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# Governing the coexistence of agricultural models: French cities allocating farmlands to support agroecology and short food chains on urban fringes

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the coexistence of agricultural models from the perspective of land management on the urban fringe. Our goal is to show how urban local authorities deal with and influence the coexistence of models when they are involved in farmland management, and more specifically when they determine which farmer should be allocated what land and under which lease agreement. To do this, we compare public processes of farmland allocation led by French local authorities on the urban fringes of Lyon, Montpellier, and Perpignan. This geographic study is based on qualitative methods (observations, interviews, and document analysis). The comparison of seven case studies illustrates the changing balances of power on urban fringes between agricultural models and between urban and agricultural stakeholders. As urban local authorities grant them land and legitimacy, farmers willing to develop agroecology and short food supply chains may settle in peri-urban areas, where access to land is otherwise very difficult for outsiders. Some public allocations of farmland divide space between models following agronomic and esthetic criteria, but few public bodies venture to hierarchize models by an unequal repartition of land property rights. Beyond their limited spatial impact, public allocations of farmland are actually important local initiatives for the institutional recognition of sustainable agriculture models, one driver within urban policies aiming at supporting a transition towards agroecology and more sustainable food systems. Governance processes could, however, be improved if local authorities would more explicitly tackle the possible issues related to the coexistence of diverse agricultural models in space, as in public debates and policies.

**Keywords** Access to land · Agroecology · Land property rights · Justice · Public policies · Peri-urban agriculture

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## Introduction

Alternative agricultural and food initiatives are multiplying in French cities (Lardon and Loudiyi 2014; Perrin et al. 2018). Inspired by compelling examples in other countries (Morgan 2015) and global networks circulating good practices (Blay-Palmer et al. 2016), more and more French urban authorities care about governing their food systems. Most of them focus first on connecting the local food supply and demand, by valorizing alternative food networks. They frequently address three other themes, according to the French National Network for territorial food projects (Montégu 2018): first social and nutritional issues, then environmental and patrimonial issues, and lastly the farmland management issue.

Concerning farmland, urban authorities use their planning and economic competences to preserve the land from further urban development by implementing specific land use regulations (Bertrand 2013). They also provide plots of land and facilities to support the renewal of local food chains. In many metropolises of the global north, the land access for direct market food farmers has become a concern. Local authorities do not have many tools to support access to land for alternative farmers: public acquisition of land often targets limited perimeters (Baysse-Lainé et al. 2018), while land use planning impacts building rights but not farming practices (Perrin 2013a; Horst and Gwin 2018). The access and use of land for new farmers as well as for urban agriculture often represent a sensitive and contentious governance issue (Manganelli and Moulart 2019).

In this context, some French urban authorities intervene in land ownership and land usage by renting plots they own or buy (Léger-Bosch 2015; Perrin 2017). This is quite new in France, where nothing similar to the large-scale English and Welsh County Council Farm Estates (Ilbery et al. 2012) or to the US Land Trusts (Wright 1992; Souder and Fairfax 1996) exists. We already pointed out French examples of farmland management led by peri-urban small town or middle-sized urban authorities (Perrin 2013b; Baysse-Lainé et al. 2018). Nevertheless, such public acquisitions of farmland were short-term projects which negotiated the settlement of farmers on a case-by-case basis. Urban actors did not usually deal with farmland management. This study tackles more developed public farmland management policies, around larger cities.

This paper proposes to use the coexistence of agricultural and food models as a lens to analyze public allocations of land on the urban fringe. Our goal is to show how urban local authorities deal with and influence the coexistence of models, when they are involved in farmland management and more specifically in deciding to which farmer should be allocated what land and under which lease agreement. What does the city change in the balance of power (and land distribution) between agricultural stakeholders? How is competitive access to the land resource influenced by the involvement of urban local authorities? Our hypothesis is that urban authorities not only change the balance of power between agricultural models, but also promote a model of agriculture connected to the city, thus meeting urban demands for local quality environmentally friendly food while resonating with and legitimating alternative sustainable agricultural models.

To test this hypothesis, we compare seven public processes of land allocation led by French local authorities willing to redevelop and/or diversify agriculture on the urban fringes of Lyon, Montpellier, and Perpignan. We will show how farmers or aspiring farmers (and their professional organizations) and public authorities interact regarding access to land, which is a pivotal resource for agricultural activity in the face of growing urbanization.

In the case studies we analyze, two main agricultural models interact regarding access to farmland: conventional farmers selling mostly in long chains, and agroecological or organic farmers supplying often local short food chains. The first group is the most numerous and is supported by dominant farmers' unions. The second group is a minority, but is supported by public local authorities (urban municipalities, inter-municipal bodies, and other local authorities) because it has a higher "territorial embeddedness" (Sonnino and Marsden 2006), and is keener to answer to new urban demands for local food (Zasada, 2011). Of course, not all local farmers fit into the first or second model (Plumecocq et al. 2018), but these two models in opposition are used by local actors as archetypes of reality, to (dis)qualify some farmers, or to express a desired future. Furthermore, the literature has already shown the exclusion processes which restrain access to farming activities for outsiders coming from other social origins who are willing to develop sustainable agriculture in France (Senc  b   et al. 2013; Barral and Pinaud 2017).

In this paper, we chose to focus on urban fringes and close peri-urban areas because urban authorities who are willing to redevelop former agricultural belts to feed the city pay the most attention to these spaces. We focus on peri-urban lands which are under the control of public local authorities, either because they are public lands or, if private, because they are located within the perimeter of a public action of farmland management. Such public allocations of land are conducted in a very competitive peri-urban land market, which helps in analyzing coexistence issues as it exacerbates rivalries in the material sphere between individuals (access to land), but also between models in a more discursive sphere (justification of privilege and/or exclusion patterns in access to land).

Consequently, the paper investigates the spatial, social, and political configurations of coexistence between diverse agricultural models in seven cases of public allocations of farmland, which offer a large array of interactions ranging from open conflict to hybridization of models. After a short section describing materials and methods, coexistence will be approached first as a new material configuration based on spatial and legal arrangements, then as a (more or less) implicit framework influencing procedures, and finally as a transformation of relations of power perceived and experienced by local stakeholders.

## Study areas, materials, and methods

This article proposes a cross analysis of two fieldworks, carried out respectively within the research project JASMINN<sup>1</sup> and during the preparation of a PhD dissertation in geography. The JASMINN project (2015–2018) focused on social justice issues in the protection of peri-urban farmland. Baysse-Lain  's dissertation (2018) approached the intersection of management of access to land and relocalized food chains and contributed to the PSDR FRUGAL project.<sup>2</sup> Both dealt with the land-related aspects of the diversification of agricultural models on urban fringes.

