



# Towards a Handbook for **SUSTAINABLE FOOD IN URBAN COMMUNITIES** [URBACT]



strategicdesign  
scenarios.net

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# Acknowledgements

The URBACT Thematic Network “Sustainable Food in Urban Communities - Developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems” is a project funded by URBACT II (2007 - 2013) and involving 10 European cities that wish to grow, deliver and enjoy more sustainable food: they are looking for joint, effective and sustainable solutions to develop low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems.

The 10 partners are: Brussels Environment of the Brussels Capital Region (Lead Partner), the Bristol City Council, City of Messina, the Municipality of Amersfoort, the City of Lyon, the City of Göteborg, Vaslui Municipality, Ourense City Council, City of Oslo and Athens development and destination management agency sa.

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URBACT mini-site: <http://urbact.eu/sustainable-food>

Project blog:

[www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food](http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food)

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# SYNTHESIS OF THE CITY PROFILES, CONVERGING POINTS, EXPECTATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS



This article presents the main lessons learned during the preparation phase of an URBACT Thematic Network focussed on **Sustainable Food in Urban Communities**. One of the main activities of this preparation phase was a tour of the **10 European cities** taking part to the network: Amersfoort, Athens, Bristol, Brussels, Gothenburg, Lyon, Messina, Ourense, Oslo, Vaslui. Site visits, informal interviews and presentations during meetings with forming local stakeholder groups allowed engaging in more than **250 different face-to-face discussions** with local stakeholders involved in sustainable food and build a good understanding of the current developments of the topic in the different cities. The 10 visits allowed building **a first catalogue of 98 cases of best practices** of sustainable food in an urban context. The text of the article is mostly extracted from the Baseline report on food concluding the preparation phase. This report includes also an overview of the literature on sustainable food in urban context and the detailed description of the profiles of the 10 cities involved.



“Site visits, informal interviews and presentations during Local Support Group meetings allowed engaging in more than 250 different face-to-face discussions with local stakeholders...”

# A varied panorama of cities and populations

The network offers a good coverage of varied situations regarding the involvement of cities towards a more sustainable local food system on the one hand and the engagement of the urban communities in achieving this system on the other hand.

# Territorial contexts...

The partner cities are distributed from extreme West to extreme East of the European territory. They also cover latitudes from South in Italy, Greece, Rumania and Spain till Nordic part of Europe with large difference in climate influence of agriculture.

They range from medium size cities with a population between 70 000 to 250 000 including Vaslui in the East of Rumania, Ourense in Galicia region of Spain, Amersfoort in the periphery of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Messina right on the strait between Sicilia and Italy.

Then comes a group of medium-large cities with population ranging from 400 000 to 1 100 000 including Bristol in the West of UK, Gothenburg on the Sweden Baltic coast, Oslo in the South of Norway, Athens, the capital city of Greece, Brussels-Capital Region in Belgium and Lyon in the centre-East of France.

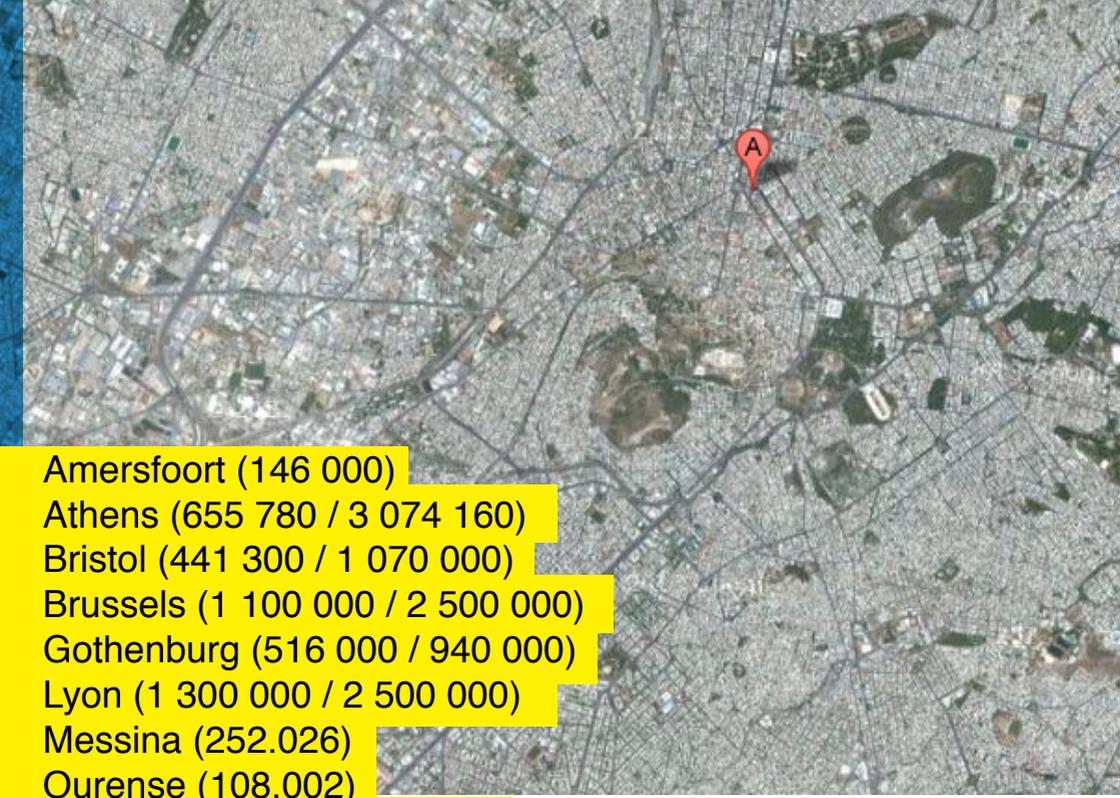
Beyond the size and demography the nature of urban fabrics of the partners cities and the regional context in which they are inserted plays an important role in our

subject. Athens or Lyon are a very dense and mineral city whereas cities like Oslo, Gothenburg or Brussels present a more loose urban fabric leaving more opportunities for food production at periphery.

