

Local Authorities' promotion of short food supply chains (SFSC)

English-language summary of workshop presentations

How do Local Authorities put in to action the environment arguments for *short food supply chains (SFSC)* promotion?

Presentation of the study

Why are the FRCIVAM and Terres en Villes interested in this subject? What is the purpose and implications of this study?

The FRCIVAM and Terres en Villes definition of environment and SFSC: “the ideal situation”.

The projects SALT and CREPE. Relation with the CROC and Alimenterra projects.

The contribution of this project and its reflections may inspire discussion between various actors.

In France, thanks to a long history of relations between town and countryside, SFSC as a system of commercialisation have existed for a considerable period of time. This is notably the case in peri-urban areas.

The development of a strict and precise definition of SFSC does not seem simple, as there are many diverse and original exchange practices which give new dimensions to the description. SFSC are know in academic literature as “dispositives”, and include markets, farmers markets, AMAP, produce boxes, farm-gate selling, collective sale points, *restauration* (catering) groups and collective selling to supply canteens, among others. In this case we present a distinction between different SFSC dispositives, such as individual/collective, as well as the involvement or not of intermediaries (Chaffotte and Chiffolleau 2007).

However, we propose the following as a comprehensive definition of SFSC:

“Modes of commercialisation which limit the number of intermediaries between the producer and the consumer and/or the geographical distance between the two” (Marital, G.). 2008)

It is necessary to emphasise that by general consensus the maximum number of intermediaries in a SFSC is one and possibly also a cooperative, workers for a direct selling organisation or a shop/supermarket which is directly supplied by producers (Marechal, G. 2008). The question of “geographical proximity” is not considered as a determinant a priori, for example in the case of internet-based commercialisation (Aubry, C. et Chiffolleau, Y. 2009).

We will equally consider SFSC as localised dispositives for sellers. The social consequences of the environmental impacts associated with SFSC, although referred to, will not be analysed in this study.

The criteria used to select the territories were initially based on recommendations from the piloting committee. In particular, Terres en Villes suggested several large towns which belong to its partnership, such as Lille. Saint Etienne was chosen in order to access another reality of peri-urban agriculture. All three territories, in fact, present different realities of peri-urban agriculture; they are diverse territories with different problematiques in the subject of SFSC.

In the case of Rennes, the territory was characterised by a region of intensive agricultural production, with an archipelagic town structure. Saint Etienne was characterised by a “green belt” of small agricultural exploitations orientated towards horticulture. Lille was characterised by a “mixed” system, including both intensive production systems orientated towards large scale supply and exploitations orientated towards horticulture, AOC and SFSC.

Regarding the choice of persons interviewed

For this study, we chose to research and collect opinions, motivations and reflections of elected representatives in particular. Material was collected from diverse sources, including official documents and policies adopted. We also sought the opinion of service personnel, professionals, researchers and other local actors who are implicated in processes related to SFSC in their territory.

In order to identify key actors in each territory, we first consulted resource personnel: the representatives of Terres en Ville for the agglomeration in each territory. These professionals, with a technician profile, were our first confidential and privileged contacts. Our objective was to collect their expert point of view with relation to their field experience.

During the interview, the objective of our study was explained in detail. Questions related to the principal policies with relevance to SFSC were posed. the interviews were semi-directed, and conducted in a very flexible way. The first objective of the interview was to trace the history of the diverse policies implemented to support SFSC in the territory. The second objective was to identify the principal actors implicated.

Similar interviews were conducted with researchers in the universities of each territory. The information received was privileged, and included fields of expertise such as environment, sociology, socio-economy, geography, territorial management and political science. Our objective was to collect the opinions and knowledge of experts in the field. Their responses are rich in suggestions for further studies to configure the specific problematique for each territory.

After having conducted the interviews, we created a grille of actors, mostly elected representatives as well as technicians and other local actors implicated in policies designed to favour SFSC in the territory. These actors would be our interview subjects.

With the first classification, different types of actors are noted: administrative, technical, political, with arguments which may differ significantly depending on their professional background.

