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# Putting Food on the Regional Policy Agenda in Montpellier, France



**Laura Michel and Christophe-Toussaint Soulard**  
with Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole (Box Contributor)

While the food supply question virtually disappeared from the agenda of the cities of the developed world after World War II, a growing number of cities in the developing and developed world alike are now giving it their attention (Chapter “[Cities’ Strategies for Sustainable Food and the Levers They Mobilize](#)”). That renewed focus has been brought about by a food supply discourse that seeks to promote a sustainable urban policy (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000). In that context, food supply has come to be at the heart of a new category of public urban action—sustainable development—that has now been widely undertaken in local public action (Béal et al. 2011).

It appears, however, that the types of policy pursued are highly variable depending on which cities are looked at. Some propose policy instruments focused on the food-health link, as in Toronto, while others are concerned with the food cycle and target waste management, as in San Francisco (a ‘zero waste’ city). City administration of food issues is very recent in France (Perrin and Soulard 2014). Though a few pioneering cities did adopt food policies, often agriculture-based at first, this level of government only recently received legislative authority from the State, in the form of the territorial food projects established under the 2014 Orientation Act.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, by tracing the experience of metropolitan Montpellier, which in 2015 devised an agricultural and food policy, we explore the pathways being taken as the urban food issue emerges. How is it put on the city’s political agenda? How does it take shape as a public issue? In other words, how does food as a social fact become an object of concern and debate and possibly public action? How does the

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<sup>1</sup>Act No. 2014-1170 of 13 October 2014 (*Loi d’avenir pour l’agriculture, l’alimentation et la forêt*).

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food issue end up taking institutional form as a food policy? At the local level, what knock-on effects does that have?

To answer these questions, we shall be making three general assumptions that are likely to have an impact on the urban food agenda and the way the food issue is framed. Our first assumption is: while sustainable food policies may seem new, they take their place within existing institutional configurations, affecting both the potential emergence of a new agenda issue and the way that issue is framed. The food issue does not crop up spontaneously on the political agenda. It must be put forward by actors—entrepreneurs—who socially construct it as a public issue for the city. Indeed, the literature on public problems underscores the role of policy entrepreneurs (Becker 1963; Cobb and Elder 1972) in the emergence of new problems in the public area, thanks to cognitive work to define the problem and a mobilization effort. There is a wide variety of issue entrepreneurs in the area of food: thus, actors such as States, the European Union (EU), FAO, the scientific community, social movements and networks of cities, have proposed food action models to be pursued within and between urban areas. While the models do propose innovative supply arrangements, which can spark public debate on the food issue, and provide some framing of ways to deal with it, they need to be taken up and interpreted at the local level by actors who can facilitate a connexion between the processes of mobilization around problems and their management under public policies. These actors are then called policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon 1984; Guiliani 1999). In some cases, the local food movement plays a central role in this interpretative process. Our perception in Montpellier, in contrast, is that the decisive role has been played by local State bodies, certain local authorities and the scientific community. Finally, the transformation of existing institutional configurations can offer a window of opportunity for a new problem like food supply to be placed on the political agenda (Kingdon 1984). Territorial restructuring of the State's role leads to responsibility being delegated to (but also caught by) city governments for these new issues. Similarly, times of institutional change or political coalition renewal are also conducive to the adoption of innovative policies—or policies perceived to be so. Our third hypothesis, then, is that the emergence of a new agricultural and food policy is bound up with changing institutional and territorial configurations, and especially the reshaping of the socio-political relationships between the city and its interstitial farm or garden areas as well as between the city centre and its rural outskirts.

By retracing the process of food policy development in Montpellier we can gain an understanding of how the food issue was put on cities' agenda in the French context. In 2015 an agroecology and food policy was voted in by Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole and came into effect in its 31 constituent municipalities. The food issue was added to the agenda in a legislative, electoral and regional context that needs some explanation. The first part shows under what conditions a city was able to address the food issue. Then, in the second part, we explain how that was done, by whom, and by means of what framing effects with respect to the policy proposal passed in 2015. In the third part we look at the effects the policy has had on local institutional configurations, relations between the constituent municipalities of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, and the emerging governance modes there.