Our analysis is based on data raised in three French metropolitan areas. Montpellier and Perpignan are located in the Mediterranean coastal plains of Languedoc and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www1.montpellier.inra.fr/wp-inra/jasminn/projet/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.projetfrugal.fr>

Roussillon. Lyon is the second largest conurbation of France (1.6 million inhabitants), situated at the juncture of the Rhône and Saône valleys in the middle of diversified agriculture—from cereal farming, to breeding, to arboriculture and market gardening. Montpellier and Perpignan have smaller populations (400,000 and 200,000 inhabitants, respectively) and are surrounded by a Mediterranean agriculture combining intensive viticulture, cereals, and some field vegetables. The three study areas offer a diverse array of relations between agriculture and the city (Perrin et al. 2018). Comparing them is thus interesting in making assumptions about the influence of geographic context on the way coexistence of models is governed at the local scale.

Around each city, we analyzed the main public allocations of farmland conducted during the past decade. The seven in-depth case studies selected are on urban fringes or in close peri-urban areas, where urbanization is a major concern. Table 1 summarizes basic information about the seven case studies. Most of the allocation processes happened in the second half of the 2010s were led by local or metropolitan authorities, and resulted in few land transfers.

We carried out qualitative investigations. First, we conducted 25 semi-structured interviews in Lyon (in 2016 and 2017), 21 in Perpignan (in 2014 and 2016), and 26 in Montpellier (in 2014, 2016, and 2018) with elected representatives and policy officers of the public authorities, representatives of both the majority and minority farmers' unions, farmers (both long-established and newcomers), and employees of SAFER<sup>3</sup> and the Chamber of Agriculture. Then, we participated as silent observers in some meetings, and we gathered documents relevant to the public projects or policies, such as town councils' session reports, lease agreements, and zoning plans. To process the information and compare the seven case studies, we transcribed the interviews and integrated their content (and that of the documents) into a common analytical framework structured around eight themes: (i) the stakeholders involved in the allocation process, (ii) the goal they target, (iii) the way they describe the local agriculture, (iv) their use of a coexistence perspective before or during the allocation procedure, (v) the identification of the farmers who got farmland and the criteria or procedure of the choice, (vi) the spatial and juridical consequences of the allocation process, (vii) the way the new coexistence of models is perceived, and (viii) the feelings of injustice expressed by farmers and other stakeholders.

## **Divided lands, varying rights: how coexistence is materially shaped by public allocations of land**

This first section of results focuses on the tangible impacts of public allocations of land. We question how such allocations change the local land balance between models. Do they modify the spatial distribution of farmland between models? The spatial proximity between models? Do they enhance access to land or secure land rights for farmers belonging to marginalized models? If that is the case, how?

<sup>3</sup> [Land use and rural settlement corporation]: a semi-public body which controls land ownership: it holds a preemptive right on all farmland put on the market. When it was created in 1962, its goal was to support the increase in farm size while avoiding land grabs. More details may be found in Sencébé et al. (2013).

**Table 1** Case study short presentation

Study area	Case study name	Main public stakeholder	Time frame	Perimeter of public land action (ha)	Allocated land (ha)
Lyon	Monts d'Or	Monts d'Or local authority (involves municipalities and metropolitan authority)	Since 2008	No defined perimeter. Whole territory: 1694	54.2
	Vaulx	Municipalities of Vaulx and Décines	2009 + since 2014	13.5 (short term)/68 ha (long run)	4
	Grand Parc	Grand Parc local authority	Since 2015	400	8
Montpellier	Agripare (agricultural parc) P2A <sup>a</sup>	Montpellier metropolitan authority	2010–2012 2015–2016	110 14	110 9.5
Perpignan	PAEN <sup>b</sup> Wastelands	Perpignan metropolitan authority	2010–2018 2009–2014	281 1319	14.7 16.8

<sup>a</sup> [Policy for Food and Agro-ecology]: the metropolitan policy that framed this second allocation in Montpellier. More details are to be found in Perrin et al. 2018 or Hasnaoui Amri 2018

<sup>b</sup> [Periurban natural and farmland protection perimeter]: a strict long-term binding land use zoning tool introduced by the national law 2005 (n.157). More details on this case may be found in Tredan and Perrin (forthcoming)

## Agricultural models struggling for places

Our first question targets the results of public allocations of land in space. The spatial configuration of public allocations depends on the extent of public ownership and market opportunities (Table 2). Local authorities are given a free hand to divide lands between agricultural models when a large public space is allocated all at once. In the contrary, when the land is private, or when it is public but already rented to farmers, its public allocation depends on market opportunities. Local authorities have to wait for plots to be sold or rental contracts to end. Dividing land between models is more complicated in such cases.

### Criteria and opportunities used to divide large public estates

The main criteria used to divide space between different models rely on agronomic and urban planning spheres.

Near Montpellier, the goal of the Agriparc project was to set up a multifunctional agricultural park. The 110 ha allocated were split into three sectors, reproducing de facto the regional-wide coexistence pattern within the Agriparc itself. The seventeen farmers chosen are diversified: they grow grapes ( $n = 10$ ), cereals and fodder ( $n = 4$ ), vegetables ( $n = 2$ ), and olives ( $n = 1$ ). Three of them have organic practices. From an agricultural model perspective, few lands were allocated to alternative systems (15% of the surface to market gardening and 20% to organic farmers). A policy officer of the metropolitan authority remembers:

When the authority bought the estate, i said, “On the north part, there will be vineyard.” It’s kind of my idea, and i claim responsibility for it. “On the south part, close to the urban fringe, there will be cereals or fodder.” Because if urbanization gains ground, it won’t do it from the north. We worked with SAFER to study soils and agricultural potential. (interview)

Alongside such agronomic and urban planning criteria, he also mentions the landscape, or at least an esthetic perspective that justifies to make alternative models invisible in the landscape:

Well, we hid the incubator! I said: “Just wait, it’s going to be a mess.” I know the landscape there by heart, I know what you can see, how you see it, everywhere; I mean, I hunted a lot over there. So, I knew we had to put the incubator below there. It was me! No way to put greenhouses in that beautiful landscape. [...] The other [conventional] market gardener is on the other side of the road, because i knew he would be clean. Besides, what he does is clean. (interview)

Market gardening was located close to natural spaces between vineyards and cereal farming. The farm incubator, which promoted organic peasant farming, was put on low-lying ground, whereas the conventional market gardener, as a member of the majority union, could set up his farm along the road. In being so visible, he can easily sell his products on-farm directly to consumers.

