

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to better understand the role of urban food initiatives (UFIs) in transforming urban food systems by investigating how UFIs engage in urban food governance and how these dynamics vary across major Indonesian cities. In cities worldwide, urban food governance faces challenges posed by a productivist legacy that prioritises national self-sufficiency and agricultural output, creating policy silos that often fail to recognise the diverse values of food embedded in everyday community life. Southeast Asian urban contexts are characterised by a mix of agricultural and non-agricultural land use, a dominant informal food sector, and a collectivist paradigm central to daily provisioning despite rapid urbanisation—characteristics that formal urban food governance frequently overlooks. UFIs have emerged in the gaps created by this mismatch. Yet scholarly engagement with the tensions between UFIs and urban food governance remains limited, as does attention to UFIs in Southeast Asian cities. This research addresses these gaps by examining how UFIs negotiate values, navigate tensions, and envision inclusive food governance in major Indonesian cities, which are among the largest urban agglomerations in Southeast Asia.

Drawing on Wright's Real Utopias framework, this study employs a qualitative multiple-case study and an abductive approach to analyse twenty-one UFIs, ranging from state-supported to grassroots, across three Indonesian cities with distinct government structures: Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that UFIs contribute to food system transformation through a process termed *embedded values negotiation*, whereby UFIs contest the productivist focus of state governance by simultaneously nurturing the social, ecological, spatial, and economic values of food in everyday life. Furthermore, this study proposes the concept of *everyday urban food governance* as a real utopias project envisioned by the initiatives, which is grounded in four principles: 1) centring the everyday scale; 2) recognising the role of relational networks involving both formal and informal structures; 3) nurturing diverse values; and 4) respecting community knowledge as a governance resource.

The strategies of each UFI in everyday urban food governance are not fixed but are continually navigated across *prefigurative resistance*, *everyday action*, *embedded cooperation*, and *critical engagement*. Moreover, these strategies are strongly influenced by the government structure. In Jakarta, a centralised provincial government and limited city engagement push UFIs toward partnerships with specific actors; state-supported UFIs operate symbiotically with district offices; and grassroots UFIs connect through permaculture networks. Yet because these relations rarely scaled up to citywide governance, strategies remain largely interstitial. In Bandung, decentralisation and partnerships among the municipality, both state-supported and grassroots UFIs, and transnational networks foster porous engagement, with a distinctive food consortium showing how these diverse actors collectively pursue food systems transformation. In Yogyakarta, the blend of a decentralised system and hereditary authority slows symbiotic coordination between the state and UFIs while sustaining rich civil society engagement. Its *Gapoktan* structure, which unites all state-supported UFIs under a single district, and dense university engagement are unique among the three cities. Furthermore, food knowledge archiving is distinct in Yogyakarta. Across all three cities, everyday urban food governance already constitutes a real utopias project as a value-laden, tension-ridden, and generative practice unfolding in Indonesian cities. The research concludes that food systems transformation in Indonesian cities does not always begin with explicit political critique, but rather through mundane, non-political entry points in everyday life. Taken together, these everyday actions cumulatively shift what is possible in urban food governance, generating principles rooted in on-the-ground realities that the state is gradually compelled to recognise.

Keywords: urban food movements, food systems transformation, citizen-led urban food systems, food urbanism, everyday governance