## **Putting Food on the Regional Policy Agenda: An Agricultural Prism**

Gilles Pinson defines the urban policy agenda as ‘the set of social facts that count as public problems, controversial and debatable at city level and calling for public action at the same level’ (Pinson 2006: 620). In the case of Montpellier, the food issue did not arise directly as such. It was the agricultural issue that was first raised by local actors as a public action item, in the years from 1990 to 2000 when wine-growing was in crisis. The action first developed was support for local wine production and, subsequently, protection of farmland from development in the metropolitan Montpellier area. Paradoxically, the prime movers in raising the food issue in local public discussions were the State—in particular through the national health nutrition plan (PNNS), then the national food programme (PNA)—but also the Agropolis scientific community. As it turned out, the 2014 municipal elections gave some new political actors an opportunity to put the food issue on the metropolitan agenda.

### *Emergence of Agricultural and Food Insecurity Problems*

Whereas under the Fordist model the State, through planning, dominated the organization of local production systems, the State’s disengagement as of the mid-1980s—a boon or a constraint?—opened up new areas in which cities could act (Pinson 2009). Certain problems previously dealt with by the State—such as the agricultural issue—then cropped up on local agendas. In the urban area around Montpellier, the first initiatives of the district, then of the Montpellier conurbation community, were to promote local vineyards. These initiatives were supported by elected officials of small periurban municipalities, who advocated for a wine-growing region dominated at that time by monoculture. Thereupon, city dwellers’ demand for quality local products led to the development of shorter food supply chains, taking the form of farmers’ markets or points of sale on the farm or in town. While wine-growing had to that point been supported by the State, then the European Union, part of the industry then pivoted toward the production of quality wines, and other winegrowers that had been producing mass-market wines permanently grubbed up their vines. As a result of these changes in the periurban vineyard landscape, production diversified in response to the needs of farmers near Montpellier who switched to market gardening or grain crops and to a certain demand from urban consumers (Perrin et al. 2013; Scheromm and Soulard 2018).

Local actors’ other main focus, as regards the food issue, was a social one. The economic crisis spurred social inequalities in the cities of the developed world, and in particular food insecurity. The shock was much sharper in English-speaking countries, where cities in crisis in the 1980s were basically left to their fate (Stoker 1991). In this context, the issue of access to food emerged as one of the baselines for urban food planning policies (Chapter “[Theoretical Approaches for Effective](#)”

**Sustainable Urban Food Policymaking**”), as in Toronto for example (Friedmann 2007). Conversely, in France, the European Union and the State, through the European Food Aid Programme (PEAD) and the national food aid plan, together with food aid associations working locally, played a central role. However, the scope for State action appeared limited, on the one hand by growing local social problems, and on the other by the transfer of national jurisdiction to the departments. And indeed the Department of Hérault and the community centres for social action (CCASs) leveraged their social jurisdiction to expand their food aid efforts. In Montpellier, innovative actions, such as short supply chain support for the *Restos du Cœur*, were undertaken in conjunction with the wholesale trading centre (MIN) and INRA and with the support of the Regional State Division of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (DRAAF) (Le Velly and Paturel 2013). It should be noted that the department and the municipalities are in charge of school catering. In that context, their pricing policies, which take family size and income into account, contribute to better access to food for children. However, catering has not really been thought through by local actors as an instrument for a comprehensive understanding of the food issue. Only the municipality of Grabels stands out, with its more comprehensive approach to food supply, which combines the creation of a short supply chain market—implemented with INRA support<sup>2</sup>—with the use of catering as leverage to promote local product supply, and action to provide farmers with land.

Hence, the food issue has not come out of left field. As public action has become more territorial, local governments have had to take on problems which, while not at first defined as ‘food’ problems, are concerned with such related issues as agriculture and social insecurity. However, even though some municipalities in the metropolitan area, like Grabels, have developed a more comprehensive approach to the food issue, before 2010 it remained very fragmented and siloed among local actors. Moreover, the metropolitan administration as such and most of the municipalities remained relatively passive.