**Table 2** Public allocations' spatial and legal arrangements

Case study	Former owners of allocated plots	Time frame of the allocation	Spatial configuration of allocations	Space partitioning between models	Lease agreement hierarchization between models
Monts d'Or (Lyon)	Private landowners	Several years, according to market opportunities (plots for sale)	Hard cores/isolated plots	No (only local SFSC)	No (length depends only on location)
Vaulx (Lyon)	Local authorities	Several years, according to terms of rental contracts (when contracts end)	Isolated plots within a perimeter	Yes, agronomic and urban planning criteria	Yes (shorter term for cereals in market gardening area)
Grand Parc (Lyon)	Local authorities			No (only local supply chains)	Yes (length and prices of rents differentiated for conventional, agroecological and organic)
Agriparc (Montpellier)	Local authorities	All plots allocated at the same time	One large continuous estate	Yes, agronomic, urban planning, and landscape criteria	Not presented as such (length depends on location)
P2A (Montpellier)	Local authorities		Two blocks of parcels	No (only local SFSC)	No (same tenure with environmental specifications)
PAEN (Perpignan)	Private landowners	Several years, according to market opportunities (plots for sale)	Isolated plots within a perimeter	No	No
Wastelands (Perpignan)	Private landowners				Yes (shorter term for cereals)



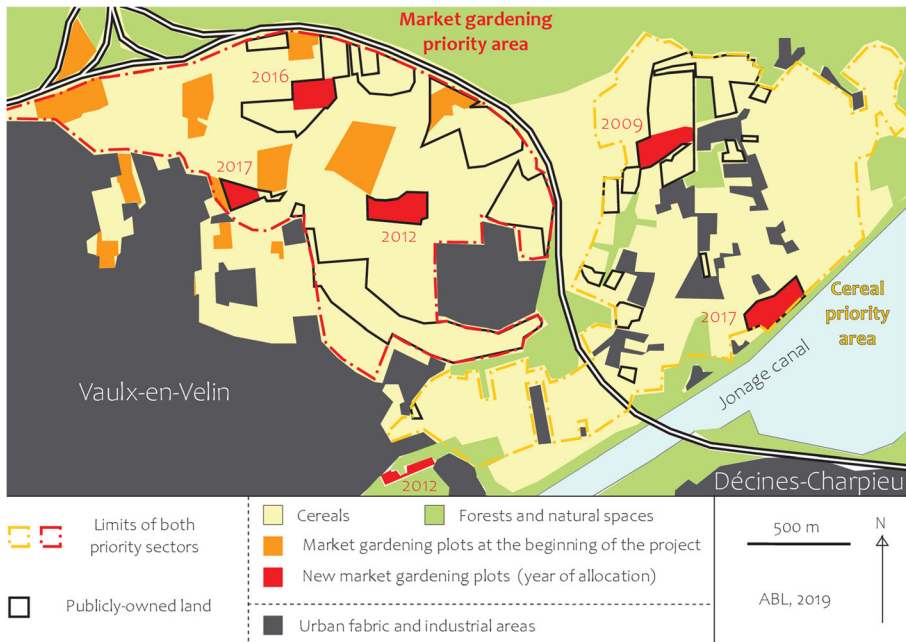
In Vaulx, the goal of the municipalities is to favor the difficult reemergence of the former market gardening belt on a plain mainly producing cereals. The four new farmers chosen are market gardeners selling locally through SFSCs (short food supply chains). Two of them are organic. Space was halved between an area prioritizing market gardening for SFSCs and another area focused on cereal farming integrated into nationwide chains (Map 1). According to the director of SAFER, this spatial partition relies on agronomic and urban planning criteria:

[O]n the west side, land is very suitable for vegetables, with good quality soils and an irrigation system. Cultivating vegetables on the east side is much more difficult, because there is a recycling factory, an area hosting Gypsies, an industrial park, and a future urbanization zone. Soils are heavier, with more rocks. So, we decided to concentrate market gardening on the west side and let the east side be a cereal sector. (interview)

Theoretical dividing plans are not definitive. Especially in spaces with progressive land allocations, the way the space is divided is adapted over time, building on effective opportunities, and on the local availability of applying farmers who meet the public strategy. For instance, in Vaulx, two plots located in the cereal priority sector were allocated to market gardening in 2009 and 2017 (Map 1).

### Allocation processes without space partitioning

In the five other cases, lands were allocated without any space partitioning or distribution plan between models.



**Map 1** Evolution of the market gardening surfaces in the Vaulx plain

In the Monts d'Or, the goal of the local authority is to create new organic farms involved in local SFSCs in order to diversify the local food supply. The five farmers chosen so far correspond to this goal, with diversified production: market gardening ( $n = 2$ ), cow and goat dairy, cow and pig meat ( $n = 1$ ), and bread ( $n = 1$ ). As public ownership is scattered over a mostly privately owned land, the local authority focuses on creating what its director calls "hard cores": farmlands which are strategic resources for the local farms to last over the years because they carry a water spring or a building, or because of their high fertility. Until now, six hard cores were created, benefiting mainly new farms. Organic farmers in local SFSCs occupy limited but growing surfaces, mainly on former wasteland. The conventional locally dominant model does not lose land, but simply gains it less easily.

In the P2A and Grand Parc cases, there is no space partitioning as all public plots available were rented to organic farmers involved in local supply chains. In Grand Parc, the goal is to promote agroecological practices and local supply chains (whether short or long). The three new farmers are organic. In Montpellier P2A, the goal of the land allocation is to consolidate the network of small farms so as to nourish agroecology. The two farms chosen are organic: a market gardener selling through a CSA (community supported agriculture, AMAP in French), and a starting farm coop with multifunctional goals (producing fruit, vegetables, and chickens, and offering catering services and educational activities).

In Perpignan, the two projects led to a *status quo ante*, as land was rented to conventional farmers, most of them long-established. The PAEN project aimed to protect farmland from further peri-urbanization and to redevelop agriculture on fallow land. The orientation towards organic farming and SFSCs was expressed by local authorities but not mentioned in the project documents. The two farmers chosen, producing grapes and chickens respectively, are conventional. The Perpignan wasteland project aimed to redevelop a diversified agriculture on fallow land and support organic farming, SFSCs, and especially new young farmers. The three farmers chosen are, however, long-established conventional wine estates ( $n = 2$ ) and a cereal farmer ( $n = 1$ ).

To conclude, public allocations of land result in various de facto spatial distribution patterns of agricultural space between agricultural models. When a global distribution plan is built ahead of the allocation process, agronomic, urban planning, and landscape criteria are used to assign an area to each model. Nevertheless, the effective location of agricultural models is highly affected by market opportunities, which may amend the plans.

### **Diversified lease agreements**

The materiality of each models' presence has been approached so far through a spatial, horizontal component. This is, however, insufficient to encompass the density of use. Indeed, depending on the property rights held by each farmer, spaces may be used differently. In this second subsection, we explore if agricultural models are allocated the same property rights on land.

Three main strategies appear when farmers do not receive the same tenure (Table 2): the public stakeholders hierarchize models by differentiating their tenure types, hierarchization occurs only in specific areas, and systemic land rights differentiations exist without intersecting with the issue of agricultural models.