We begin from the hypothesis that the expectations of collectivities differ depending on the scale from which the SFSC-environment question is addressed. Hence, at different levels of territorial governance, there are different categories of interlocutors and different objectives regarding the environment. For example, the governors at the commune level will have different expectations from those at the agglomeration level; there is also inter-territorial variability to take into account.

The place of agriculture in the economic strategy of the agglomeration will also affect the work domains and functions of various elected representatives.

The elected representatives and other actors invited to participate in our study via an email, in which we explain the general objective of our study, while taking care not to mention our objective to determine the environmental arguments used in favour of SFSC. We also underline the partnership with Terres en Villes.

A semi-directed interview is prepared, to take place in the office of the elected representative or an office of the agglomeration. The overall approach is open and flexible; the main objective is to let the person interview speak freely. As a result, a general interview guide is prepared, which can be used or not, wholly or in part, depending on the person interviewed, with the objective of relaunching the discussion. Examples from other territories and countries are also used to relaunch the discussion. The specific questions are organised into subthemes.

Results: Presentation and analysis

A typological proposition

During the interviews, numerous arguments have been raised, including the role of short food supply chains (SFSC) in the respective territories and the relationship between SFSC and the environment (identified or not by interviewees). The arguments presented were quite varied, due to different motivations, expectations and visions.

Inspired by a comprehensive sociological approach and elements of justification theory, we propose to identify their nature and to propose a typology. We concentrated on possible constants in the discourses, in valorising local specificities.

Regarding the methodology, it is important to note that the topic of our study « SFSC – environment » was not directly raised during the interview process. However, the typology included 4 registers of arguments. We identified one economic argument and three environmental arguments. The same argument register was found in the three case studies. Regarding the study, it is not an attempt of a priori classification, rather an analysis of the results of the individual case studies.

The following table shows the argument register by territory and its global classification:

Argument register	Lille Métropole	Rennes	Saint Etienne
SFSC as a diversification strategy for the local economy	Dark orange	Dark orange	Red
SFSC as territory structures	Red	Dark orange	Red
SFSC as vectors of change for agricultural practices	Red	Red	Dark orange
SFSC as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Light orange	Red	Yellow

Source: own elaboration from territorial studies undertaken.

The order proposed reflects the priority of each metropole, which is different for each case. The colour scale indicates the intensity in which the arguments were raised. Therefore, red indicates that the argument raised was considered as the most important; the dark orange indicates that the argument was raised explicitly. The light orange indicates that the argument

was raised among other arguments and the yellow indicates that the argument was raised incidentally.

We identified distinct approaches and considerations relative to the arguments, often divergent. This raised possible themes of research regarding the priority themes and the numerous motivations of the agglomerations.

The inclination of the individual territories concerned, including the political nuances, is outlined in more detail in the results section. Following is a general classification:

Lille Metropole: The valorisation of proximity.

Rennes Metropole:

Saint Etienne: Strengthening of a traditional economic activity. Preservation of a privileged life style. A response to the demand for collective restauration. The beginning of an approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The focus is more on local than global issues

We found that the discourse of both elected representatives and technicians were linked more strongly to the particularities of the local situation than to transversal or global approaches such as the global energy supply context, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change or global biodiversity.

In particular, climate change was considered, in most cases, as something taking place elsewhere. Climate change was sometimes seen as a problem which will take place in the future, however as a process starting to manifest itself.

In fact, the global discourse remains as a more general collection of processes in evolution. In order to achieve a more global consciousness, the relationship between society's expectations and collectivist must take a strong part.

Contemporary policies are obliged to re-examine environmental questions, in the new context of an energy crisis and the phenomenon of climate change. There are several policies both at the national and international level: "Grenelle de l'environnement", Plan Climat, Agenda 21, Plan Alimentation Sante. Their regional applications will be perceived differently, depending on local priorities and concerns, as well as the level of governance of each collectivity.

Regarding the Plan Climat, we are aware of the concerns regarding the comparatively restricted vision of workplaces to address the challenges of a subject considered complex by

the policymakers. In fact, the Plan Climat consists of various protocols which need to be appropriated by all sectors in order to work efficiently.