### ***Role of Regional State Authorities and the Scientific Community in Handling the Public Food Supply Issue in Montpellier***

A variety of actors are involved in the emergence of the public food supply issue in cities. In defining this new issue in the public space, a contrast may be drawn between bottom-up dynamics, originating with civil society, and top-down ones, for which administrative or political elites are responsible (Stierand 2012), or indeed between convergent and competitive initiatives.

Elites sometimes take advantage of the social movement to develop and implement their policy. Actors from academia very often play an important role in spreading

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<sup>2</sup>Creation of a collective label (IciCLocal) jointly filed with the INPI by INRA and the city of Grabels.

these ideas. Such is signally the case of the Anglosphere's food planning movement, in which researchers are heavily involved (Derkzen and Morgan 2012; Brand 2015). It is true, too, of Montpellier, where the scientific community of the Agropolis research centres, which works on problems of agricultural and food sustainability, has played an awareness-raising role with politicians through a number of research projects undertaken in partnership with local authorities over the past decade.

And lastly, while international trade liberalization negotiations have cast doubt on the role of the State as a protectionist force and provider of agricultural subsidies, that role has been reconfigured rather than abolished. In particular, the food supply issue has been taken up by the State,<sup>3</sup> which has developed an incentive policy in the form of the national food plan (PNA), which seeks to encourage territorial actors to involve themselves in the issue of food, its quality (nutritional and heritage-linked) and accessibility (Bonnefoy and Brand 2014). While DRAAF mobilization is variable depending on the region of France concerned, the Languedoc-Roussillon DRAAF appears particularly active in implementing the regional food programme (PRA). In spite of the PNA's constrained financial resources, the two project officers of the DRAAF nutrition and food supply quality unit have helped to stimulate local debate on the food issue, focusing on areas of activity that frame the issue primarily in terms of agriculture and food: these include short supply chains, the 'fruit for recess' project and other educational activities, as well as heritage issues and allotment gardens; and, on the other hand, the issues of catering and food aid. The two project officers have been responsible for devising and disseminating best practices in food policy across the region. To that end, they have sought out, gathered, sorted and organized (on index cards) a whole range of information on food initiatives under way in the region, relaying information from one to the other and helping them to network: local/organic food supply for cafeterias, territorial food project, land programme, etc. DRAAF too is active in popularizing these initiatives, organizing events where information gathered on current experiences is presented and shared, then disseminated to partners through a variety of channels. Lastly, DRAAF is involved in training, and seeks to share these best practices in that area too. In short, even though it has no formal hierarchical role empowering it to exert direct control over local authorities, it seems that in practice, after 5 years of field work, DRAAF is actively contributing to the emergence of food as a public issue (Michel et al. 2014).

Thus, in the early 2010s, while the food issue continued to be addressed in a piecemeal fashion through various poorly coordinated sectoral approaches (agriculture, school catering, food aid), there was an emerging focus on food supply as a discrete urban issue. At first it was a focus mainly of the State and the Agropolis scientific community, but as the conurbation underwent institutional and political changes, the issue made its way onto the local political agenda.

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<sup>3</sup>In 2009, through the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (MAAP).

