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## *L'Horta, agriculture and city: history and present. Valencia World Food Capital in 2017*

Nowadays, cities overlap to the territorial matrix and territory. This is the reason why it is necessary to reinterpret territory itself and the concept of region. The idea of the territory is now associated with flows between global networks of cities. Conversely, the notion of the region should consider its urban nature (city-region) in any of its forms (from urban areas to polycentric regions and megaregions, as focus of the new economic geography).

In this way, urban predominance conditions the polycentric approach, which focuses on urban structure instead of improving urban-rural relationships. In fact, urban-rural borders are fictitious, in this context of a single global city, which is related to rural areas in the new economic geography developed by economists like Krugman, Fujita and Venables; the ecological economy, which promotes the transition to a new green and blue economy more de-materialized; theories about the new urbanism and the healthy city; landscape theories; and those of a new sustainable territorial development based on local specificities and territorial cooperation.

The aim of this paper is to advance in the study of urban-rural relations in the current context of reinterpretation of these elements and the new kind of connections between them. Valencia is our case study because of its singular periurban ecosystem: "l'Horta", a cultural, historical landscape, previously abandoned and damaged, which has now been recovered as a central element for a new order and more sustainable model of regional development. In this model local development is based on a context and in a postmodern interpretation of development, instead of an economic-growth approach.

In this way, the new economic approaches such as green economy, circular economy, ecological economy, pave the path for the improvement of the social and environmental situation while the economy is functional. Now there is no doubt about the shortage of natural resources. There is no way to keep an exponential economic growth without considering environmental health issues. Because of this old perspective, there is a risk of losing ecosystem services which, according to FAO, represented 125 billion dollars in 2014. From the perspective of urbanism and spatial planning, the aim is to preserve these ecosystem services in order to improve health and good living, well-being and quality of life. Ecological economics as well as the new economic geography evaluate cities in order to achieve new forms of city organization that enable to guarantee improvements in the levels of the well-being and quality of life of its population. Cities become integrated spaces rather than growing spaces, which are also respectful towards their respective hinterlands thanks to new strategic perspectives in urban development, for example the integrated sustainable urban development strategies, and the understanding of cities as part of city-regions which are formed by urban and rural areas as one.

These urban-rural relationships are also modifying the paradigm of development through concepts such as Green Infrastructures and Landscape, both key concepts used when developing subregional instruments (plans) of the Spatial Planning.

All these strategies share a common point of view, complexity. It is a consequence of the multifunctional-

ity perspective of land use, particularly in agricultural land use, which combines social, environmental and economic issues as a part of the territory, achieving progress towards new forms of Smart Specialization Strategy for urban areas and its hinterlands. That requires political leadership, legislation and appropriate financing, as well as public recognition, which become key factors in a new understanding (culture) of the territory and the city. In the case of Valencia, this seems to be possible as a result of new local and regional governments that are encouraging the territorial affairs, placing territory and a more sustainable management in the political agenda.

The group Government and Local and Sustainable Development group (<http://gdls.blogs.uv.es/>), as well as the Chair of Valencian Territorial Culture (<http://catedractv.es/>) are interested in researching issues such as this. That is why we pay attention to the 'Horta de Valencia' as a case study. This space has evolved in a very particular way since its initial apogee as a space in which historically the production of agricultural product substitution was developed as the main economic activity for the direct supply of the city. First, they harmoniously coexisted. Later, for the export, to have to face a progressive devaluation of the agricultural activity that led to its substitution and abandonment. This, beyond the socioeconomic effects, led to a disrepair of the traditional existing territorial system, as urban developments dispersed without clear functional vocation over a territorial matrix in which some of its elements (such as the irrigation network) have lost their original functionality. Finally, today, as a result of the recent economic crisis linked to the bursting of the real estate bubble, a new approach has been opened that seeks to recover the primordial relationship between the city and its immediate surroundings; both at the demand of the citizen groups, first, as because the political will of the new regional government, later.

"L'Horta" presents an important environmental, social and economic value, because of the symbiotic relationship among the local population and the territory through agricultural activity. As a consequence of years of sustainable anthropic intervention, "l'Horta" represents a unique landscape (one of the remaining periurban agriculture spaces). An area in which is located a historical scenario that currently includes a great human capital, an ethnological culture of uses, rites, traditions and customs that contribute to defining the identity signs of the Valencians.

But also, a conflictive space. The globalization of the food system has progressively moved the consumer

away from local products. That is why Valencia loses the role of main market of Horta products. The agricultural activity has lost economic relevance due to the growth of industry and tourist activities. All this, attached to the metropolitan location and the urban sprawl, have produced territorial conflicts and pressures. For instance, in 1970 "l'Horta" had lost 22% of its irrigated area, 87% in 2003.

Therefore, it is necessary to face the metropolitan dynamics which are conditioning "l'Horta" evolution. These are a high demographic growth, changes in the social composition of its inhabitants, and a city model based on its consideration as space on which to locate and develop large projects and events. Address all these trends and dynamics, only will be successfully treated by spatial planning policies.