### A threefold hierarchization in the Grand Parc

When the Grand Parc authority regularized the traditional but informal occupation of its land by farmers in 2005, all farmers were given the same rights for 10 years. In 2015, it differentiated tenures according to the sustainability of the farmers' practices.

It first adapted the length of the lease agreements. As the technician points out,

[F]or those who are in organic farming or agroecology or agroforestry, the agreement lasts 12 years, whereas those who stay in conventional farming have only an 8-year-long tenure. [...] What is now very clear is that we won't allocate freed parcels to conventional farmers; they will be set aside for agroecology, organic farming and local supply. (interview)

Prices of the lease agreements were also differentiated:

Before 2015, the price we asked was based on the administrative framework,<sup>4</sup> but then we realized that our land has a specific status and that we could fix the prices ourselves. We then decided to make the conventional farmers pay more and the others less. As the previous price was 57 €/ha/year, we put 50 € for organic farmers, 80 € for agroecological farmers, and 100 € for conventional farmers. (interview)

In this case, the differentiation of lease agreements indicates the authority's preference and serves as a minor incentive to drive farmers towards more sustainable farming practices. It induces a hierarchization of agricultural models.

### A spatially explicit hierarchization in Vaulx

In Vaulx, tenures vary according to the location. Most farmers benefit from very secure and long-lasting lease agreements (*fermage*). However, in the area prioritizing market gardening, cereal farmers can only sign precarious lease agreements. As the policy officer for agriculture in the town of Vaulx states,

[S]ome people question: "why implement precarious leases?" Because, for now, the only people willing to farm our lands are large cereal farmers. We didn't want our land to become wasteland, so we lease it to cereal farmers. But they remain available: if a market gardener comes in and ask for land, we will be able to allocate him some of these hectares. (interview)

The goal of the lease agreement differentiation is indeed to favor the difficult reemergence of the former market gardening belt.

### Diversification of tenures and models do not coincide

Nevertheless, hierarchization strategies are few. Most public stakeholders do not wish to officially organize coexistence through such public allocations. In

<sup>4</sup> In France, land lease agreement prices are regulated by the State.

Perpignan, the first goal of the public policy is to defend agricultural activity against urbanization and land abandonment.

In two case studies, we could observe a differentiation of tenures on public estates without any link to agricultural models and their hierarchization. In the Agriparc of Montpellier, the type of tenure depends on the type of culture, and the allocation key is based on the previously mentioned spatial pattern. Lands closest to the urban fringe, producing cereals, are leased on short-term contracts. On the other plots, further away from the city, market gardeners and winegrowers obtained *fermage* lease agreements. Consequently, the few organic farmers received better tenure than some conventional farmers, but such a difference was initially not looked for.

In the Monts d'Or, the local authority uses three tenure types: the *fermage* for groups of plots vast enough for farmers to make a living on them (farmland hard cores); short-term and non-renewable leases for small, isolated public plots waiting to be integrated into hard cores; and lastly "loans for use" (for free) for private land whose management is delegated by private owners to the local authority. Agroecological farmers benefit mainly from *fermage*, but also from free loans for use.

To conclude, hierarchization of models through land property rights allocation is not frequent. Two of our case studies could, however, be weak signals of new forms of public farmland management. Indeed, dividing lands while differentiating property rights and their length and content may be a tool for policies and governances of models' coexistence, and a powerful means towards progressive transformations of land balances.

## **The coexistence of agricultural models: a blind spot in public procedures of land allocation**

The preceding section shed light on the spatial and juridical aspects of the coexistence of agricultural models. This section will show how public procedures of land allocation (fail to) tackle the issue of coexistence. It first presents the criteria and actors involved in the selection of beneficiaries and then the visions of agriculture carried by their discourses.

### **Criteria and actors involved in the selection of beneficiaries**

We observed three distinct procedures, according to who decides: SAFER, local authorities, or a more diversified set of actors.

#### **Selection by SAFER generally maintains the status quo**

SAFER is a semi-public body which controls the farmland market. It systematically receives the information of all farmland put on the market because it holds a preemptive right to it. In practice, the vast majority of farmland sales go through SAFER without it showing any interest in preemption. In the perimeters targeted by local public action of farmland management, SAFER can play a key role in choosing the farmers to whom the newly available land is allocated.

In three cases (Montpellier Agriparc and Perpignan PAEN and wastelands), SAFER decides without any specifications imposed by local authorities. While it does not display a preference for a certain model and hence should be open to all, such a procedure in fact maintains the status quo or reinforces the conventional agricultural model's local stranglehold on farmland.

The usual procedure is the following: the SAFER publishes a call for applications in newspapers and on its website for 20 days. Then, its technical committee chooses among the applications received, with regard to (i) the integration of the project in the local agricultural context, (ii) its compliance with local policy, (iii) the competences of the candidate, and (iv) the technical soundness of the project. There are no interviews with applicants.

The technical committee includes representatives of farmers (farmers' unions, the Chamber of Agriculture, and farmers' banks and insurance companies) and delegates of the state (the Ministry of Agriculture and the Finance Ministry). Delegates of local authorities (Département, Region, associations of Mayors) may attend, but the municipality or inter-municipal body concerned with the land allocation may not. In some cases, the committee welcomes landowners' unions and bodies (or NGOs) for the protection of the environment.

When the local authority does not explain to the SAFER its will to develop sustainable agricultural models, the SAFER most often gives the land to already operational neighboring farms, to support their economic viability. In the two cases around Perpignan, for instance, SAFER several times gave the land available on the perimeters of the public projects to mid- or large-size wine estates belonging to the high-yield, conventional agriculture model based on the use of synthetic inputs, minerals, and water.

### **Selection by local authority favors sustainable agriculture models**

In two cases (Grand Parc and Monts d'Or), the local authority chooses directly to whom it rents its publicly owned farmland. It prefers to rely on employees with agricultural knowledge rather than on farmers' representatives and SAFER. Such a procedure favors aspiring farmers belonging to sustainable agricultural models. However, the surfaces allocated are often limited and the plots scattered within a perimeter still mainly occupied by conventional farmers.

The selection procedure is fast in each case, and neither open nor transparent. There is no call for applications, just an interview. The local authority chooses the beneficiaries from among the aspiring farmers who contacted them to ask for land in recent times and/or were introduced and supported by an influential person (an elected representative or a local farmer). Such a procedure supports sustainable agricultural models and can be understood as affirmative action trying to correct a power imbalance on a case-by-case basis.

### **Selection by a committee including local authorities' and farmers' representatives helps to tackle coexistence issues**

Only in two cases were beneficiaries selected according to formalized criteria via discussion in dedicated local committees. Such a procedure legitimizes the coexistence

scheme, or the priority given to organic food producers selling through local SFSCs. It resembles the beginning of a territorial governance.