## *Changes in the Regional Political Configuration: A Window of Opportunity for the Food Issue*

The appearance of multi-level governance across Europe (Marks 1996) also led to changes in the way agricultural and environmental issues were dealt with at the institutional level. In Europe, reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy made for greater involvement of regional governments in handling agricultural problems and a new environmental focus (rural development, agroenvironmental measures, management of the wine crisis). At the same time, the various territorial and administrative reforms redistributed local jurisdictions. In France, the rise of intercommunality resulted in profound changes. The 2001 transformation of the—very urban—Montpellier district into a much broader conurbation community changed the socio-economic balance within the urban area. The mobilization of newly integrated rural municipalities and DRAAF support succeeded in putting the agricultural issue on the new intercommunal agenda thanks to the preparation of an agricultural assessment upstream of the Metropolitan masterplan, named ‘SCoT’ (Jarrige et al. 2006). Finally, as a result of the Rio Conference of 1992, local Agendas 21 have multiplied. Everywhere their implementation has fuelled a discussion on ‘green’ areas in the city and its outskirts, with new virtues being found in agricultural areas. In Montpellier, the challenges of managing natural and agricultural areas, on the one hand, and periurban agriculture on the other, were placed on Agenda 21 adopted in 2011, assigning two project officers the job of investigating the ‘agricultural problem’ part-time. Thus, the environmental argument helped legitimize the agricultural issue within metropolitan Montpellier. Some natural or agricultural areas, up to that time considered only in the light of land reserves for urbanization, suddenly acquired an environmental value that made them central to sustainable urban development. Since the mid-2000s, collective gardens and agricultural parks in particular have become highlights of the urban projects of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, even where the food issue as such is not specifically mentioned.

The 2014 election of a new team to administer the conurbation seems like a window of opportunity (Kingdon 1984). The fact that the new Mayor of Montpellier, when also elected President of the conurbation, emphasized his desire for political innovations in response both to the changes in local society and the aspirations of the executives in charge of its policies, opened the door to addressing new issues but also embarking on new forms of governance. Indeed, the new political balance within the metropolis has given a boost to an official who is committed to agricultural and food issues. The President of the conurbation and future metropolis has to deal with its rural municipalities and also the political balancing act that placed the Greens in a favourable position. Thus, an innovative project combining agriculture and ecology has been entrusted to an official - a woman- from civil society who embodies renewal of the political establishment.



## **Construction of a Regional Agroecology and Food Policy**

Urban food policy development is not part of any defined regulatory schedule. In France, agriculture, like food, is not something for which local, communal or inter-communal governments are responsible.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, national and European policies governing these sectors offer simple incentives, not binding on the local authorities and relatively recent developments. In particular, the State seeks to encourage actions it can no longer take directly, by enriching local initiatives. Accordingly, we find ourselves in a situation where, if local urban governments decide to embark on such projects, they do so mainly on their own initiative. As a result, relevant frameworks need to be found, or devised, for the actions to be taken. Their particular context is innovation, which gives particular importance to the knowledge that needs to be leveraged for action at the local level, and to collaborations that can be established with researchers. The essential knowledge for the actions to be taken pertains both to the particular field, the urban food system, and to the skills, tools and means available to local authorities to act locally on the food system and guide its development. Montpellier's experience shows how that endeavour has unfolded and the role to be played by knowledge mobilization, with some help from researchers, in formulating an 'issue' with which local elected officials can identify.

### ***The Spark: Political Renewal and Administrative Reform***

Food policy development in Montpellier has come about as the result of a combination of several changes in local political life. First, a new political team took charge of the conurbation community, seeking a clean break with the past. As public administration underwent reorganization, the challenge for Montpellier was to be recognized as the 11th Metropolis in France, joining a list of ten metropolitan areas or urban communities already chosen by the State for designation as 'metropolises' as of 1 January 2015. That challenge obliged the President-elect to gain the consent of the 30 municipalities making up the conurbation as well as that of the City of Montpellier, whose new mayor he was. He was also called upon to persuade the largest possible number of intercommunal authorities in the region to sign a cooperation pact with Montpellier focusing on a few strategic development areas. Pivotal in this endeavour to enlist the surrounding areas' support were the issues of agriculture, food and rural life. Those issues are not being coordinated only by the President himself, who relies instead on the Vice-President he has appointed to take charge of them. She is the newly elected Mayor of one of the smaller municipalities in the conurbation, an agricultural engineering by training whose background is civil

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<sup>4</sup>A state of affairs now subject to change: the Bonnet report (2016) proposes that communities be invested with responsibility for food.



society (environmental sphere). Her agroecology and food responsibilities<sup>5</sup> mean that she will take the opportunity to launch a public policy as innovative and comprehensive as she can make it.

