Growing Food and Density Together: Enabling sustainable urban transformation through local food production

Rapid urbanisation, significant loss of productive land, and subsequent climate change impacts in cities create critical challenges for food security and human health and well-being. Food is a powerful pathway for initiating a successful placemaking process, strengthening urban-rural linkages and improving liveability, sustainability, resilience and social connectivity in cities.

Why the study:

This collaborative research project explored w*hat can happen when local foodscapes are placed at the centre of urban transformation?*
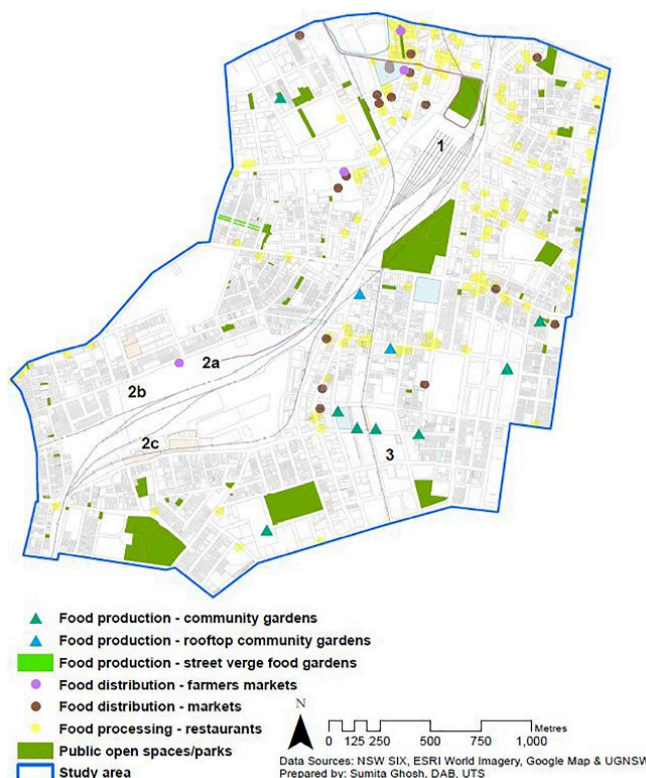
What we did:

This project analysed and mapped the current local foodscape in the dense inner-city Sydney considering spatial locations of different urban agricultural typologies such as community, rooftop and street verge gardens, food distribution points such as farmers' markets and food processing or eating places. Urban design principles were formulated to guide food-oriented planning in high-density environments. In this way, the challenges of high-density cities were turned into an opportunity for urban density and food systems to work together to regenerate productive and healthy cities.

The project was a collaboration with Macquarie University (MQ), University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and University of Sydney (USyd) and funded by Landcom NSW,

What we found:

We found that an active local foodscape with diverse urban agriculture typologies of growing, making and eating is already operating in this densely populated part of Central Sydney. Formulating urban design guidelines for placemaking and urban agricultural planning policies can help immensely in developing liveable neighbourhoods in compact cities.

Data Sources: NSW SIX, ESRI World Imagery, Google Map & UGNSW
Prepared by: Sumita Ghosh, DAB, UTS

- ▲ Food production - community gardens
- ▲ Food production - rooftop community gardens
- ▮ Food production - street verge food gardens
- ● Food distribution - farmers markets
- ● Food distribution - markets
- ● Food processing - restaurants
- ▮ Public open spaces/parks
- ▭ Study area

What this means:

Multifunctional and generative urban agriculture ecologies can transform abandoned sites, shrinking neighbourhoods and dense urban environments into vibrant and healthy places, and cultivate communities' capacities to grow into socially networked communities.

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