In Vaulx (Lyon), a local ad hoc committee decided the spatial distribution scheme presented in the previous section, delimiting one area for market gardening and another one for cereals. The committee includes local authorities—employees and elected officials of the 2 municipalities (Vaulx-en-Velin and Décines-Charpieu) and of the inter-municipal body (Grand Lyon—metropolitan scale)—farmers' representatives, a retired market gardener representing the local farmers' union, and technical staff from SAFER and the Chamber of Agriculture. Minority alternative farmers' unions were not invited. An employee of Vaulx municipality explains:

We really wanted to benefit from SAFER'S expertise, on the one hand in the committee which allocates public lands, on the other hand for the drafting of contracts with farmers. [...] The municipality does not claim to be an expert in agriculture; the objective was to redevelop agriculture, so we chose this partnership. [...] But it means that we are committed to respecting the committee's choice. No plot was allocated solely because the municipality of Vaulx-en-Velin decided so. [...] Fortunately [...], the committee has always decided by consensus. (interview)

In Montpellier in 2015, the metropolitan authority launched a call for applications in order to allocate two plots. Alternative profiles (a CSA and a multifunctional farm coop) were selected. The call remained open 2 months. The selection was based on a weighted criteria list including organic practices, integration into local SFSCs, welcoming city dwellers on the farm, farming competences of the candidate, and the technical and financial soundness of the project. The criteria were announced in the call and explained during collective site visits (welcoming more than 70 visitors). Each applicant received the same information through an official FAQ (frequently asked questions) and then had the opportunity to defend her/his project in an interview (Hasnaoui Amri 2018).

The Montpellier metropolitan authority had internal agricultural skills: the vice president in charge was an agronomist and one employee worked previously for an NGO supporting organic market gardening. For the project, the staff consulted a local established organic market gardener selling through a CSA. The selection committee included elected officials and technical staff from the metropolitan authority and from the municipalities where the parcels were located. The allocation was done with an emphasis on transparency and the will to build a replicable methodology through this case. However, this long procedure has not yet been replicated and these two allocations have actually had a limited spatial impact on the local coexistence still dominated by conventional wine growers.

In conclusion, the range of actors involved in the procedure strongly influences which agriculture model benefits from the land allocation. The SAFER gives preference to locally dominant conventional agriculture, while the local authority prioritizes sustainable agriculture (agroecology) and short food supply chains. The coexistence issue was considered only in one case—that in which the selection committee is more open, including several representatives of local authorities and of farmers among its members (Vaulx). There, coexistence was not negotiated a posteriori but was planned

from the beginning. When local authorities are explicit about the objectives of the allocation, the expected profiles of the applicants, and the way to make selections, the procedure supports the legitimization of marginalized agriculture models and shows the political will of the city to gain legitimacy in dealing with agriculture.

### **Diverse visions of agriculture guide the procedure**

The visions of agriculture held by the institutions in charge of the allocations range from a dichotomous opposition between conventional and organic agricultures, to the recognition of the diversity or of a desired transition towards agroecology.

### **A dichotomous opposition of two models in competition for land**

In four cases, the discourses insist on or start with a dichotomous opposition of two models in competition for land and public recognition. In the Monts d'Or (Lyon), for instance,

depending on whether we consider new agricultural actors or farmers who have been working here for generations, the ways of thinking are not at all the same. [...] A lot of new farmers gave us a new breath, with a vision of agriculture that is not the one we had twenty or thirty years ago—based on an intensive farming scheme depending on European subsidies. There are now more extensive farms that contribute to the common good, because they preserve the environment. (director of local authority)

I tend to see two models with, on one side, the old farmers, forty to fifty years old or perhaps close to retirement, who remained in the old model: landowners, wishing to stay with more conventional agriculture, [...] they continue to work in the same way [as their parents did] and they are very attached to the land. On the opposite side, we have the new model emerging, with young farmers [...] who prefer to invest in production tools rather than in land [...]. And they are mostly oriented towards SFSCs and organic farming practices. (SAFER employee)

These two quotes show that the local authority and the SAFER share the same vision of opposing older conventional intensive farmers with new young organic farmers involved in SFSCs. These two groups are presented as in competition for land: when a plot is available, the SAFER technical committee has to decide whether to sell the plot to the local authority (which will rent it to organic farmers) or to the conventional farmer, who is often already farming the land informally. Within the SAFER committee, there are “representatives of this new agriculture model and representatives of the old agriculture model. So, there are often conflicts” (SAFER employee). What makes this case peculiar is that because of the urban context, SAFER tends much more to ally with the local authority than it does in more rural areas (where the agricultural sector is still socially dominant). The proximity to the city and the involvement of urban stakeholders in farmland management hence change the balance of power between agricultural models: they weaken the domination of the old conventional model.

Similar opposition exists in Vaulx (Lyon) between market gardeners, often with organic practices and involved in SFSCs, and conventional cereal farms producing commodities for the global food markets. Around Perpignan, farmers' representatives advocate for conventional input-intensive large-size farms producing fruit or wine, and systematically disqualify small organic SFSC farms:

Elected officials [...] want the landscape to change, and then they want it to be organic. We have nothing against organic but... it is almost a dogma on the part of elected officials [...]. Farming practices can respect the environment without necessarily being organic. When we talk about turning wasteland back to agriculture, it is not with a farmer in organic market gardening who just needs 2500 m<sup>2</sup> that you will have an impact on the landscape! (SAFER employee)

In most cases, local actors hence oppose the conventional model and an alternative model, relying on organic practices and local SFSCs.

### The recognition of diversity

Behind this dichotomous opposition, which is used to advocate for access to land, the actors are nevertheless aware of the internal diversity of the farmers' professional group.

First, it is not always possible to sort all farmers according to this dichotomous vision. Interviewees identify farmers between the two models: for instance, old small farmers involved in SFSCs for a long time in the Monts d'Or. In Vaulx as well, the discussions of the selection criteria within the committee show slightly diverging visions of the farmers to be promoted as alternatives to aging conventional cereal farmers:

- Young full-time market gardeners trying to use as few chemical inputs as possible (president of the local farmers' union)
- Young organic market gardeners *or* cereal farmers willing to grow new crops—lentils, for instance (municipal employee)
- Small organic market gardeners willing to sell through local SFSCs (elected municipal councilor and inter-municipal employee).

As underlined by Plumecocq et al. (2018), sustainable agriculture encompasses a diversity of models legitimized by a plurality of values.

Second, farmers' organizations close to the conventional model deny using a dichotomous approach for selecting aspiring farmers in Perpignan:

We look at whether the project seems serious, realistic, and solid, according to economic criteria, the business plan, the great classics criteria! It may not sound fun, but it is efficient and rational. We support all supply chains and production systems if they are efficient. We often have people with a farming project who are not very professional in their approach. [...]