Meanwhile, the matter taking up most of the conurbation's time and effort is the launch of the assessment of the second version of its SCoT, in which the terms of reference of the tenders for the hiring of design offices are defined. The Vice-President therefore decided to take advantage of that requirement to obtain assistance from researchers in drawing up the specifications. Having worked in Montpellier's agricultural training college, she got in touch with a research team at INRA whose work she was familiar with—a study of periurban agriculture undertaken for the agricultural assessment under the first SCoT (Thinon et al. 2003).

### *Knowledge of the Urban Food System: Partial, Haphazard*

As a corollary of their land use and urban planning expertise as well as economic and social development, local authorities rarely have technical resources in the agricultural and food sectors. The Montpellier conurbation community, which undertook to devise a SCoT masterplan with emphasis on agricultural and natural structuring in the development of its territory, had not initially acquired any expertise in that area. Since Agenda 21, two task officers have been given the following part-time assignments: for one, inclusion of agriculture in communications on economic development; for the other, coordination of the agri-parks component included in the SCoT zoning. Some assessment work was financed also through an agreement with the Chamber of Agriculture.

When, wishing to launch her policy, she contacted the INRA research team, the Vice-President's immediate focus was the renewal of the SCoT agricultural assessment. However, her first contacts with a researcher led her to widen the scope of her intended policy, realizing, thanks to the research team's presentation of examples of policies implemented elsewhere, in English-speaking countries in particular, that the food issue covers a far broader range than just agriculture. That wider policy scope was by no means alarming to the community's officials, as they realized that the food issue was not something foreign to their own concerns but rather shed a different light on areas in which they were already active. As the meetings progressed, nine divisions of the intercommunal government apparatus, out of 15, were deemed to be directly impacted by the issue. How then should a policy affecting services right across the board be correctly designed? How should the area's other vice-presidents and other officials be asked to pitch in, with only the one vice-presidency specifically designated as having responsibility for food?

These initial thoughts led to the idea that the policy to be developed needed to come from the stakeholders of the whole conurbation and its 31 municipalities, be

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<sup>5</sup>The contours of her vice-presidency, which initially consisted of 'SMEs, crafts, agriculture, rural life and traditions' will in 2015 be refocused on 'agroecology and food'.

they elected officials or services officers. Technically, the commissioning of specifications under the SCoT masterplan, in the form of works management assistance, was the operational basis of the emerging contract with the research team, but everyone's common objective from the start was to formulate goals on the basis of which a comprehensive public policy could be put in place. The work schedule was tight, however—6 months at most—as the policy was to underpin the future metropolis project. Because of that constraint, a pragmatic approach was taken, based on discussion of possible ways forward rather than a formal expert opinion. The discussions proceeded by pooling knowledge on what a 'food policy' would mean in Montpellier by means of workshops with the mayors of all 31 municipalities as well as other elected officials and services officers,<sup>6</sup> drawing inspiration from the approach taken by the experimentation and research group on development and local action (GERDAL) (Darré 2006). The researchers organized the workshops and participated in them, to provide documentation and facilitate the debate, as facilitators rather than experts.

The participants were presented with a brief 'agricultural and food portrait of the territory' to stimulate dialogue on the characteristics of the local agricultural and food system. The first workshops pointed up the primacy of farmland in the debates among local officials, for whom the question of what to do with periurban land was a primary concern. The food issue was less present in the workshops, where the point of view of the periurban elected officials was stressed, apart from the subject of school catering, which was also within the municipalities' purview. As the discussions went on, the researchers' contributions winkled out participants' main areas of concern, such as farmland, agricultural facilities, canteens or farmers' markets. Other areas were dealt with more quickly (environment and tourism) or even ignored as being perceived to be outside the communities' remit (health, trade) or too little known (link between insecurity, health and food supply).