In 2004 it was developed the first instrument for "l'Horta" area. It was the first attempt of spatial plan for this area, following a sectoral approach focusing on natural protection. This selected approach hindered the development of agricultural activity, trying to preserve the environment but not favouring the presence of professional farmers, indispensable for the durability of "l'Horta". There was not a real political interest in improving Horta due to the absence of cooperation mechanisms between public administrations, economic agents and civil society groups. It was necessary to introduce the citizen into the decision-making process, but there was a lack of a political will. For "l'Horta" space, it is necessary to combine economic with environmental and social issues. This instrument gives more attention to environmental, artistic and historical difficulties than social and economic matters.

The threat posed by the urban sprawl across l'Horta made it necessary to protect the land which had not yet been transformed and to apply a series of recovery measures. However, it was an instrument that in the short term allowed to protect it, but it was closer to a typically urban solution than to a real spatial planning instrument, paying attention to the classification of land uses and their landscape integration. That implies a loss of capacity to deal with the complexity of the territory and the processes that take place on it.

However, this first attempt of spatial plan for the l'Horta area was never approved. Changing its denomination and its characteristics, in 2015 Horta's plan starts its second step, whose central axis is the recovery of "l'Horta" as a productive space. The new Territorial Action Plan (PAT) thus collected the results of the previous work and complemented them by locating the space in

its territorial context and seeking its functional integration without neglecting its maintenance and recovery. In this sense, the strategic approach becomes fundamental, which not only seeks protection but also the recovery of productive spaces linked to agricultural activity. The current instrument, and the Law that accompanies it, closed the process that began in 2008. We found a PAT of l'Horta that has evolved and that, in its current approach, fits in with a new subregional instrument of an integral nature, not sectorial as previous one.

The city evolved from being considered as space for speculation and urban development (with a predominantly morphological approach of built space and urban sprawl) to another one of improvement of its functioning and of the quality of life of the citizenship (paying greater attention to the functional criterion), fostering a model of friendly transition between the city and l'Horta. However, despite this change in the sensitivity of the political representatives, it remains to be seen if the necessary coordination between the different administrations with concurrent competencies over the same space takes place.

In 2017 Valencia became into the World Capital of Food according to Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. A new perspective on food production and consumption that is particularly interesting in Valencia due to the l'Horta tradition, which allows explaining the election of Valencia as food capital of the World. In this sense, and in a context of the development of spatial policies looking for the multifunctionality of territories, with attention to agricultural spaces, farmers are not only responsible for agricultural production but also those who provide a series of additional services (ecological) that must be put in value and for which they must be repaid. Adequately enhanced, these services allow an endogenous development of agricultural areas: landscape, natural and cultural maintenance.

Agriculture is mainly linked to rural areas. However, we must not forget that there is a peripheral agricultural reality in cities, which they can easily supply. It is a positive element and a good opportunity for the development of the agri-food sector and local trade, as well as for establishing new urban-rural relationships not solely based on the occupation and urban transformation of the nearby rural land; revitalizing in this way some relationships and lost functional dynamics, as the Valencian case.

The creation of a Municipal Food Council of Valencia (CALM), aims to establish a new form of local food governance to improve the city's food system (adapting to their requirements, which necessarily implies considering about the Huerta and the town with an overall vision). These tasks, carried out both by the City Council of Valencia and by social organizations, have consisted principally in the development of a set of participatory processes from which to draw up a series of proposals.

The creation of the CALM represents a new and important forum of debate and participation of the different territorial stakeholders related to l'Horta (producers, distributors, retailers and consumers). All of them with their own interests and opinions, often divergent. Thus, CALM represents a clear example of governance, with the possibility to make possible the mediation for the resolution of conflicts. In addition to representing a participation process that encourages the institutionalization of new ways of acting in the public life of the city, food can promote knowledge of the territory for a very urbanized citizenship and disconnected from its immediate surroundings.

Throughout these pages, we have seen how the design of a new form of spatial planning and management of an emblematic space, that of l'Horta de Valencia, from a reconsideration and change of the model of territorial development prevailing until now. It is made from the recovery of the traditional territorial matrix as a unique differential fact, with the possibility of becoming a vein for economic recovery, after the crisis caused by the bursting of the real estate bubble. Throughout this paper, it has been demonstrated to what extent what constitutes a reflection and diagnosis of a more academic nature can have a practical application. It shows that there are a series of conditions that have been evidenced, although not yet with perfect assembly, such as political will, a new normative and instrumental framework and an emerging new territorial culture manifested in greater political participation and commitment, and international recognition that feeds back the previous one, that have contributed to procure advances towards a new model of spatial development. It is also interesting to see how the processes of social innovation in this case start from the local population and give rise to the incipient emergence of new forms of governance and government, such as the recent Law of the Huerta and the development of new spatial planning instruments finally approved since long time ago.