The direct peri-urban areas may be characterized by a very populated urban sprawl especially for the biggest cities like Lyon, Athens, Brussels or Amersfoort in comparison with very rural outskirts like for Ourense, Vaslui or Messina.

Finally the regional context is well-known for having a rich agriculture like Galicia for Ourense or Rhone-Alpe for Lyon in comparison with Attika region around Athens or with the regions around Oslo or Gothenburg.

It is also to be noted that some of the cities are important ports with a fishing tradition influencing the diet in Messina, Gothenburg, Oslo, Athens and till certain extend Bristol and Ourense whereas Lyon, Vaslui and Brussels are based in the hinterland.



Amersfoort (146 000)  
Athens (655 780 / 3 074 160)  
Bristol (441 300 / 1 070 000)  
Brussels (1 100 000 / 2 500 000)  
Gothenburg (516 000 / 940 000)  
Lyon (1 300 000 / 2 500 000)  
Messina (252.026)  
Ourense (108.002)  
Oslo (613 285 / 1 000 000)  
Vaslui (69 000)

# Food cultures

Beyond the territory and land context, there is a striking difference in the food culture in the different partner cities, resulting in large disparity in terms of resilience, environmental impact and CO2 emissions.

Italy, Greece France and Spain are world-known for their respective gastronomies: Messina, Athens, Lyon and Ourense demonstrates a strong food culture, which has also been spontaneously referred by the other cities of the network.

Whereas countries like Norway, UK or Netherlands suffer from a weaker food culture that dissolved quickly into the push of low-quality food brought by modern agro-

industry. The challenge for Oslo, Bristol or Amersfoort belonging to the latter group is to recover from this situation and the topic of sustainable food is seen as an opportunity to build or rebuild a food culture.

For Messina, Athens and still a certain extend Lyon, Ourense and Vaslui, the challenge is opposite: they still have a strong food capital, striving to avoid its on-going erosion. Sustainable food is then seen as a leapfrogging opportunity to pass from a still vibrant traditional food culture to a sustainable one without passing to an intermediate stage of industrial consumption.

- Matvett.no project, Oslo, Sweden
- 
- 



Still a strong food capital...

...effort to avoid erosion, to leapfrog



Food culture already lost...

...effort to recover

- Cooperativa C.A.I.F.E., Messina, Italy

- Capital of Taste 2012,
- Amersfoort, Netherlands

A population rooted/  
engaged with food...



...often blind to slow  
disengagement

An active foodies  
community...



...on top of a population  
who doesn't care

- Food gathering event,  
Ourense, Spain

The posture of the population in front of food reflects this polarization: cities with strong food culture demonstrate a population that is strongly rooted and engaged with food.

In spite of the robust traditional and diffused engagement there are signs of erosion clearly visible in particular in the food habits of the new generations in Messina, Athens, Vaslui. At present these cities tend to demonstrate a certain blindness to the risk of this evolving situation.

The cities lacking with a strong food culture shows generally a very dynamic and colourful communities of food activists. Amersfoort, Oslo, Bristol, Gothenburg, Brussels and Lyon shows both patterns, food activists

multiply initiatives from urban gardening to food festivals. These so-called 'foodies' represents a minority. Often, their high visibility tends to hide a mainstream population rather disengaged with food and not necessarily sensitive to the food community arena.

# A general reclaiming food movement...



Despite the rich variety in territorial and cultural differences described above, the network of cities shows strong elements of convergence for what regards the theme of sustainable food in urban communities.

## Food resilience as an issue

First of all the theme appears to be clearly as an issue for all the participating cities and a deep concern to reach a more resource and carbon efficient food system. Some of them as Bristol, Brussels, Amersfoort or Lyon, Gothenburg or Oslo have already demonstrated interest at both citizens and political levels.

But also for newcomers, joining the URBACT Thematic Network appears as an opportunity catalysing a mix of latent requests ranging from defending traditional gastronomy, reducing food-related health diseases to increasing city resilience or reducing its carbon footprint.

‘Sustainable food’ appears clearly as an issue for cities...



- Hartcliffe Health & Environment Action Group,
- Hartcliffe neighbourhood,
- Bristol, England



## Crisis as threat and opportunity

The generalised economic crisis generates precariousness in access to food for an increasing number of families across the cities of the network.

This is blatantly obvious in cities hit by the crisis like Athens, high unemployment rates as in Ourense or Messina or among a significant part of the population living in poverty like Bristol or Brussels.

Other factors such as fast population growth also affect richer cities like Oslo. Sustainable food then seems as an even less attainable goal and a low political priority when even cheaper low quality industrial food becomes difficult to afford for underprivileged population groups.

The issue of food poverty is highly sensitive but the cities

of the network also see some opportunities that are linked to any crisis. Transition towards sustainable food reveals many synergies with the revitalisation of the socio-economic fabric.

Cases in Bristol such as the “Feeding Bristol” local community growing project or reengagement in cooking activities supported by the “Hartcliffe Health & Environment Action Group” provide direct benefits to the families with decreasing purchasing power.

Labour intensive food production activities especially in urban contexts present in Brussels, Ourense or Athens has a potential of job opportunities and the emergence of new entrepreneurship.

- “The food challenge”, Etterbeek, Brussels Capital Region, Belgium

# Creative activism and resisting traditions

A 'reclaiming food' bottom-up movement is strongly emerging opposed to previous decades where food was perceived in terms of service, convenience, innovation and modernity.

According to the food cultural background described above, this diffuse reclaiming food request assumes different forms: a creative activism reconnecting with self-growing food, cooking skills, social or symbolic values of eating together and innovating in new forms of delivering, cutting intermediaries, inventing short food networks.

On the opposite, we can see in the cities with strong food culture forms of resistance to preserve tradition, an attachment to original culinary principles and a diffuse resistance to any changes including towards sustainable concerns.