Realizing how little they knew of the urban food system made participants aware of the areas in which they were active and those where they had no role. They were helped to explore areas more remote from their everyday by a presentation the researchers gave on a more global view of the food system, one that also featured innovative actions, little-known initiatives, but also discrepancies between the various municipalities, in particular compared to those engaged in pioneering efforts in some areas of food policy. The idea thereby emerged, too, that while food supply was a new subject of public policy, numerous initiatives did already exist; and while these were quite various, they did constitute a possible basis for a 'unifying' policy that would to some extent constitute a revelation or synergization of actions already under way.

The workshops not only gave participants a better grasp of the food system, it also impressed upon them that the policy to be devised would require both new actions and an effort to coordinate existing ones. The action knowledge imparted

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<sup>6</sup>An analysis of the organization chart of the conurbation community, now a metropolis, established that nine of the 15 branches were directly concerned by the agricultural and food policy (P2A). The unit heads and elected officials concerned were then invited to the workshops with the mayors of the 31 municipalities making up the metropolitan area.

was therefore of several kinds: knowledge of the purpose, of who should take action, and of what they should do.

### ***From Assessment to Policymaking: Framework Policy and Adaptive Governance***

The Montpellier conurbation community received metropolis status on 1 January 2015. Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole came into being, and as a result some powers previously exercised by the municipalities (e.g. urban planning) were redeployed to the intercommunal level. At the same time, the community's vitality won it the coveted French Tech certification given to cities that have fostered the creation of innovative start-ups. The situation was highly conducive to the preparation of the new agroecology and food policy. Even before the research team handed in its report, entitled *Preparatory Study of an Agricultural and Food Policy* (Souillard et al. 2015), the community was beginning to communicate, through press conferences and interviews in local newspapers. The city seized on the food issue to amplify its territorial marketing message. The issue gained all the more prominence owing to the political situation, a few months before the regional elections, as well as the merger of the Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées regions. In a bid to compete with the city of Toulouse, the President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole made more and more overtures to the region's intercommunal authorities, creating a 'territorial parliament' bringing together some 50 of them.

It was at this point that the new VP in charge of agroecology and food met once again with the metropolitan area's elected officials to hammer out the overarching themes of the future metropolitan policy: six workstreams and three cross-cutting themes, all focused on five goals. The discussions dealt with the actions to be taken, the means to be deployed and the implementation timetable. The VP addressed participants' concerns by emphasizing the need for high-profile actions to be taken quickly even while maintaining a long-term focus, and so proceeding in stages, which would be dictated by the political agenda. The project was presented in community council and adopted on 25 June 2015. A 'P2A' team (on agroecology and food policy) took shape at Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, made up of four officers belonging to the Economic Development and Operational Land Management services, as well as a City of Montpellier officer in charge of school catering whose mission was to bring his ideas to the attention of the other municipalities of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole. A few actions were set in motion straight away. At the same time, action programmes were under development on the various themes, with separate committees being formed to have the stakeholders draw up task sheets. Completion of the preparatory study also marked the end of the working relationship with the researchers, which had been quite intense during the workshops.

A second phase then got under way to help follow up and evaluate the policy. A multi-year agreement on cooperation with the researchers has been signed.

While the goals of the policy now being undertaken do cover the main elements of the food system, in practice its priority themes are focused on a few actions based on resources actually available to Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, e.g. its public lands or its municipalities’ canteens (see Box 1). Hence, the emphasis is on the agricultural restoration of available land by settling farmers on it, with a variety of production systems suited to urban demand: small market gardens and more specialized farms, able to supply mass catering with products sold through short supply chains. The governance to be pursued is meant to be pragmatic and adaptive. While political considerations would dictate some urgency in taking action, the limited means available to the team being formed will require them to moderate their ambitions. Certain themes are not really addressed in the first set of actions—to wit, health measures and food availability for poor households—but that issue is left for another day. A frame-

**Box 1: Metropolitan Montpellier’s Agroecology and Food Policy**

*Source: Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole*

The P2A is structured around five goals, each of which requires an initial assessment so that baseline indicators can be established for its evaluation. Those goals also serve to identify and indeed select the actions to be supported by Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole. They are: To provide healthy locally produced food to the masses. To support the agricultural and agrifood economy and employment therein. To preserve the landscape heritage and natural resources. To limit GHG emissions and adapt to climate change. To promote social cohesion by caring for the link with nature and the relationship between city and countryside. Six workstreams form the operational heart of the P2A. For each, a goal is defined, broken down in a set of task sheets. The key food system stakeholders are not the same for each stream. The resulting actions are defined as development proceeds.

