



Special session :

S76 Places for Sustainable Food: What's Behind and Beyond the Relocation of Food Systems?

Title:

Integration and territorialization of food-related issues. An analysis of the dynamics of coordination between stakeholders involved in territorial food projects in the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region (France).

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Introduction

Awareness of the negative externalities and vulnerability of food systems has led to the development of numerous initiatives by a wide range of local actors (agricultural producers, public actors, citizens, etc.). The structuring of localized food systems is now seen as a means of initiating a transition to more sustainable models. The integration of agricultural, food, environmental and health issues on a territorial scale (Lamine et al. 2019), and the alignment of various territorial public policies concerned with food systems, are seen as levers for sustainable transitions (Loudiyi, 2020). In this sense, the 2014 French law on the future of agriculture, food and forestry created territorial food projects ("Projet Alimentaires Territoriaux" in French, hereinafter PAT), a territorial governance arrangement for strengthening and enhancing food systems anchored in the territory, which are now recognized as levers of agricultural and food transition (MASA, 2020). In particular, they aim to federate actors around a common food-related territorial project, to strengthen local food supply chains and to act as levers for integrating different issues (social, environmental, economic or health-related) and areas of public action.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how PATs meet these objectives by studying the dynamics of coordination between the actors involved in these arrangements. In other words, does the construction of coordination around these arrangements enable the structuring of local food supply chain and the deployment of processes for integrating the issues, sectors and scales of action required for the transition of territorial food systems?

The first step was to draw up an overview of the diversity of PATs and their singularities, in terms of projected trajectories of change and forms of actor participation in the French Auvergne Rhône Alpes (AURA) region. In the AURA region, there are over 60 PATs, 56 of which are in the emergence phase (labelled level 1) and 7 fully operational (labelled level 2). A second task consisted in selecting two

"operational" PATs, contrasting and characterized by a history of territorialized food policies, in order to assess the effects of PATs on the interactions between actors in territorial food systems, on the structuring of local food chains and the integration of issues, sectors and scales. To this end, we analyzed the evolution of the territorial food project actors through social network analysis approaches (relational chain and complete social network) considering the types of actors involved (roles, challenges raised, positioning in controversies, practices). Thus, we documented the construction and implementation processes of integrated food policies through the prism of these coordination and alliance strategies (sectors involved, associated governance processes, cooperation at different organizational levels, as well as the controversies structuring these constructions).

The paper presents the theoretical framework of the research, the methodological framework and the data mobilized. As the research is ongoing, only the initial results concerning the diversity of PATs and the expected results concerning the effects of two contrasting PATs on interactions between actors are presented.

Theoretical framework

The analysis of interactions between actors in territorial food systems structured by public action arrangements follows on from research carried out in regional science on the role of actor networks in the development and governance of territories, with theoretical and methodological developments applied to food systems. In particular, it draws on work that mobilizes the analysis of proximity dynamics (Torre and Rallet, 2005) to understand the role of conflicts (Torre et al., 2014) and collaborations on territorial resource specification and territorial development (Colletis-Wahl and Pecqueur, 2001). It also draws on work in evolutionary economics, which analyzes innovation processes and the life cycle of territories via changes in the structure of business networks and their proximities (Suire and Vicente, 2014; Boschma, 2015).

The specific nature of territorial food systems means that they have to deal with a wide range of issues, and their transition to greater sustainability depends on a wide diversity of actors embedded in socio-economic networks and territories. Producers and other stakeholders in food systems are interdependent, and the development of territorial agro-ecological value chains requires the coordination of a wide range of stakeholders at different stages of farm (Gillerot, Jeanneaux and Polge, 2022; Polge and Pagès, 2022) and value chain (Gillerot et al 2023) evolution. In the same way, the production of integrated food policies requires the coherence of sectoral objectives, the commitment and coordination of actors from different sectors, and the articulation of different levels of organization (interaction between departments of the same authority, between different organizations and institutions, between different territories near or far) (Loudiyi, 2020, Parsons et al., 2018).

Territorial public action arrangements can provide a structure for these networks by mobilizing and federating a diversity of actors from the economic world, civil society or local authorities concerned by the issues being addressed (Gilly and Wallet, 2005). The structuring of actor networks then depends on their own dynamics (existing proximity relations, cliques, permanent geographical proximity) and the ability of the arrangement to make these proximity relations evolve (construction of a logic of belonging to organized proximity, situations of temporary geographical proximity) - (Polge and Torre, 2018). The multi-level (links between individuals and organizations) and multi-scale (links between the perimeter of the arrangement and more local actions such as the structuring of territorialized supply chains) nature of initiatives depends on the position of the active members of these arrangements in the networks of actors (centralities), their posture and their relationship to intermediation (Polge and Piraux, 2017). An analysis of the interactions between actors of territorialized food systems involved

in PATs thus makes it possible to understand the role of these arrangements in the structuring of territorialized agroecological supply chains, the integration of public policies and, more generally, their contribution to the processes of transition of these systems towards greater sustainability.