It is mainly in the wetland depression that we can consider organic agriculture, where there are issues of biodiversity and water quality management. But it does not mean that you can do what you want on other lands. [...] There is room for all production systems. In addition, if we had the goal that the entire perimeter be organic, it would have been an additional handicap to find new farmers. We were not going to sort the projects according to whether they are in conventional or organic farming! (Chamber of Agriculture, 2016)

Finally, visions of agriculture may vary within the same organization according to the person interviewed. In the Montpellier local authority, in 2012, diverse visions coexisted. In its Local Agenda 21, the department of the environment defined the public estate (to be allocated to farmers) as a “multifunctional agripark,” where agriculture should combine functions of production, SFSCs, landscape and biodiversity management, and leisure and education (Jarrige and Perrin 2017). However, the employee from the department of land management, directly in charge of land allocation with SAFER, expresses a much more dichotomous vision based on esthetic criteria: he prefers the “beautiful landscapes” of conventional input-intensive melon production.

Behind dichotomous visions, which serve in the competition for land and official discourses, actors can recognize in interviews the complexity and diversity of the farming community. They acknowledge a coexistence that is not limited to competition. But only a few of them advocate publicly for diversity.

### **For a general transition towards agroecology**

Recognizing publicly the diversity of farming systems may be a way for the local authority to not have to choose between models and to invite all farmers to progress towards agroecology, which is considered a necessary transition and a desired future especially in two cases.

In Montpellier, the metropolitan authority launched a “policy for food and agroecology” (P2A) in 2015. It recognizes the diversity of farming systems and considers them all useful for territorial development. More small, diversified food-oriented farms selling in SFSCs are required by consumers; bigger, less diversified farms and wholesalers are useful for provisioning public cafeterias with local products; olive oil and wine sectors contribute to territorial marketing, terroir, and agritourism; small and bigger food companies further innovation; and urban gardens promote the empowerment of local community and producer-consumer reconnection (Metropolitan Vice-President, 2015). The metropolitan policy hence includes and values diverse farming systems without hierarchizing them or presenting them as models. The vision is that these farming systems may coexist (without asking how or if it could be problematic).

In the project that we studied in 2016 (P2A), the metropolitan authority allocated farmland only to the first category, with the goals to “consolidate the network of small farms in nourishing agroecology” and “relocate food production to the benefit of collective catering, by moving towards direct sales and short supply chains” (Metropolitan Vice-President, 2016). However, conventional vine growers and extensive livestock breeders are supported in parallel by other metropolitan projects (Hasnaoui Amri 2018). And in all public documents and events, the metropolitan authority has

since used the term “agroecological transition” to include all farmers and invite them to progress towards more respect for the environment.

Similarly, the local authority of the Grand Parc (Lyon) rents available plots to newcomers involved in organic farming and local SFSCs, but it promotes a triple transition:

- The first transition promoted in the 2000s concerned crops (from corn monoculture to diverse crops). “Originally, corn occupied a large portion of the park, which was widely criticized by the general public, and by us too, at the time. Now, there is much less corn. As a result, this will to diversify the agricultural landscape is no longer a priority” (Grand Parc employee).
- Now, through differential rent prices, the Grand Parc promotes a transition of farming practices (from conventional to agroecological and organic).
- The transition also concerns marketing channels (from global markets to local SFSCs): products have to be processed and sold in a 100-km perimeter in order to get the Parc label.

Here, the vision is not coexistence but rather the necessity of a general transition: every farmer should progress in these directions.

In conclusion, local authorities rarely explicitly tackle the coexistence of diverse agricultural models as an issue to be addressed, either before the public land allocation or as a result of the allocation. Nevertheless, their strategies are *de facto* based either on a dichotomous vision of conventional and organic models in competition, or on the recognition of more diverse farmers and the desired transition towards agroecology. We hence need to focus now on how the diverse local stakeholders have perceived the change in coexistence induced by public allocations of farmland.

## **The experienced coexistence: a debated transformation of land balances**

In this last section, we focus on how coexistence is perceived and experienced by the local stakeholders. To achieve this ambition, we first explore how farmers relate to other farmers and to models regarding land division and land rights hierarchization. Then, we analyze how interviewees feel about the way the procedures were led and about their results, which refer to both procedural and distributive justice issues: is the resource equitably distributed? Are the procedures inclusive and fair? Are all models given equal footing, with respect for their various identities?

### **From conflict to hybridization: a gradient of coexistence between old and new neighboring farmers**

Interactions between old and new farmers and the public stakeholders range from open conflict to hybridization of models. Our gradient is inspired by Depraz (2008), who

classifies conflictual situations as conflict, tension, divergence, compromise, convergence, agreement, or consensus.

### Open conflict

We faced only one example of open conflict, which resulted in a court judgment. In the Vaulx cereal priority area, a cereal farmer used a plot of land with a 1-year-long lease, which had been renewed every year for 5 years. The town administration decided to allocate it to an organic market gardener, to supply school cafeterias with local vegetables. The cereal farmer refused to let the land be farmed by someone he did not recognize as a farmer (“this guy is not a farmer; he is probably not registered at the agricultural social insurance mutual benefit fund,<sup>5</sup>” interview) and sued the town. He argues:

A short-term lease doesn't mean you can stop it to give the land to a guy to grow vegetables when the market gardening area is full of corn! [...] There is no irrigation here: how is he going to work? I requested access to water, but they refused; most likely, he will get it. (interview)

Moreover, he felt neglected by the town, as he had been evicted from dozens of hectares in the past years because of urbanization; in his view, he should have been eligible for other public lands.

### Tensions

Furthermore, the bitter feelings evoked during the interviews referred to tensions, the second level of our conflict gradient. In the Vaulx market gardening priority area, cereal farmers feel progressively driven out by the short-term leases. In Montpellier, a long-established organic market gardener supplying short food chains notes that the metropolitan authority has never given him anything like the public aid it grants new market gardeners. In the P2A project, newcomers enjoyed a facilitated access to the irrigation network and land (at a low price), and they could count on support to obtain a building permit. In comparison, the mentioned market gardener struggled for years to find even small, isolated plots on the private land market; these plots were without building rights (even for agriculture) and sometimes exposed to flood risk.

### Distrust and suspicion

A third level of conflicting coexistence is made up of distrust and suspicion between farmers of distinct models. Several examples show limited relationships between them. In the Monts d'Or, distrust is reciprocal between conventional commodity farmers and agroecological farmers supplying short chains—the latter organize an informal network by exchanging material and knowledge, and through a common farmers' market. In the Vaulx plain, market gardeners and cereal farmers have few opportunities to meet, exchange, and work together: cereal farmers usually live 10 to 20 km away from the urban fringe and come to the plain only when field labor requires it, while market

<sup>5</sup> *Mutualité sociale agricole*; in French, the social security system of the agricultural sector.

gardeners live nearby. Nevertheless, the market gardeners direct some criticism towards the unsustainable use of irrigation water by cereal farmers.