- The GASAP network,  
• Brussels Capital Region, Belgium



A 'reclaiming food' bottom-up movement strongly emerging...

Food activists social innovations (i.e. Bristol, Amersfoort, Oslo, Gothenburg, Brussels, Lyon)...

...food oriented population culture (i.e. Brussels, Lyon, Athens, Messina, Ourense, Vaslui)

- Canteen chef, Messina, Sicily, Italy



A transversal topic that is pooling together all what is food but sometimes coming from different motivations (social inclusion / education / art / solidarity / fair and ethical / environment...)



## Transversal push

Another characteristics of the reclaiming food trend is its transversal aspect, it pools together all what is related to food in each cities mixing often initiatives born with very different motivations.

Urban gardening for instance may start as an activity facilitating social inclusion of marginalised population. It may also originate as an art project, an educational initiative, a pretext for socialisation, a production

enterprise or a simple recreational hobby. These different motivations tend to blur and most gardening initiatives are multipurpose.

The resulting aggregations made by the transversal nature of the network theme increases the number of initiatives to be found in a determinate city but often brings together heterogeneous initiatives difficult to handle with same supporting policies.

# Leveraging on food attractiveness

The population engagement process into sustainable food tends to be based on similar strategies building on this reclaiming food movement and leveraging on engaging dimension of food: quality, tastes, gastronomy, socialisation, pleasure...

This indirect strategy is working quite well: Initiatives from community gardening to food festivals and from farmer seasonal markets to cooking schools tends to pop-up everywhere.

It raises interest in food first in order to focus on sustainability.

The limit of this strategy is that many initiatives reach an involvement in food but not necessarily in sustainable food.

In other words, many promising food initiatives as listed before may stay as happy and enthusiastic moments of socialisation and gastronomy events that hardly influences the population food practices and in particular, the reduction of its environmental impacts.

Oslo Food Court, . . . . .  
Oslo, Sweden

University of Gastronomy, . . . . .  
Messina, Sicily, Italy

Same strategy to leverage on engaging dimension of food (quality, tastes, gastronomy, party, pleasure...) to engage population with food sustainability (sometimes risk to loose environmental goals)





Niche level : upscale / jobs > transversal issue:

Jobs & business models:

How can we consolidate promising food practices, transform them into sustainable businesses and upscale sustainable food to a larger share of the population?

## Up-scaling niches

The last common aspect to be underlined is that most of the initiatives considered in the different cities are at a niche stage and strive to upscale.

Promising solutions emerged both in terms of sustainable food and of potential new business models.

The challenge is now to screen the most promising ones, generate viable enterprises, bring them to a regime level in order to both provide sustainable food to larger share of the urban population and to generate employment opportunities.

- New market gardening farmer, Vaslui, Romania

# Screening promising initiatives...

Partner cities show a panorama of initiatives ranging from micro-actions to more structural projects or policy changes. The most colourful and visible ones such as food-art happenings or large popular food-oriented gatherings are not necessarily significant in terms of local transition towards sustainable food.

Reciprocally, important on-going transformations based on sustainable procurement in school canteens or redynamisation of a market gardening city-belt may have less visibility and raises less popular attractiveness but have greater impact in the end.

# Define project scale

A hierarchy between the panorama of initiatives brought forward by each city is necessary to clarify the steps toward the consolidation of a local sustainable food system and the Local Action Plan leading to it.

Apart from positive thinking on any step forward to be considered (no matter the level of its importance), a simple scale to situate the level of development of initiatives considered by the cities should be introduced to help comparisons and to facilitate exchanges of experiences:

— Social innovation / first pilot (i.e. a shopping mall rooftop with a permaculture garden in Oslo; a street currently dedicated to the traffic that will be turned into a garden with vegetable plots in Athens);

— Recurrent cases / different enterprises (i.e. a seasonal farmers market taking place 4 times a year in Amersfoort; 70 restaurants in Brussels proposing a sustainable food menu during the Goûter Bruxelles yearly festival);

— Emerging trends / share of the market (i.e. 30 community gardens managed by the municipality of Lyon; refurbishment of the central markets selling fresh food in Vaslui or Ourense);

— Mainstreaming / generalisation (i.e. generalisation of organic canteen program in Brussels; 100% organic meat in public canteens in Gothenburg)



Different levels of projects/initiatives:  
- social innovation/first pilot  
- recurrent cases/different enterprises  
- emerging trend/share of the market  
- mainstream/generalization

• Nos Piliifs farm,  
Brussels Capital Region, Belgium

Multiple promising initiatives springing –up,  
systemic multiplication effects...  
...a necessity to agree on some basis of comparison



## Estimate social involvement

Most of the initiatives considered have a systemic nature: a community garden generally combines multiple direct effects (i.e. diffusing growing skills among the population; sample production of vegetables...) and generates indirect effects (i.e. reconnection with the use of fresh ingredients; revitalisation of the neighbourhood life...).

It is therefore difficult to estimate the importance of each single initiative for the multiplication factor of combined direct and indirect effects. Some of the visited projects introduced spontaneously a simple assessment scale trying to estimate how many people are touched by the initiative.

# GHG emissions and resource efficiency

The initiatives promoting food witnessed in different cities have a great value to re-engage the population with food. This is already very important to generate an interest in food prior to introduce sustainability concerns on the one hand.

