

# Public land as a resource for urban food policy? Constructing the missing geography and the evolution of public land ownership in the city region of Ghent (Belgium)

**Hans Vandermaelen**

*Ghent University  
& ILVO*

**13 de diciembre 2021**

CONFERENCIA INTERNACIONAL EN URBANISMO  
Y PLANEAMIENTO AGROECOLÓGICO

**Planeamiento urbano y territorial:  
catalizadores de la transición agroecológica**





*Public farmland in Leuven © Hans Vandermaelen 2020*

# Public land as a resource for urban food policy?

**AESOP SFP conference “Land use and urban planning as a catalyst of the agroecological transition”  
13 December 2021**

**Hans Vandermaelen**

[hans.vandermaelen@ugent.be](mailto:hans.vandermaelen@ugent.be)/[@ilvo.vlaanderen.be](mailto:@ilvo.vlaanderen.be)/[@gmail.com](mailto:@gmail.com)

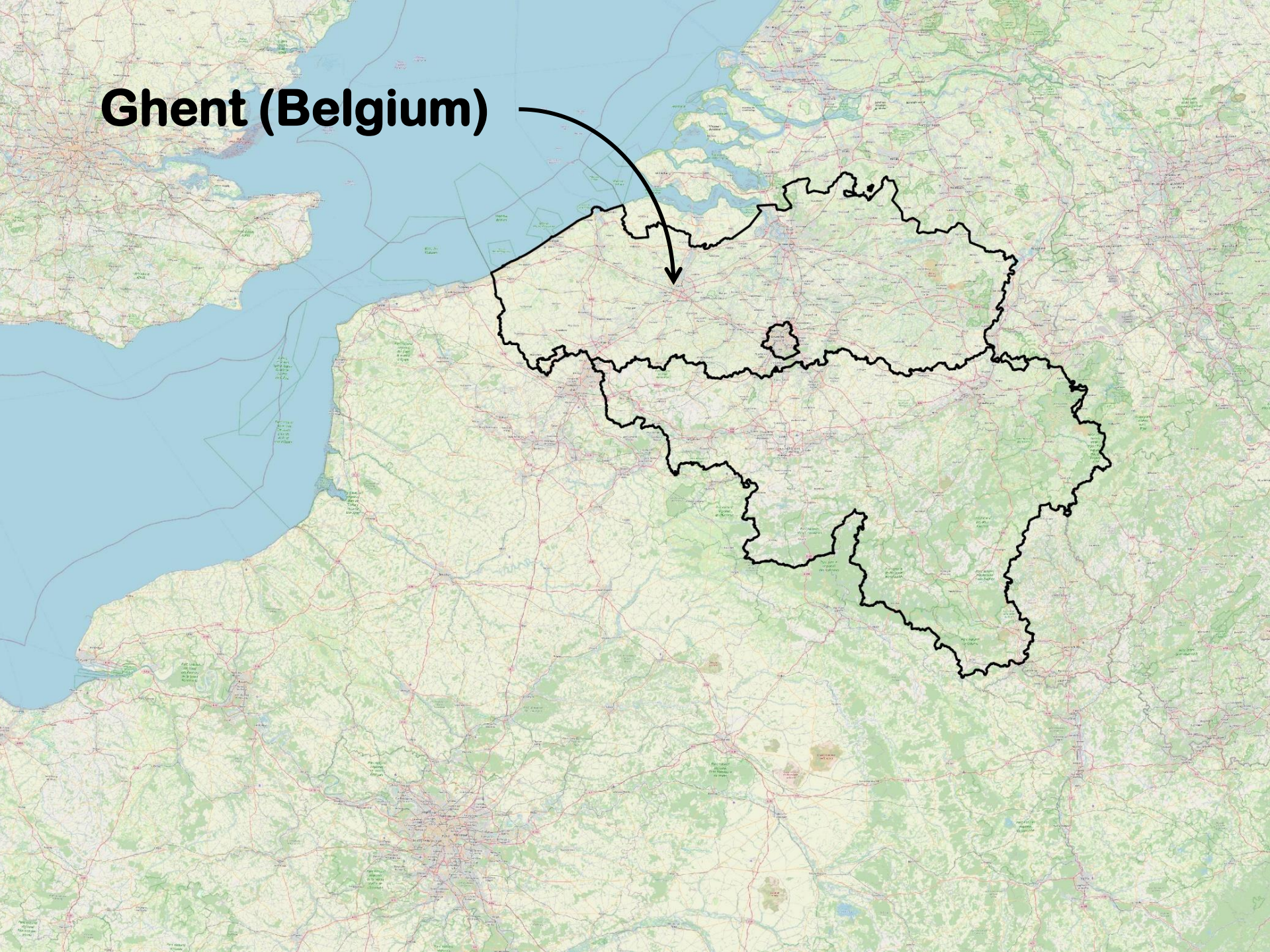
PhD researcher 2018-2022

Ghent University – Department of Architecture and Urban Planning & Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO) – Social Sciences Unit

Supervisors prof. dr. Michiel Dehaene (Ghent University), dr. Chiara Tornaghi (Coventry University, CAWR) & dr. Elke Vanempten (ILVO)



**Ghent (Belgium)**





# Ghent urban food policy intro

Food policy



MUFPP



Horticulture project  
"De Goedinge"



Grazing project  
peri-urban green park



UN Climate  
Action Award



URBAN FOOD POLICY

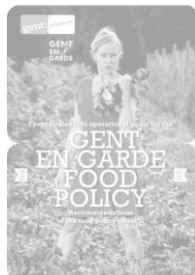
Food waste  
projects



Call for  
projects

# Ghent urban food policy intro

Food policy



MUFPP



Horticulture project  
"De Goedinge"



Grazing project  
peri-urban green park



UN Climate  
Action Award



URBAN FOOD POLICY

Food waste  
projects



Call for  
projects

# Ghent urban food policy intro

→ Observation 1: The debate on the strategic potential of public land for urban food policy is conducted almost exclusively on the basis of a few exceptional cases, not on a systemic level



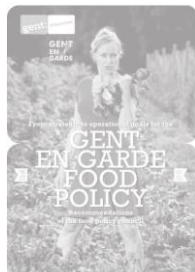
# Relation urban food policy ~ public land

## PUBLIC LAND OWNERSHIP

?

→ Observation 2: Little is known about the dynamics of public land ownership within the urban food policy community.