Workstream	Targets	Actions (excerpt)
To consolidate the fabric of small farms involved in direct sales	Small-scale farmers, committed consumers	A guide to sales outlets for local products A ‘resource farm’ as a place of excitement and experimentation
To promote local supply in the city, in particular in catering	Specialized farms, consumers	Expand public procurement support channel structuring consolidate and modernize the MIN
To promote the diversity of the area’s iconic products and expand agri- and oenotourism	Oil-producing orchards, vineyards	Support for product merchandising Development of an agritourism strategy

(continued)

**Box 1:** (continued)

Workstream	Targets	Actions (excerpt)
To support innovative enterprises in agrifood and agriculture provisioning fields	Upstream to downstream companies	QualiMed competitive cluster green tech and agro-tech nurseries
To mobilize citizens around food supply and the producer-consumer link	Consumers, 'gardeners'	Écolothèque recreation Centre gathering of initiatives call for ideas (food practices, fight against waste, urban green space, etc.)
To forge a consistent approach to the integration of agriculture into development projects	Developers, communities	Coordination with SCoT masterplan and PLUi zoning code for urban agriculture

The governance instituted is meant to be pragmatic. The point is to make do with what exists and to act on the food system to effect change. The approach is based on building trust between all those involved.

work policy has actually been formulated, but not yet accompanied by any follow-up and evaluation scheme. Governance is being put in place as we go along, but is subject to a number of constraints due to political imperatives and Technical Services' institutional organization.

## Organizational, Political and Territorial Reconfigurations

Politically, the fact that P2A was adopted by the metropolitan Council gives it great legitimacy; and the workshops from which it originated attracted many elected officials and administrative staff, who then got involved in developing the project. Finally, the project has the support of the President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole. Its implementation does however pose a few challenges, in particular because of the necessarily cross-cutting, multi-actor and multi-level nature of its governance.

One immediate question mark is its political backing. During the workshops, it was mainly those elected officials with some awareness of food and agriculture issues—mayors or deputy mayors of the municipalities of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole—who got involved. Now that the main principles have been endorsed, implementation will depend on a solid political coalition able to validate a number of choices that will have more direct consequences, for example in terms of land or catering. Rather than attempt to forge a majority on the metropolitan council, the first task will be to win the municipalities' mayors over to a collective position suited to the way Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole is governed—that is, a form of metropolitan governance drawing its inspiration from 'neo-regionalism' (Lefèvre

1998), not based on a top-down approach but rather on the quest for consensus between multiple government actors. In actual fact, in the operations of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole, the mayors of each municipality have a prominent place in negotiating intercommunal policies, which therefore are consensus-based; in Montpellier that consensus is ratified by the signature of the 'Confidence Pact'. Mobilization around the P2A must therefore be done primarily at the intercommunal level, as it provides for each municipality to list the workstreams it finds useful and approve a communal P2A to be put to a vote by the municipal council.