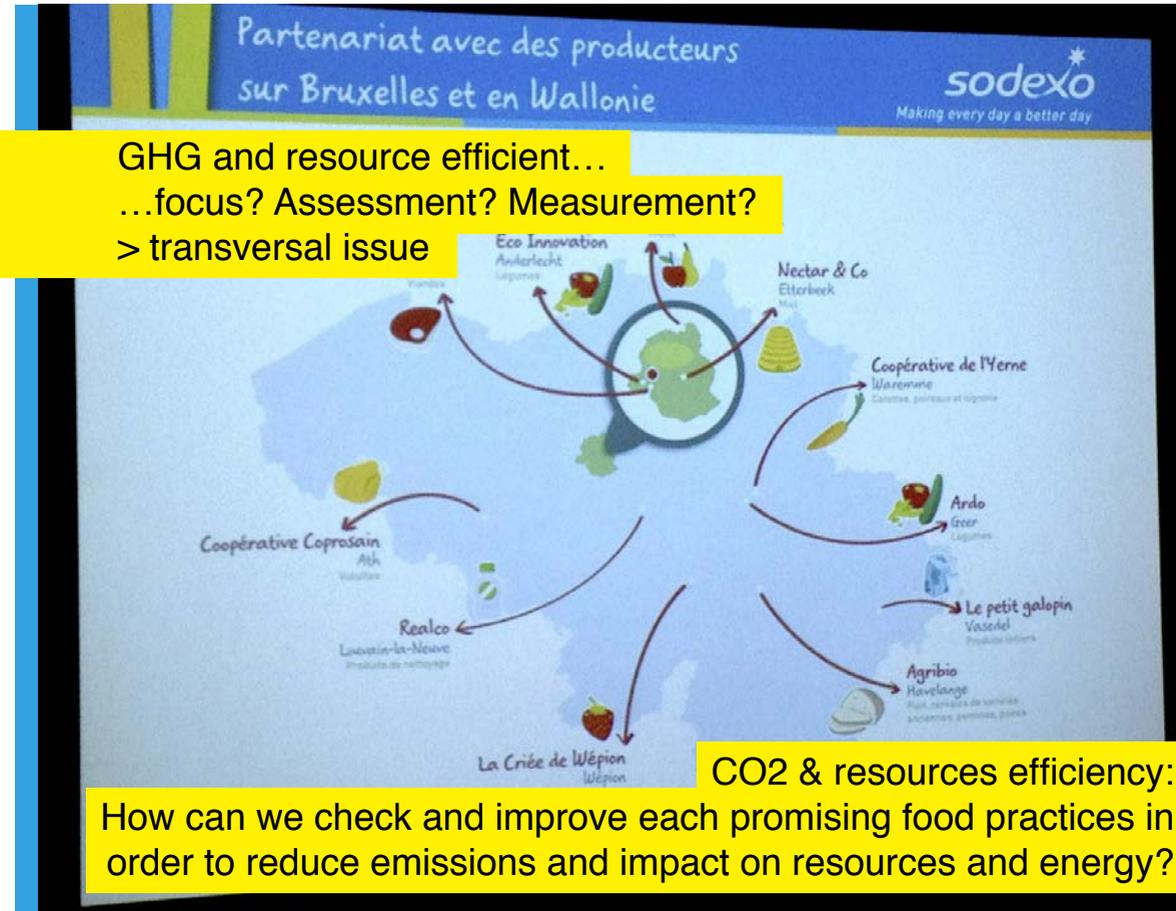
On the other hand and as already mentioned earlier in the text, a re-engagement in food is necessary but not sufficient to ensure that focused initiatives are promising in terms of sustainability.

Reduction of GHG emission and improvement of resource efficiency has to be considered for each of the emerging solutions to be part of the new local food

system in each city. Progresses on sustainability indicators are necessary across the network in order to classify best practices in terms of sustainable food and to give priority on the most promising one and reorient the others.

For instance, private catering company Sodexo provides half of the meals in the canteens in Brussels.

In response to Brussels Environment's will to improve environmental performances, the company is fine-tuning an eco-calculator that indicates the meal's carbon footprint.



• Sodexo Canteen eco-calculator,  
Brussels Capital Region, Belgium



# Governance of the local sustainable food system

Partner cities welcome the topic of sustainable food recognising it is a critical issue in future urban contexts. The transversal nature of this subject is challenging most of the municipalities' infrastructures. Earlier, food was dealt at higher national or regional levels, whereas now its approach at city levels tends to pool together sectors that did not particularly interact before.

Lyon and Gothenburg in particular underlined how the sustainable food topics require bringing together land use issues with a number of departments, including the department of urban planning, the one in charge of parks and gardens, the environmental impact assessment one, low incomes, population mitigation and the department dealing with social inclusion, entrepreneurship and job creation, the department of economics etc.

The food topic cuts across activities, sectors, department...  
...generate transversality within public administration  
(i.e. Gothenburg, Lyon)

# Generating synergies

The 'reclaiming food' movement generates many heterogeneous initiatives, often isolated one from another and developing informally without any overall strategy.

The challenge for the partner cities is then to keep the momentum, to create links between these initiatives.

Such micro-projects may stay in independent niches if they do not synergize. Isolated food-related initiatives can be compared to acupuncture needles stimulating specific points of the territory.

If well chosen, they can link together, cross-fertilize and reinforce each other. These points then may generate a systemic effect that goes beyond a series of localised benefits - a systemic transformative effect on the territory and that generates the emergence of a local food system..

Many heterogeneous initiatives...