### **Mutual indifference**

Further cases are not conflictual. Interestingly, feelings of injustice are at a low level in the Grand Parc, where tenures are the most hierarchized and precarious. Long-established farmers know their (grand)parents settled down illegally on public marshlands and were tolerated: they do not question the instability of leases. Furthermore, they know the groundwater can be used as Lyon's emergency drinkable water reserve and do not challenge the transition policy towards agroecology. The cohabitation of conventional, agroecological, and organic farmers is marked by mutual indifference; moreover, many of them live outside the Grand Parc and come only for field labor.

### **Collaboration**

Collaborations between models are still underdeveloped. Nevertheless, coexistence can change ways of living together by overtaking suspicion and preconceptions of other forms of agriculture. In the Agriparc, neighbors' mutual suspicion gave way to exchanges and new relationships. A conventional winegrower met an aspiring organic market gardener of the incubator, saw him working, got along well with him, and finally offered him a parcel to set up his own farm in SFSCs.

### **Hybridization**

The last level leads to hybridization of models. Only one case can be reported so far: a cereal farmer of the Vaulx plain accepted the dedication of a share of his parcels to growing tomatoes for the local market. The steering committee of the project hence wants to secure his land rights more than it does those of other cereal farmers still producing only wheat and corn for long chains.

To conclude, differences in property rights between agricultural models are major reasons for feelings of injustice. Differences of locations seem to be less contentious. Few situations of open conflicts happen, but long-established farmers voice much bitterness and fear concerning the support local authorities provide to newcomers. Farmers of distinct models usually do not interact, but a few positive impacts of spatial proximity can be highlighted.

### **Farmland allocation procedures reveal relationships of power**

Not only the results of the procedures form the basis of feelings of injustice. Stakeholders have also expressed resentments towards the allocation procedures, which are considered inadequately inclusive, transparent, or legitimate.

### **Exclusion of agricultural models**

The first criticism of allocation procedures concerns the exclusion of some agricultural models (and their representatives) from the decision-making process.

Interviewees in two cases denounced the gap between the initial goals of the public policy and the farmers selected. In the wasteland case (Perpignan), a farmer (who was allocated some plots) states that “in fact, the project produced exactly the opposite of what was planned.” This project aimed to redevelop agriculture on wastelands and support “organic farming, short food supply chains, new young farmers, and finally the diversification of the agriculture in place by the introduction of pharmaceutical and energy crops” (public document presenting the project, 2008). In 2016, an employee of the local authority who led the project explained that such objectives were set in response to the societal demands. However, an employee of another local authority regrets that the allocation “benefitted large wine estates rather than young people willing to start a business and have less social and financial capital (...). No young farmers, no organic farms, no SFSCs” (interview).

SAFER led the selection procedure and the opportunities for dialog with alternative farmers’ representatives were limited. An employee of SAFER justifies their choice by underlining:

[The local authority] never made me feel that i should prioritize organic farmers. We do not distinguish between conventional and organic, as opposed to what is actually written in the project documents. At the time the project was launched, organic, CSA, SFSC were popular, but I never had any incentive in this direction. (interview)

Local authorities invited SAFER and the Chamber of Agriculture to the meetings about the project, but not the representatives of diverse farmers’ unions. A representative of a minority alternative farmers’ union (*Confédération paysanne*, member of La Via Campesina) “wonder[s] why they did not contact other organizations closer to organic farmers, which could have helped to identify young farmers willing to start a business in organic farming.”

Agricultural models locally in the minority were hence excluded from the discussions and from access to land. In the Monts d’Or, feelings of exclusion or marginalization are expressed as well, but on the contrary by conventional farmers who contend that the public strategy to buy farmland and rent it to organic farmers excludes them from the local land market.

### **Lack of transparency: acquaintances and informal infra-institutional arrangements benefit all models**

A second frequently expressed criticism of farmland allocation procedures concerns their lack of transparency.

The literature reports that social reputation and mutual acquaintances within the agricultural (or political) community (Hobeika 2013) strongly impact SAFER’s choice, which does not make it easy for newcomers to take over or create farms (Sencébé et al. 2013; Baysse-Lainé and Perrin 2018). However, similar biases were reported when the local authority directly led the selection procedure, and even when an official selection committee involving local authority and farmers’ representatives conducted the procedure.

In one case, a young farmer (not from the region) believes to have had the best score according to the selection criteria, but was ultimately not given the land—in his opinion, because an elected representative supported another project from the local alternative agricultural community.

Personal connections and favoritism or nepotism were also denounced in several cases. Farmers who did not benefit told us that a plot was given to the brother or a friend of the actors in charge of the project. A cereal farmer evicted from his land believes that the mayor gave it to a market gardener not because of his crop, but because of his ethnicity (he belongs to a locally important ethnic minority).

Finally, informal infra-institutional arrangements between SAFER and local authority may impact the choice made by SAFER's technical committee between agricultural models:

The SAFER, it was us, who always worked with mutual understanding. We told them, “this applicant we like; this one we do not like; you have to choose X.” The SAFER did not agree on X—not so much the technicians but the elected farmers' representatives of the SAFER. We told them, “no, if you want [the rest of the land] for other farmers, you leave 10 ha for X.” Then, they understood. (employee of a local authority)

Hence, favoritism and informal infra-institutional arrangements during the procedure may favor all models and impact the results of land allocation in terms of coexistence.

### **Farmers' representatives deny the legitimacy of urban local authorities to manage farmland**

Farmers' representatives do not want the urban local authorities to manage farmland and impose an alternative, more sustainable agricultural model.

Tensions between SAFER and local authorities were often mentioned. In one case, the local authority was pressured to let SAFER control the selection:

Immediately the SAFER was against us. They said, “but how, these guys are doing our job; we do not agree.” So, at the request of the president, in order not to anger the SAFER, we had to go through them [to select farmers]. (elected official, local authority)

I cannot conceal the fact that SAFER and the Chamber of Agriculture saw, at least initially, not necessarily favorably, that an urban local authority could take care of, structure, coordinate, animate, what was their business, their prerogative. I felt a certain observation, which slows down the procedure. (technician, local authority)

The SAFER does not accept that local authorities impose specifications on farming practices:

I expect one day to argue with the municipality, because it will compel us to impose specifications on farming practices. And, as SAFER, the law forbids me

to impose such specifications. The strategic plan should not allow land for only one type of agriculture: it would be resented. And i feel that one day it could happen, because the elected officials speak in slogans. A mayor wants to manage everything in his town, he wants to choose and control who settles. [...] Choosing an organic farmer goes against the principle of free enterprise. Actually, the mayor normally does not have a say in the SAFER technical committee. But our goal is not to get angry with the mayors. (SAFER employee)

Farmers also mentioned their opposition to this new role that some urban local authorities take concerning farmland management because they feel evicted or because they fear that the local authority will become the main landowner:

That a public actor, not at all agricultural, buys land and builds an agricultural estate, it seems to me [...] not normal. Not normal at all. We have already talked about it with [the director of the local authority], we often fight each other, [...] actually] it's a discussion. (a farmers' union representative)

Locally, diverse long-established farmers share this opinion. Evoking SAFER's pre-emption right and a parcel he could not buy, one farmer told us: "I feel like we are coming to Russia, you know" (interview). To these farmers, property does really matter, and the local authority should buy land only if no farmer is willing to: coexistence is acceptable if they can still buy agronomically viable and/or future urbanized parcels themselves. At a national level, the dominant farmers' unions (FNSEA, JA) vehemently oppose the rise of public farmland estates (Daurelle et al. 2015).

