitical crisis, climate change). As a response to the pandemic recovery, there remains much to be worked out on RAA planning. We have identified three perspectives of challenges in planning the RAA to inspire future studies.

The first challenge concerns the relation between the local food system (which supports the RAA) and the global food system (the mainstream). Studies generally tend to oppose them, claiming that RAA refers to small-scale, anti-industrialised and sustainable practices, and global market-led agricultural activities are large-scale, capitalist and environmentally unsustainable. However, such opposition does not exist inherently and may generate conflicts between stakeholders, i.e., conventional farmers treating RAA practitioners as threats. Born and Purcell (2006) warned not to fall into such a "local trap". The fact is the general coexistence of local and global food systems (Gasselin et al., 2021).

Further, the territorial transition cannot only rely on small-scale demonstrative projects but requires conventional actors (farmers, processing enterprises, supermarkets, etc.) to upscale the transition. The pandemic has, for example, witnessed such a transition for conventional actors as supermarkets involved local products (e.g., Nemes et al., 2021). Countries may have different optimised models of coexistence of local and global food systems. What should

such models be like, and what role should the planning play to deserve further studies.

Second, RAA planning may encounter policy incoherence between different policy sectors and between different government levels. Planning the RAA at a local scale may be conflictual with (inter)national policies. For example, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidises farmers according to the size of their agricultural land (Van der Ploeg et al., 2015). Such policy, even if corrected by the new European agenda on CAP, still encourages farm enlargement and is conflictual with the RAA's ambitions in supporting new and young farmers to work in the RAA. Likewise, local food provision preference in the public procurement sector may be conflictual with the supra-local requirement of open market competition (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010; Ferk & Ferk, 2017).

At the local scale, food planning strategies and RAA-associated territorial policies in other sectors may not be coherent. For example, in some areas of the Netherlands, the land-use plan regulates that farmland in agricultural zones should be grassland to maintain the open landscape. Such regulations may hinder food planning goals of developing diversified RAA activities with other forms of landscape (e.g., food forests) (Gemeente Grootegast, 2010, 2016). Political decisions can be made to remove such hindrances from local regulations but usually take a long time, whereas the Covid-19 pandemic has given lessons that crisis requires rapid reactions (Schwab & Sternfels, 2022). Overall, planning the RAA coherently with other associated policies and with the ability to encounter future uncertain risks is a topic which deserves study for the pandemic recovery.

Third, the pandemic recovery does not occur as an individual process but is juxtaposed with a series of new challenges, e.g., the geopolitical crisis, the aggravated climate change. For instance, the global food crisis brought about by the Ukraine crisis may necessitate national measures to increase production. The European Commission, for example, proposed measures including scaling up sustainable production capacities (European Commission, 2022). "Sustainable" being used, it still risks a turn to a productivist agricultural model, which may sacrifice the environmental performance, opposing the goal of mitigating climate change. Planning the RAA should be situated in a larger context with these issues with potentially contradicting goals, and try to contribute to the diverse planning challenges, e.g., biodiversity improvement, climate change mitigation, maintaining of productivity, shaping the healthy city and provision with affordable food. A global investigation involving all those potentially contradictory aspects and innovative solutions would be valuable to the pandemic recovery through planning the RAA.

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