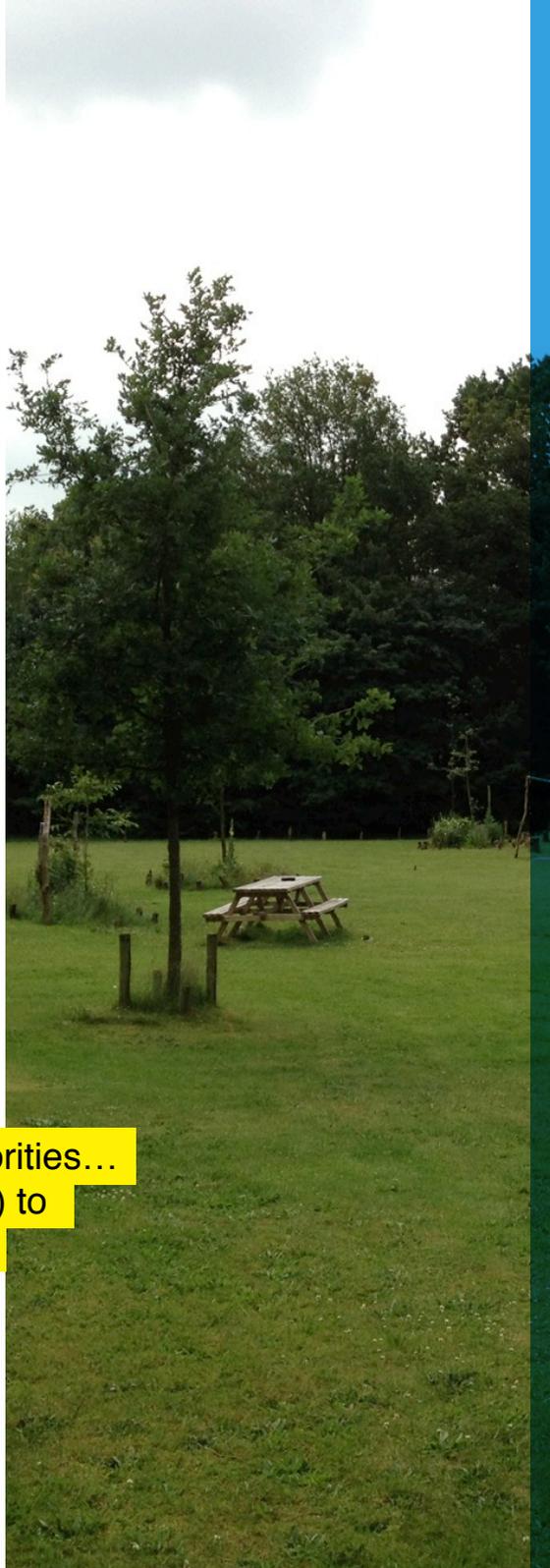
...keep the momentum, create links, synergies (i.e. ULSG people meet for the first time or wish to know each other better/have more exchanges)



...towards a local food system (acupuncture: from isolated to systemic...)

> transversal issue:

Synergies, governance & local system: How can we link multiple promising food practices, develop synergies, increase resilience and generate the vision of a coherent local food system?



Different posture for public authorities...  
...from public-driven (i.e. Athens) to  
public back-up (i.e. Amersfoort)

## Governance postures

The postures adopted by the municipalities in the different partner cities in order to stimulate and generate these systems of food initiatives show also very important differences.

In most of the cases public authorities consider they should initiate and lead public participation. In Athens for instance, the Eleonas' urban farm is born as a top-down project decided at a political level that is subsequently seeking engagement of the local population to take part in growing activities.

Ourense also shows a strong development policy involving 10 surrounding villages in a collaborative market and a gardening project. Afterwards, municipalities tend to monitor and control the projects they initiated: Lyon achieved the stage of 30 community gardens and decided to slow down the new creation in

order to monitor as in an incubator if the community gardens evolve towards a financial and management autonomy.

Bristol tends to adopt a more loose posture watching the many food initiatives emerging in the city, comparing the social entrepreneurship business model behind them and their capabilities to grow and disseminate autonomously and with less public or private subsidies in this period of budgetary shortage.

At the opposite extreme from Athens, Amersfoort shows a situation where the lead is left in the hands of the local food community and the public administration is adopting essentially a back-up governance posture especially removing barriers – mainly on legislative issues – that prevent the grassroots movements from developing.

# Platforms and experimentations

Beyond this main polarisation between top-down initiatives driven by public administration and bottom-up movements where the public administration adopts a back-up posture, some cities show specific and innovative governance features.

Bristol established an informal policy platform: the Bristol Food Policy Council is not an official administrative body of the municipality but it acts as such.

A dozen of representatives of local food stakeholders including small and large businesses, non-profit organisations, academics and public authorities regularly meet, discuss food-related issues and problems and work as a think tank and an advisory panel for local governance.

Food Policy Council, . . .  
Bristol, England

Ourense shows a series of initiatives right in line with a current debate on the right of experimentation of public authorities.

The main starting initiative of the municipality is an articulated project involving stimulation of market gardening in surrounding villages combined with a direct delivery scheme and the refurbishment of the historical central market.

The whole project works as a small-scale experimentation testing both different relatively independent initiatives and their integration through a strategy brought by the municipality.

Market Food Lab, . . . . .  
Ourense, Portugal

Different posture for public authorities...

Platform...

...Local Food Policy Council (i.e. Bristol)



Experimentation...

...Local Unit of Nutrition and Food (i.e. Ourense)

# RESULTING THEMES AND CROSSCUTTING ISSUES



The URBACT Thematic Network “Sustainable food in urban communities”, composed by 10 European cities intends to show how cities can create a coherent food policy that would take into account environmental, social and economic issues based on their level of actions.

# Organization in 3 themes

In line with the concept of rural-urban continuum presented in the State of Art, three themes have been selected to organize the multiple vibrant and heterogeneous initiatives of cities along a local sustainable food supply chain: “Growing”, “Delivering” and “Enjoying”.

These themes have strong links with each other and are related with the capacity to act and with the various competences of the cities and partners. This generic focus allows the creation of a framework in which every city can express its own strategy.

## Growing

The theme of Growing explores all possible ways to grow food near or within the city. It includes fostering sustainable agricultural growth in urban and periurban areas owing to urban planning strategies; the use of derelict lands; safeguarding and improving the fertility of lands; developing new technologies not requiring so much land to grow; encouraging decentralised individual, community and commercial fruit and vegetable gardens & food production; encouraging households and citizen 'organisations' to grow food in the city, in gardens, in parks, on public and private green spaces, on rooftops, on balconies...

## Delivering

The theme of Delivering explores ways to distribute, share and procure local food inside the city. It includes more sustainable and less carbon intensive delivery systems giving efficient opportunities to local production; enabling direct links between supply and demand for sustainable food; facilitating the transition of existing distribution market actors towards greater sustainability and lower carbon intensity; stimulating the emergence of new initiatives (e.g. food businesses, retail...) and other local initiatives (e.g. markets, purchasing groups, networks, transparency in food chain...)