At the territorial level, that requires the Vice-President in charge of the policy to forge a consensus among municipalities with very different profiles. Indeed, agricultural and food issues are very differently perceived from one municipality to another, some large urban ones being focused on city dwellers' concerns, e.g. nature and food, while small periurban municipalities have instead an agricultural, rural profile. Existing initiatives show that these municipal profiles afford many different ways of looking at the food issue. For example: urban collective gardens or food aid in Montpellier; short supply chains, health and rural life in Grabels; agricultural and environmental land policy in Lavérune; or the management of the agricultural built environment in Saint-Geniès-des-Mourgues. A central concern of the P2A is in fact openness to further town-and-country cooperation regarding food supply channels for catering. One might speculate that this could lead to a real 'interterritoriality' as defined by Vanier (2003), i.e. the setting in motion of cooperation on food supply channels via agreements between private actors, pooling of public facilities, shared governance structures, etc. If municipal versions of the P2A and cooperation with communities beyond Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole can be achieved, that would be a good sign for the makeover of town-and-country relations that will be pivotal in building urban food governance.

Of course, the food issue involves responsibilities that are not necessarily those of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole. For example, catering is essentially under regional and departmental jurisdictions (for high and secondary schools) or the municipality's (in the case of kindergartens and primary schools); and the municipalities, having been stripped of many strategic responsibilities by enhanced metropolitan intercommunality, are naturally very keen to maintain their prerogatives in that area. Agriculture, on the other hand, is a jurisdiction shared between many different territorial levels: European, national, regional and departmental. And food insecurity, finally, is under the jurisdiction of the department and the municipalities' CCASs (social education centers), given their social affairs mandate. What Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole can legitimately be involved in, therefore, remains to be determined, as governance will have to link a number of areas of multi-level cooperation. These findings are in line with the work of the new regionalism on metropolization (Lefèvre 1998; Brand 2015).

Lastly, at the organizational level, the P2A is currently an innovative policy championed by a team of four persons. Its cross-cutting nature means that it will require a number of long-established administrative sectors to work together. The classic challenge, here, is the siloing that has long been observed in work on organizational sociology (Friedberg and Crozier 1980). What resources of its own can

the P2A draw upon (budget, specific service) in undertaking its cross-cutting endeavours and inducing the other services and elected officials to comply with its recommendations? The human and financial resources made available for this public policy will be an important indicator of its effectiveness.

All of which leads us to ask ourselves: what will the governance of the food issue look like at the metropolitan level? And what then of the role of civil society actors? Whereas in some cities, like Lyon (Brand 2015), the social movement has driven local public action, such has not been the case in Montpellier. For now there is no strong link between food movements and P2A implementation. Montpellier has very many associations but so far their activities have garnered little support from Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole in terms of a comprehensive food policy. The policy was indeed developed without any discussion with them. Cooperation does exist between associations and public institutions in some limited spheres where it has become institutionalized: such is the case, for instance, of the cooperation between the Department of Hérault and food aid associations, or the arrangements governing collective gardens established by the City of Montpellier. While many citizens' initiatives do exist, a new stage of the P2A calls for greater openness to civil society.

## Conclusion

In the case of Montpellier, if food policies are now on the agenda, that is due to the combined effect of administrative and political timetables, which have opened up a window of opportunity as defined by Kingdon (1984). However, that dynamic is both made possible and constrained by pre-existing fragmentary public actions on related issues. The second process is the framing of the food issue, which depends on the development of shared knowledge of the field, namely the urban food system. As in other cities worldwide, the approach we can observe in Montpellier involves the mobilization of scientific and technical resources, which produces its own framing effects: there are areas of interest in which local actors are overinvested, while other matters that had been neglected are brought to light by cooperation with the researchers. The third process relates to the many sociopolitical reconfigurations involved in food governance. New elected officials are the ones developing that governance, but they must deal with the political system in place. By bringing the food issue into the sphere of local political action, they help to make a subject that was formerly marginal a model of openness to political innovation. A cross-cutting concern by definition, food supply is an area where cooperation is unavoidable for administrative and technical services whose jurisdictions were initially assigned to them in terms of the key mandates of a French metropolis. It also leads to reconfigured relationships between city centres and their outskirts and between urban, periurban and rural areas. The fourth process is the mobilization of civil society actors, which the scientific literature holds to be a prime vector in the construction of sustainable food governance. Their participation, however,



has barely begun in Montpellier, but also more generally throughout France, where the tradition of State and local governments' taking responsibility for public problems still holds sway.

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