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Minutes from the European Resources Forum 2016

Minutes by:

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DAY 2 – Thursday, 10 November 2016

Plenary session: Resource Efficient Land Use within the Rural Urban Nexus

- **Stephanie Wunder** Senior Fellow, Ecologic Institute, Germany
- **Marielle Dubbeling** Director, RUAF Foundation-Global partnership on sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food systems, The Netherlands
- **Vincent O'Connell**, Surrey County Council, Representative of the Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe, United Kingdom
- **Dr. Inge Paulini** Secretary-General, German Advisory Council on Global Change
- **Chair: Dr. Martin Hirschnitz-Garbbers**, Coordinator Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy, Ecologic Institute

Stephanie Wunder started the session calling for an integrated approach in managing and strengthening rural urban linkages. Mrs Wunder pointed out the many links between the urban and rural (such as transport, education, tourism) and its challenges: In times of population growth and migration trends, cities are growing with 2/3 of the population expected in cities by 2030. This leads to land nearby, often fertile agricultural land, being sealed for their development. Although the land use of cities as space is comparably small, their footprint is immense (50% of waste production, 60-80% of greenhouse gas emission, 75% of natural resource use). Furthermore, nutrient cycles are not closed and modern diets are more resource intense (factor 5-10 for animal based products). The importance of rural-urban linkages for sustainable development is addressed by the SDGs and sustainable cities and diets were also on the Habitats III agenda. With all the existing challenges and diverse definitions of cities (from localities of 200 inhabitants in Iceland to 10.000 inhabitants in Portugal), an integrated policy on the administrative and sectoral level is necessary for rural-urban sustainability. Food can serve as an entry point. A food policy for an integrated territorial development can include bottom-up processes, develop the region, create livelihoods and find synergies with climate change adaptation.

Marielle Dubbeling presented the multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary work of the RUAF foundation, an international network for urban food policies working with cities to get food on their agenda. The influence of food on sustainable land use is often neglected: Food is taken for granted as it is a basic service. However, the production, transport and waste of food contribute to a large part of the global emissions (25-30%). Food can work as a tool for urban sustainability: it can reduce the ecological footprint, bring social cohesion and creativity and link the rural with urban area. The Milan Food Policy Act shows the recognition of cities on the importance of food policies. A good example for a city region food system can be found in Belo Horizonte, Brazil: As a strategy to reduce poverty and strengthen the rural area, vulnerable groups and schools were supported with locally produced food. A series of shops offered 50 basic food items from a local

rural area for a standardized price in return for a shop location in a profitable area. Ile-de-France has a food waste reduction strategy working with large wholesale markets and recycling food waste by social supermarkets. Additional food is bought through contracts with regional farmers. Good practices are available.

Vincent O'Connell filled in for the President of PURPLE (Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe). He stated that land is a valuable resource which is often defined by its functions but also has inherent value (landscape, territory). The rural and urban are interdependent and distinct definitions are difficult as the line between urban, peri-urban and rural is fine, and better described by characteristics. From the PURPLE experience working with rural-urban linkages, it is important to take into account the power of relationships between different actors, to aim for genuine equality and understanding and to consider different interest groups. Mr O'Connell reported on his experience with green belt development in the peri-urban zone: In Surrey they tend to be fragmented and it is not straight forward to build on them. Hence, more subtle ways are needed to talk about the use of green belts.

In the **plenary discussion**, the lack of the fact that agriculture is a major contributor to breaking the planetary boundary was pointed out. Stephanie Wunder answered that the debate on land as a resource was often *only* on agriculture. There are competing land uses and many good ideas exist e.g. the potential of organic or climate smart agriculture. But demands are also rising for biomass, bioenergy, bioeconomy etc. and hence it is important to also talk about sustainable diets.

Urban farming and agriculture are not forgotten by urban planners and think tanks but are a solution also recommended by RUAF as Marielle Dubbeling pointed out. They pose many benefits such as social cohesion and climate improvements. However, food production needs to go beyond urban framing for urban food supply. Ecological forms of agriculture are expected to have increasing demands near cities. The International Water Institute showed that cities are often near valuable agricultural land which is eaten up by city growth. In this way, the peri-urban areas are a subject to land grabbing. It is recommended to integrate urban ecosystem e.g. by resource recycling (P, N) and reuse in rural areas. Other ideas are heat transfers from urban areas. Many lessons are to be learned between the urban and peri-urban in regards to supply chains, demands and market developments. Although the trend is to move away from areas of food production and farming is widely seen as "hard work, low income, bad reputation", Sweden is showing a different trend of an increasingly positive image of farmers. Showing farming as an attractive career is a challenge that needs to be addressed better.

Concluding, **Dr. Inge Paulini** embedded the findings and recommendations of the WBGU report on transformative cities into the discussion. The report looks at the problems and trends of the archetypes of rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Food is considered as an important factor in land use. The question is how to find a good solution for all the competing land uses, how to best assess the functions? Diets certainly are important, be it vegetarian or meat based. And besides the consumption side, it needs big solutions also on the production side in agriculture which can address the income of farmers or the pricing system of food. The orientation of land use should always be towards the common good. Further WBGU recommendations are: keeping enough urban space public and strengthening the social impact analysis.