## Enjoying

The theme of Enjoying explores how people in the city can embrace a sustainable, happy, healthy and vibrant food culture in canteens and households. It includes an increase in the demand for sustainable food (e.g. local products, without pesticides, seasonal and fresh products...) and an encouragement of sustainable practices (e.g. food storage, preparation, avoiding waste...) by supporting changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of canteens and of final consumers. This can be achieved by involving urban consumer groups not previously reached or aware and adapting the approaches to their specificities (e.g. low-income households, single person households, different food cultures, young families lacking cooking skills...).

# Crosscutting issues



The transversal overview of the main lessons learnt during the visits of the ten partner cities reveals three main recurrent concerns that will be put forward as three key crosscutting questions. They will systematically be considered in the network's discussions and deliverables for each theme:

## Governance, synergies & local system

How can we link multiple promising food practices, develop synergies, increase resilience and generate the vision of a coherent local food system?

This question applies to all 3 themes combined (growing, delivering, enjoying). It requires learning from each other's food governance approaches (e.g. Bristol's Food policy council, Amersfoort's bottom-up

facilitation...), drawing on the URBACT methodology & capacity building related to Local Support Groups and Local Action Plans. It also requires an initial inventory/mapping of what is already in place in the partner cities in the area of sustainable food, in so that each city takes targeted actions to generate synergies, upscale initiatives and strengthen the local food system.

# Social Inclusion, jobs & economics

How can we leverage on sustainable food transition to reduce food poverty, foster (re)engagement with growing and cooking food, support inclusion of marginalised and underprivileged population groups and enhance cohesion between communities? How can we consolidate promising food practices, transform them into sustainable businesses and upscale sustainable food initiatives to reach a larger share of the population?

Examples of how this question relates to the 3 themes:

## ■ Growing

What is the economic importance of the local sustainable food production and transformation

sector? What is the job creation/preservation potential in this area, notably for unqualified agricultural workers? What business models exist to upscale pilot farms and make them viable in the long term? How can local communities and marginalised or vulnerable population groups be involved in growing projects and benefit from them?

## ■ Delivering

What is the economic importance of the sustainable food distribution sector? What is the job creation/preservation potential in this area, notably start-up of new means of distribution and shift of existing actors? What business models exist to step-up from a niche market and ensure access of local producers to local markets? How can local communities strengthen their ties and take an active

role through purchasing groups and other bottom-up projects? How can commercial retail be complemented by social groceries to ensure fair access?

## ■ Enjoying

What is the economic importance of sustainable food demand (both private consumption and public canteens) as a lever to drive supply? What is the job creation/preservation potential in this area, notably through a shift in public procurement practices and in the services provided by catering? How can food purchases become more sustainable and remain affordable within a limited budget for households and public bodies (through redefinition of menus, lowering share of animal protein in favour of vegetables & legumes, use of locally available produce...) with special attention

to accessibility for low-income households? Reaching out to population groups less easily reached by communications on sustainable food (multi-cultural, low-income households...)

# CO2 & resources efficiency

How can we check and improve promising food practices in order to reduce emissions and impact on resources and energy?

Examples of how this question relates to the 3 themes:

## ■ Growing

Considering the carbon footprint and resource efficiency of various urban agriculture methods (greenhouses, aquaponics, indoor production...) and which growing practices should be promoted on environmental grounds in the local context. Avoid wastage at production stage.

## ■ Delivering

Assessing the relative importance of transport distances and logistics to the city and within the city in terms of carbon footprint and resource efficiency. Avoid wastage along the food chain.

## ■ Enjoying

Enable informed consumer and public procurement decisions with regards to carbon footprint and resource efficiency of different options. Foster behavioural change for more sustainable practices (purchasing, storage, cooking) and avoid food wastage.”

# TOWARDS AN URBACT THEMATIC NETWORK



## TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGES EXPECTATIONS

Major reasons to take part in this URBACT Thematic Network emerged from discussions with the forming group of local stakeholders in each city and from the interactions between cities' requests and assets on sustainable food.

- Fair and Sustainable City label,
- Lyon, France

## Transfer experiences

First of all, cities will reciprocally benefit from the experience of the other cities in developing particular actions such as public procurement to promote sustainable food both from the demand and the supply sides.

This is for instance an area where Brussels, Gothenburg or Vaslui could transfer part of their know-how to Athens, Bristol, Oslo and Amersfoort. In the same way the experience of Lyon with a municipal Fair and Sustainable City Label and of Bristol with its Good Food Charter will strongly benefit other cities for instance the Eating Ourense label, the Messina Region food label or the Greek Cooking label for Athens.

*Lyon "Fair and sustainable" program was set up in 2010 in order to create a community of sustainable practices among the trade people in town. The label is characterised by transparency of selection criteria, progressive improvement process for those not yet eligible. The cooperation happens in club of exchange between entities awarded with the label. The aim is to label 400 businesses or associations toward 2014.*



Lyon Fair and Sustainable City label...



Lindåsskolan school Chef...

- Lindåsskolan school canteen Chef, Gothenburg, Sweden

## Implement ideas

Beyond possible exchanges of experiences between cities (see exhaustive presentation of 'gives and gets' hereafter) the transnational URBACT exchanges will allow to transfer inspiration and innovative ideas that pop-up in one city and may be implemented right away in many others within and beyond the network.

To pick up one out of many such examples: reducing food waste is a critical concern in particular for school canteens where kids show often a narrow food spectrum and are reluctant to finish their plate.

A pro-active canteen chef in Lindåsskolan a primary and secondary school in Gothenburg invented the tasting spoon: tea spoons available on the self-service food line allow kids to taste the food before they help themselves thus reducing food waste for dislikes or excessive quantities taken.

This and many such tiny but significant social innovations could easily be adapted to school canteens of the network and beyond.



# Cross fertilize between supporting (re)engagement and avoiding disengagement

Current situations reveal on the one hand partner cities with an active food community stimulating a population disconnected with and on the other hand partner cities with a traditional strong food culture fighting against its erosion.