In conclusion, when farmers' representatives deny the legitimacy of local authorities to manage farmland, it may be also a strategy to oppose access to land for alternative agricultural models that they disdain. More generally, the conflicts and tensions depicted, as well as the diverse resentments expressed in interviews, show the need for such public procedures of land allocation to be more inclusive, transparent, and legitimate, especially about the issue of the coexistence of diverse agriculture models.

## Discussion and conclusion

In Lyon, Montpellier, and Perpignan, several public allocations of farmland occurred during the past decade. Such procedures are interesting arenas for studying coexistence between agricultural and food models, but they need to be situated within the different paths that cities are taking as they strive to fashion more sustainable urban foodscapes (Moragues-Faus and Morgan 2015). Through public allocations of land or provisioning for school cafeterias, urban local authorities have emerged as new normative actors in agriculture (Marty 2014), but they still lack legitimacy in the French agricultural sector. Their cross-sectoral and territorial approach to food is supported by minority and dominated groups of farmers and by civil society organizations. It generally fails to stand up to the sectoral and corporatist approach of French majority agricultural organizations (Thareau 2011; Barral and Pinaud 2015). Beyond the role of the cities,

the changing balance of power in access to land also needs to be related to civil society movements (Beckett and Galt 2016) which promote the recognition of farmland as a common resource, such as *Terre de Liens* in France (Baysse-Lainé and Perrin 2018).

In this paper, we have used the coexistence of agricultural and food models as a lens to analyze how public allocations of land illustrate changing balances of power between farmers and between urban and agricultural stakeholders. Coexistence was approached first as a new way of organizing material agricultural space, then as a more or less implicit framework influencing procedures of land allocation, and finally as a transformation of land balance (and of relations of power) perceived and experienced by local stakeholders.

When space was explicitly divided among models, agronomic and esthetic criteria were used. Few public bodies venture to hierarchize models by an unequal repartition of land property rights. According to the case study, models are defined in various ways, mostly by combining farming practices (organic vs. conventional) and supply chains (SFSCs vs. long chains), and more rarely by the size of farms (small vs. large), territorial embeddedness (high vs. low), and in some cases the types of production (market gardening vs. grapes or cereals). An “urban” model of agriculture hence emerges from this comparison of peri-urban case studies of public allocations of farmland.

Procedures of public allocation of farmland are interesting instances or arenas to observe the coexistence between agricultural models in the discursive sphere, too. Our results show that the procedures are very diverse and that they generally support sustainable agriculture but rarely tackle the coexistence issue explicitly. The discourses of the persons in charge often reflect rivalries and sometimes hierarchization between models, but the range of actors directly involved in the procedure then strongly influences which farmers actually benefit. The procedures occasionally show processes of exclusion, lobbying, or the use of personal connections in favor of diverse models.

Analyzing discourses of farmers about these land allocations (and especially their feelings about the results and procedures) leads to identifying three classical social justice issues. Is the resource equitably distributed? Are the procedures inclusive and fair? Are all models given equal footing, with respect for their various identities? Public allocations are especially criticized by some farmers’ representatives for their potential for institutional marginalization and disqualification of conventional models. Beyond their limited spatial impact, they are actually important local initiatives for the institutional recognition of sustainable agriculture models. The agricultural models are, in fact, in competition not only for access to land, but also for public support and legitimation. By engaging in farmland management on the urban fringe, urban local authorities do not really change the spatial land balance, but they legitimate and contribute to a better recognition of subordinated agricultural models. The reemergence of peasant farming in Europe (van der Ploeg 2008) can be understood as a “struggle for recognition [... of] the coexistence of several models of growing and selling food” (Coolsaet 2016). When they allocate land to small organic farmers, urban local authorities contribute to “a form of status recognition in which different farming practices can coexist” (ibid.). However, agroecology is still considered a marginal form of agriculture (Altieri and Nicholls 2012), suffering from institutionalized misrecognition. In-depth case studies are useful here to delineate the social power relations of access to land and public support.



Urban local authorities are not equally aware of the relationships of power among diverse forms of agriculture. When they decide to allocate farmland to alternative farmers, some of them basically respond to local societal demand for organic, local, and short food chains, as shown in the Perpignan and Vaultx cases. Others officially value all types of agriculture, like in Montpellier. They have given land preferably to alternative farmers in recent times, but do not engage in a policy explicitly aimed at supporting only small-scale organic farms. Only in Monts d'Or and Grand Parc (Lyon) does the local authority hierarchize agricultural models or, at least, engage in affirmative action in favor of organic farmers supplying local short food chains. Such proactive policies occurred where local authorities have skilled elected representatives, hired skilled technicians and/or directors in the agricultural field, or when they allied with SAFER to preempt farmland. Additionally, agricultural land use is protected from urban development inside such perimeters.

The comparison of seven case studies proved useful to identify the changing balances of power on urban fringes between agriculture models and between urban and agricultural stakeholders. The way in which urban local authorities either do or do not influence the coexistence of models is strongly linked to spatial justice issues. As urban local authorities grant them land and legitimacy, farmers willing to develop agroecology and short food supply chains may settle in peri-urban areas, where access to land is otherwise very difficult for outsiders. The relation between local authorities and SAFER or other farmers' representatives varies greatly from one place to another. Further comparison between cases or longitudinal studies are now needed to understand why this relation evolves in some cases towards more concerted action and collaboration, while in other cases, the urban local authorities progressively take over farmland management.

The public allocations of farmland studied in this paper are place-specific initiatives, but they show nevertheless that a new urban model of agriculture has progressively gained legitimacy in peri-urban settings. They illustrate a generic trend of urban strategies aimed at transitioning agriculture and food more towards agroecology and short supply chains. Our results have practical implications for policy-making, showing that farmland governance processes could be improved if local authorities would more explicitly tackle the possible issues related to the coexistence of diverse agricultural models in space, as in public debates and policies. The gradient we propose, which ranges from conflict to hybridization, may also help to raise awareness about such coexistence issues. Another driver in propelling a transition towards more sustainable models is the differentiation of the content and length of land property rights local authorities allocate to farmers, according to their agricultural model. Such a strategy nevertheless requires precise skills in agricultural law, which are still often lacking in urban public administrations.

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