« The Plan Climat has just been implemented... But SFSC are integrated in Agenda 21, which concerns communication and responsible consumption»

(Conseillère en charge de Service d'Economie Sociale et Solidaire à la Communauté Urbaine et à la Mairie de Lille. Membre des commissions :Economie, Logement . Conseillère Municipale de Lille. Représentation :Association Développement des Initiatives de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire sur Lille Métropole (DIESS), Syndicat mixte Espace Naturel Métropolitain (ENM).)

We note that the arguments presented regarding the environment-agriculture relationship made reference to sustainable development.

“Taking into account this sustainable development policy by the service has not been very evident... This would oblige a questioning of the interests of all the politicians... it depends on people’s personal interest in the issue... taking into account [sustainable development] has been seen more as a constraint, budgetary and ... because it also modifies the issue of work”

(Technicien Chargée de mission Développement Durable, Agenda 21 et Plan Climat Saint Etienne Métropole)

In contrast, sustainable development as a transversal reflection in the Metropole will be perceived differently by individuals within the same team, depending on individual roles, personal history and ideology.

« In Rennes, we started talking about greenhouse gases five years ago, and five years before that, we talked a lot about energy, mastering energy. Because firstly there is an elected representative in Rennes delegated to energy who is involved a lot in that subject and also after the international alert, I think that everyone has more or less realised the gravity of the problem ” (Technicien Chargé de l’environnement à la ville de Rennes)

If we valorise the main questions collected in the Metropoles, these reflections are emphasised:

How do we confront the governance of a global problem?

What type of governance for the Plan Climat?

How do we assemble the elected representatives regarding SFSC and climate change policies, when there are different domains: economy, territorial management, agriculture, and environment?

Once again we return to the problematique of governance regarding our subject, which must be addressed at the territorial level in an integrated context. There is also the question of which actors, which representation is most legitimate for the global reflection. We therefore propose the inverted question:

How can a local environmental problem be addressed in a concerted approach – between the collectivity and the local actors – and also be coherent within a global problematique?

Conclusions

From our original research question and our study in the three metropolises, it appears that the links between SFSC and their environmental effects form part of a more developed reflection of the collectivity regarding how to approach a global problematique, which is apparent at both local and global scales. Effectively, we are immersed in a discourse under construction, which is rich in local specificities.

From our typology, we found four argument registers, the same for all three territories. One was an economic argument, the other three environmental. They included: SFSC as a diversification of local economic activity, as territorial structurants, as vectors of change of agricultural practices and as a means of diminishing greenhouse gas emissions. However, the manner in which these arguments are presented and the relative priority they are given by each territory is different for each territory, as has been discussed in the preceding two chapters.

Consequently, if we re-examine the analyses shown in chapters 3 and 4, a profound questioning of the traditional agricultural system and its impacts on the environment and public health is evident. This appeared in the local scale measures adopted or in the centre of a larger reflection, as a strategy to counter global problems such as climate change and the energy crisis. There are distinct differences in the appropriation of these themes with relation to the policies implemented and the different services implied.

Regarding this point, it has been argued that SFSC, as forms of diversified agriculture in the peri-urban context, generate amenities in the territory. They also represent a manner to reduce the environmental impact of agricultural systems.

Another aspect of SFSC is their consideration as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions fundamentally by reducing the impact of commercialisation.

Consequently, the maintenance of a peri-urban agriculture represents maintenance of landscape and the local environment, as well as a promotion of local consumption which respects seasonality and diminishes “food miles”, for the collectivity. The arguments outlined show that SFSC are at the heart of environmental debates and concerns, and also that at the local level they are well-placed to relate to a global environmental problematique. It seems

that we are in the initial stages of a shared reflection which visualises SFSC as a means of describing the complex relationship between local and global.

However, and as we have noted, the discourse is largely shared.

First of all, a strong political will, maintained in the long term, permits the implications of policies which direct communal norms. There is also the role of citizens/consumers which affect the political will.

The degree of appropriation is determined by the construction of specific spaces for governance in each territory. As we analysed the support for peri-urban agriculture, by its specificity, which in part constitutes the beginning of policy construction at the territorial level and which is also influenced by policies at the national and EU level, and which attempts to address global problematiques.

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