The URBACT network offers in particular a very important opportunity of cross-fertilization between both groups of cities.

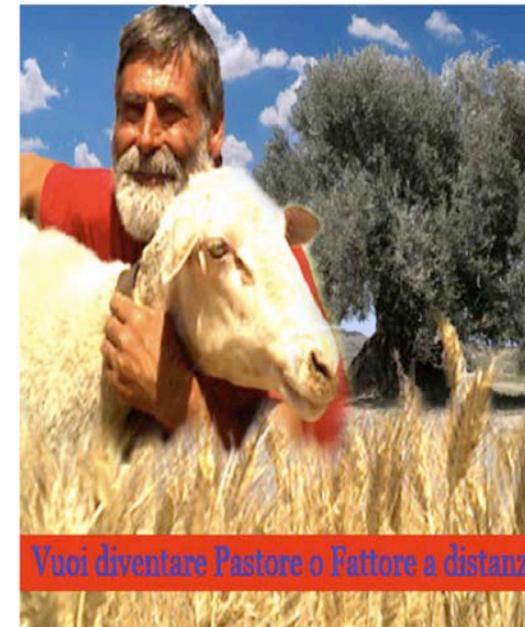
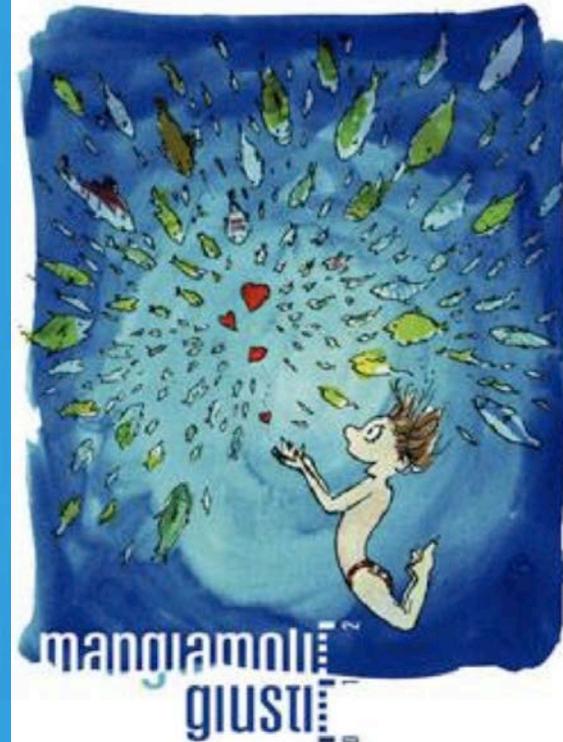
The former group shows a wide range of explicit public policies and social initiatives that could be adapted to the latter group.

Reciprocally, the latter group has invented a series of actions of strengthening and revitalising their existing cultural assets that could be transposed to the former group context.

Within the Italy-born Slow Food movement a wide variety of food-reclaiming actions evolved, adapted and reinvented with

the internationalisation of the movement: for instance and among many good practices, the Atelier del Gusto (Taste Workshop) or the Presidi (safeguarding action to literally 'rescue' an endangered food species) are both suitable to support the (re)engagement and avoid disengagement with food of populations.

*Slow Food organises an education campaign on how to eat properly fish: not too small to secure reproduction and not too old because of heavy metals. Other campaign from Lega Coop consists in building links between cities and countryside proposing urban inhabitants to adopt a sheep in a rural farm: a light idea that induces families to visit the sheep and permit reconnection with territory...*



“Mangiamoli giusti” and “Adopt a sheep”...

• “Mangiamoli giusti” and “Adopt a sheep”,  
Messina, Sicily, Italy



100% organic meat in public canteens...

- Lindåsskolan school Chef,  
Gothenburg, Sweden

## Leverage on existing governance and policy practices

The URBACT network presents a great opportunity to influence reciprocally governance posture and policy practice habits. The very confrontation to a municipality facing similar challenges but taking action in a totally different way shows that alternatives exist and may be efficient even if in a different socio-economical context.

Cross-fertilization in governance cultures concerns for instance the role of public participation: Gothenburg leverages on a goal of 100% organic meat in public canteens to induce global low-meat diet; Bristol encourages synergies between public and private funding requested by “growing” initiatives; Amersfoort gives particular attention to removing barriers to food-related social innovations; Lyon provides knowledge and expertise support to the study and management of community garden dynamics.

# Embody a vision

One more interesting appetite triggered among partner cities by the participation to the URBACT network is the generation and embodiment of the sustainable food vision. Cities, as seen earlier in the text focuses on a series of challenges in terms of food security, access and quality and aim at improving their resilience.

Each of the partner cities intends to build a more resilient and sustainable local food system. They each compose their own mix of solutions between local specific challenges, emerging popular initiatives, working policy practices.

The constitution of a Local Support Group pools together active forces and the projection into a Local Action Plan envisions progressively how a sustainable food city may look like in the near future. Actually, the focus on a selection of emerging best practices during the Lead Expert visits provided samples of what food resilience might be.

For instance, the city of Vaslui is immersed in a still vibrant rural environment with limited access

to expansive mechanisation and unsustainable pesticides or fertilizers; traditional practices of self-production were reinforced during the domination of the communist regime and a large part of the population is still highly engaged with food, producing vegetables and fruits, making their own wine, piling stocks in purposely made storage basements, etc. Thus Vaslui may embody for the other cities of the network, one of the possible visions of a resilient sustainable food city.

*Mr and Mrs Tinaru, a middle-high class retired couple is certainly not representative of the 3-4000 single family houses with cultivated garden. Their brand new house on a large 8000 sqm piece of land is much above the average line. But their engagement with food seems to be much more symptomatic: they are organized as a real self-production growing food in two on more than half of their plot, experimenting*

## • Household resilience, Vaslui, Romania



Household resilience

*many varieties of grapes and tomatoes, making their wine and piling home made preserves in the summer, storing food in their 'natural fridge' specially made cave*

*and welcoming any visitor with a complete tasting of their production.*

# A Handbook on Sustainable Food in Urban Communities

The ten partner cities provide a good coverage of the different challenges and opportunities for what regards their common focus on transition towards sustainable food in urban contexts. Their disparities is therefore a great strength for the purpose of the URBACT Thematic Network as most of the requests cities have in terms of acquiring knowledge, transfer experience, learn from good and bad practices can be found among the same group of cities.

