



Food Sovereignty in South Africa: Policy Implications and the Right to the City in Urban Agriculture

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Abstract: In South Africa, the official interest in agriculture in urban centres and suburbs is quite recent. Urban agriculture is associated with many benefits including increasing food security, diversifying diets, and livelihood support. However, an adequate incorporation into policies considering the needs of communities remains challenging. This research emphasises the agency of farming initiatives and the way they contribute to inclusive development in the city. This reflection is guided by the theoretical approach of the right to the city and the concept of food sovereignty. The combination offers important aspects for the improvement of urban agriculture from a socio-political and ecological perspective and promotes the much needed dialogue between policy-makers and communities. The initiative 'Kos en Fynbos' in George serves as one empirical case of this study.

Background

While South Africa is considered as food-secure, albeit one in four people currently suffers **hunger** regularly, and more than half of the population, mostly the poor, are at risk of going hungry (Oxfam 2014, 4). Globally it is one of the nations with striking **obesity rates**. Disparities between rural and urban areas are on the rise. In this context, **urban agriculture** is often touted as the panacea for urban food insecurity and unhealthy nutrition. Nevertheless, many attempts failed to improve urban food security or to encourage poor inhabitants in urban gardening. **Movements of the people** themselves, articulating their needs and wishes are considered as a valuable **alternative to top-down approaches** particularly among marginalised groups of society. Food gardening in the city represents particular interests of inhabitants and is a way to produce space.



Research Questions

1. How can an optimal political environment and frame for urban agriculture considering peasants' perceptions and needs be designed?
2. How do bottom-up initiatives energise this debate and improve the situation of marginalised communities?

Urban agriculture is a way urban inhabitants appropriate urban space and accordingly demand their right to urban metabolism.

The role of urban farmers: "[T]he state can assist urban farmers in their work (e.g. more secure leases, zoning changes, and public grants) or it can hinder them (e.g. selling the land and bulldozing the garden), but in the long term it should not produce and manage the gardens on behalf of inhabitants. Inhabitants should." (Purcell & Tyman 2014, 12).

The Case of 'Kos en Fynbos' in George

= innovative urban farming movement

- Founded in the marginalised community Blanco in 2013
- Activities: cultivation of vegetables, knowledge exchange, innovative practices (permaculture, no-till farming) – have spread to other communities
- Aim: to promote healthy nutrition and food security, increase solidarity

Governmental support is needed to sustain these efforts!

Conceptual Approach

Assumption: People have to **reclaim power** over their lives (everyday routines) including **food consumption and production** (right to the city).

Food Sovereignty emphasises alternatives to the global agri-food system and the demand of markets. It is considered as the precondition for food security. It focuses on the people themselves and their rights (to healthy food and to define own food systems). (Re)localisation and democratisation of food systems are main components. Inclusion and agroecological farming are important.

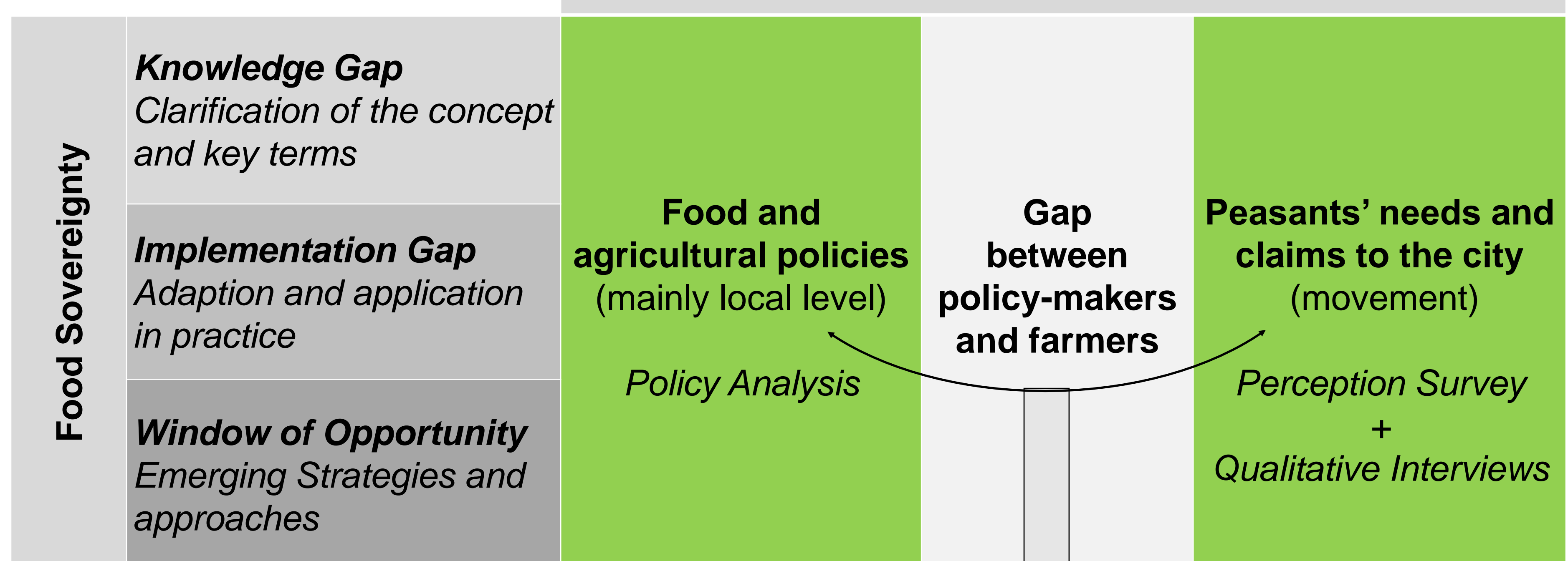
The inherent **transformative capacity of food systems** can only be used throughout the struggle for food sovereignty starting with efforts of peoples themselves. → **Right to the City** (critical urban theory, mainly Lefebvre)

Right to the City

Aims: democratic management, inclusion, and the social function of the city.
Way forward: expose forms of injustice and exclusion in the urban realm: "[E]xpose, propose, politicize" (Marcuse 2009, 194).

Research Gaps and Design

Interdependency:
perspectives towards **Food Sovereignty**



How to politicise?

- Political recognition of bottom-up claims
- Identification of opportunities for support and implementation into existing policies
- **Participative decision-making**, for instance Food Policy Councils (participatory multi-stakeholder platforms including representatives of the civil society; arena for the public to 'claim the right to city')

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