### Food policy



### MUFPP



### Horticulture project "De Goedinge"



### Grazing project peri-urban green park



### UN Climate Action Award



## URBAN FOOD POLICY

### Food waste projects



### Call for projects

## PUBLIC LAND OWNERSHIP



**1800 ha  
and 9 farms  
still in  
public hands  
Ghent**

[illegible]

## URBAN FOOD POLICY





# Relation urban food policy ~ public land

PUBLIC LAND OWNERSHIP



Ghent sells 450 ha  
public farmland  
to investor



Ghent is  
regularly  
selling



Sell-off  
policy is  
explicitly  
reaffirmed



1800 ha  
and 9 farms  
still in  
public hands  
Ghent

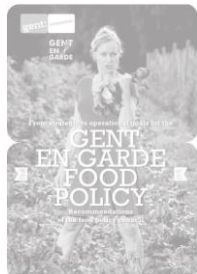
→ **Observation 4: Lack of understanding of public land ownership disempowers local communities.**



Legal case 2 farmers



Protest against sell-off



URBAN FOOD POLICY



# Relation urban food policy ~ public land

PUBLIC LAND OWNERSHIP



→ Observation 5: There is no structural take on the strategic relation between public farmland and urban food policy.



URBAN FOOD POLICY



# Discussion

- Observation 1: The debate on the strategic potential of public land for urban food policy is conducted almost exclusively on the basis of a few exceptional cases, not on a systemic level
- Observation 2: Little is known about the dynamics of public land ownership within the urban food policy community.
- Observation 3: Information on public (farm)land ownership is very patchy.
- Observation 4: Lack of understanding of public land ownership disempowers local communities.
- Observation 5: There is no structural take on the strategic relation between public farmland and urban food policy.



## Contact

[hans.vandermaelen@ugent.be](mailto:hans.vandermaelen@ugent.be)

## Acknowledgements



JPI Urban-Europe SUGI-NEXUS Programme  
'Urbanising in Place' (ID: 11326801)



Research Foundation Flanders (ID: G0H5817N)



Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO)



ESPON EGTC 2020 Programme (Dissemination of ESPON results  
among the scientific community) (ID: EE/SO4/189/2021)