At local level, the URBACT project has been an opportunity for many local stakeholders to meet for the first time. Round tables of participants' presentations, reactions to the presentation of the URBACT network and exchanges on expectations clearly reveal interest of local stakeholders to meet. Even when they happened to know each other before, this was for most of

them the first time they had an opportunity to exchange about sustainable food issues. And even where groups had already been formed prior to the URBACT project, as was the case in Bristol or Amersfoort, the interest was high for more frequent, informal and forward looking opportunities to share own initiatives, projects, problems, etc, and to discuss the local food system.

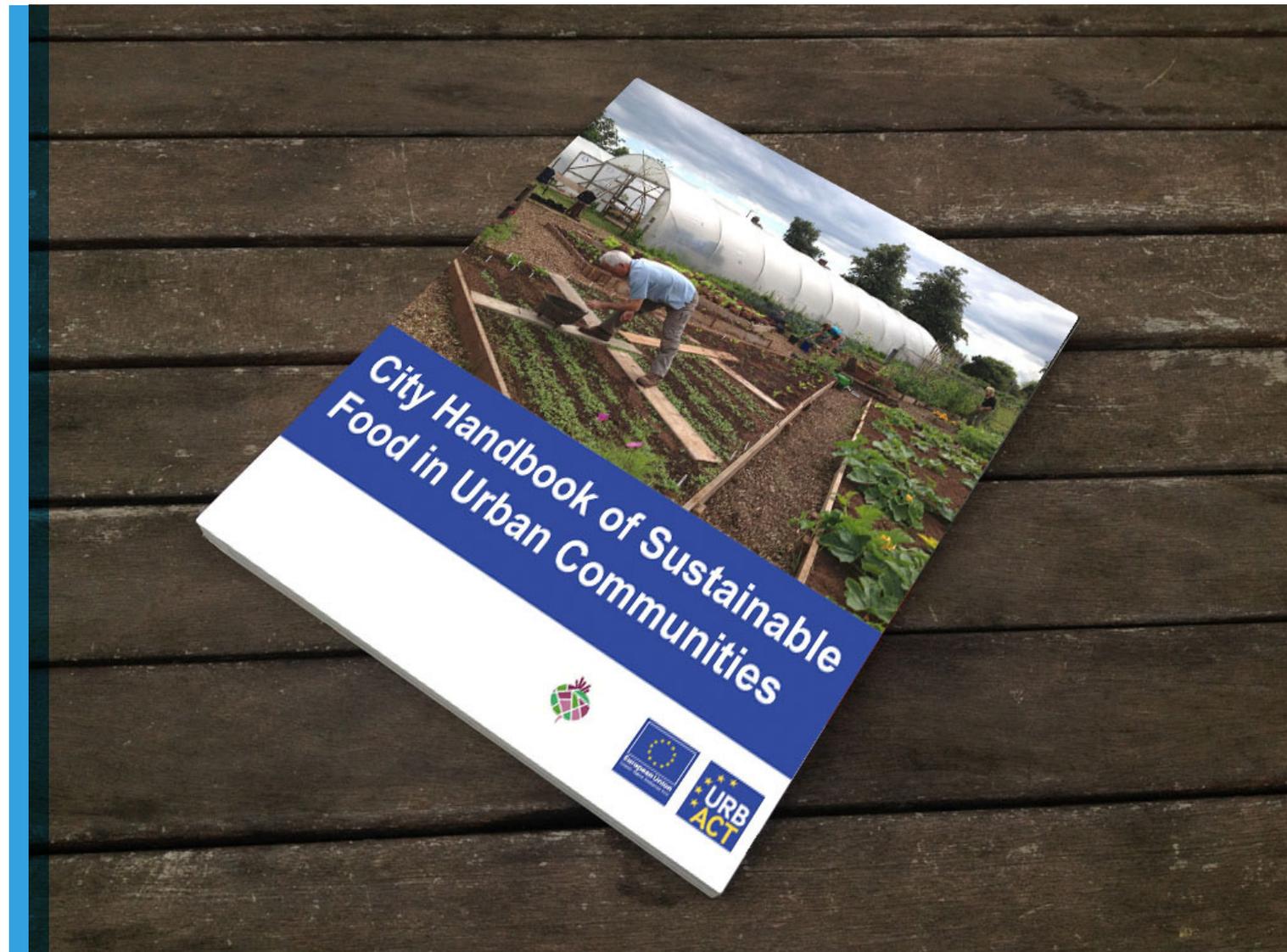
Among the goals of the URBACT thematic network one of the intentions is to gather the experiences and lessons learnt along the project and present them into an Handbook in order to disseminate results and engage new cities in engaging Local Support Groups and in developing Local Action Plans for sustainable food in an urban context.

This Handbook is meant to be an easy to read and hands-on publication with different entry points for the different targets:

Elected representatives and policy makers at municipality level will find a panorama of experiences of various cities and their different pathways they followed in terms of governance, stakeholder engagement, land use management, urban food production, short distribution networks, consumer behaviour changes, etc, and opportunities and barriers to take action towards food resilience of cities;

Civil servants and local non profits will find a range of concrete actions, development process and tools in order to generate a local support group, enhance local initiative, articulate between growing, delivering and enjoying, unlock the stakeholder interplay, build innovative hybrid partnerships, etc, in order to carry-on a transformation process of the local food system.

Finally citizens will find inspiring stories of other citizens, families, neighbourhoods and urban communities that engage towards change in their food habits.



Towards a Handbook for

# SUSTAINABLE FOOD IN URBAN COMMUNITIES [URBACT]

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