Methods and data

To analyze the diversity of PATs in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, a database has been built on a sample of 42 PATs labelled in 2022 (out of a total of 52 PATs, i.e. 4/5 of the total). The data comes from the labeling files submitted by the awarded territories. For each PAT, data on socio-demographic characteristics, actions developed and partners (categories and associated sectors) are collected and coded. These data are considered declarative for partnerships, but enable us to capture the ecosystem of actors involved in TO. The analysis is based on 38 comparable PATs; we have excluded the 4 departmental PATs, which are specific in terms of leadership and actions (in line with their delegated powers) and sometimes complement PATs in their own areas.

Based on our analysis of the diversity of PATs in AURA, we have selected two consolidated PATs, whose trajectory precedes the label introduced by the government in 2020. This choice was based on two PATs, which are a priori contrasting in terms of participation and actions undertaken, but whose broader cooperation dimension is attested. As part of a partnership research project, we have built up a strong partnership with the coordinators of the PATs chosen as case studies. The first step was to analyze the documents available on these PATs (reports, presentations, minutes of meetings and workshops, attendance sheets) and to conduct exploratory interviews in order to analyze the trajectories of the PATs (time sequences, resources mobilized, mode of access to resources), to identify and characterize actors and controversies, and to select the population of actors involved in the PAT to be surveyed. The second stage consists of conducting interviews with members of this population. These interviews consist of narrative questions to analyze individual trajectories (attributes, temporal sequences, resources mobilized, mode of access to resources, positioning in relation to identified controversies, etc.) and a sociometric-type questionnaire to characterize relationships (origin of link, types of link) between the actors surveyed at different temporal periods. The data processing consists, with regard to the sustainable transition of systems, in quantifying and qualifying individual and collective trajectories using the quantified narratives approach (Grossetti, Barthe and Chauvac, 2011; Gillerot, Jeanneaux and Polge, 2022; Polge and Pagès, 2022) and the evolution of actor networks using complete network analysis (Lazega, 2001; Polge and Torre, 2018).

Expected results

An analysis of the partnerships involved in a sample of 38 PATs reveals an average size of 16 partners per project. In a third of cases, more than 20 partners are involved in the same PAT. However, in 2/3 of cases, actors from the agricultural sector (upstream SA actors) represent more than a third of the actors present and represented. Similarly, and in contrast, in almost 2/3 of cases, actors from the food sector (processing, distribution and consumption) represent less than a third of the people involved in partnerships. The most sensitive point in this initial analysis of partnerships is the low representation of environmental actors (absent in half the cases), and social actors (absent in 45% of cases). The proportions are even lower for healthcare actors. This initial panorama lays the foundations for a more in-depth analysis of the integration of different sectors and areas of public policy, and the degree of this integration.

The in-depth analysis of the two PATs selected, that of the Grand-Clermont-PNR Livradois-Forez and the PAT of the Lyon metropolis, has enabled us to model and visualize the collective trajectories of these PATs, the individual trajectories of the actors involved in these PATs and the evolution of actor networks.

The modeling and visualization of collective trajectories are presented in the form of graphs of resource access situations, associating resources and modes of access to these resources (via mobilized actors or mediation arrangements/tools), and in the form of histograms presenting the proportion of different categories of resource access modes at different phases of PAT trajectories. These results give us an idea of the scope of the actors/tools involved and the resources mobilized, and provide us with comparative elements on the relational and institutional determinants of PAT development and their scope (actors, sectors and areas of public action).

The modeling and visualization of the evolution of actor networks are presented in the form of time series (by identified phases) of graphs of complete inter-individual socio-economic networks, aggregated (sum of link types) and disaggregated according to the types of interest links identified (service, sales, studies, consulting, etc.). Ties identified as coming directly from PATs are underlined. Statistical measures are used to characterize the structure of these networks, the position of actors and interaction logics such as homophily (links linked to common characteristics between two individuals, such as type or sector of activity, scale of action, change strategy, etc.), interdependence (reciprocity, correlation between link types) and structural factors.

Discussion – conclusion

These results will enable us to test our hypotheses concerning the achievement of PAT objectives linked to the federating of actors, the structuring of territorialized supply chains and the integration of different sectors and areas of public action. These results will enable us to develop a discussion on PAT evaluation processes and on the role of PATs in the transition of territorial agricultural and food systems.

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