

Allotment garden on the roof of the Paris city council house. Potager de l'Hôtel de Ville (in French).  
Photo: Cecília Delgado, 2017



MAIRIE DE PARIS

**UN RUCHER « ABELLE, SENTINELLE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT » EST INSTALLÉ DANS CE JARDIN**

Rassurez-vous, cela ne représente aucun danger !  
 Pour ne pas gêner les abeilles, les rucheaux ont été installés dans un endroit sûr et protégés par une clôture.  
 Les rucheaux sont installés dans un endroit sûr et protégés par une clôture.  
 Pourquoi des ruches « Abeille, sentinelle de l'environnement » ?  
 Les abeilles sont indispensables à notre environnement.  
 Elles jouent un rôle essentiel dans la pollinisation des plantes.  
 Elles sont également une source de miel.  
 Elles sont une véritable sentinelle de l'environnement.  
 Elles nous permettent de mieux connaître leur environnement.  
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# Critical keys to understand the emergence of a strong U.A. movement in Paris

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## Abstract

**The city of Paris has been extremely active on programmes and projects concerning biodiversity, greening, urban agriculture [UA] and food initiatives. Our leading question in this paper is: which are the critical points that explain such a lively process? In order to address this, 22 actors and initiatives were either consulted or visited and a semi-open questionnaire was applied.**

**Findings are showing that UA and food growing importance results from a unique combination of, at least, four critical factors: A facilitating policy framework; A highly qualified professional and institutional profile of the promoters; A holistic and inter-disciplinary approach to UA that helps in including and connecting a larger number of actors and gain a critical mass; A very conscious consumer mindset that increased the demand for local food. In a nutshell, those critical factors contribute to UA and food emergence, and make the city a unique research case to understand UA future models, at least in European countries.**

## Keywords

*Urban Agriculture; City-based policies; Urban Agriculture and food promoters; Paris*

## Introduction

This paper presents an exploration on the key critical factors enabling the shift from Urban Agriculture [UA] and food related projects to city-based policies using Paris as a paradigmatic case. Having as main focus UA the city developed several initiatives, namely the “innovative greening” (Mairie de Paris, 2013) or more recently the programme Parisculteurs (Mairie de Paris, 2016). In addition, Paris Local Urban Plan considers UA mandatory in new housing developments<sup>1</sup>. With those initiatives Paris aspire to have 100 hectares of green spaces until 2020, including 33 hectares of UA. It’s an ambitious policy that deserves attention, as

<sup>1</sup> Paris UA and food blowing up initiatives are also under the scope of “Environment and Sustainable Development” governmental issue – more information on Mayor’s network in France. <http://www.amf.asso.fr/dossiers/index.asp?MENU=4> (accessed on March 2018)

lessons learned can be useful for other countries and cities notably in Portugal. Which are the critical factors that explain such a lively process? Based on existing literature (IPES-FOOD, 2017, RUAF-ICLEI, 2013) we argue that political support for UA, and multi-actors processes participation are critical. However we don’t know if those both factors do exist and are sufficient to explain the blowing process in Paris.

## How we did it?

In order to understand UA Paris scenario, 22 actors and initiatives were either interviewed or visited from July to August 2017. The selection of the initiatives and actors considered as much as possible all the UA diverse perspectives from social to environment, including as well economic one’s. To select actors and initiatives several methods were used: literature review; a list of UA partners provided by Paris municipality; systematic and repeated UA related web site searches; contacts provided by the platform actors for Paris sustainable; and the official list of community gardens in Paris. Finally a list of potential visits and contact was settled based on a wide sort of UA activities from: production for distribution; honey production and distribution; production for self-consumption; production for pedagogic events; food governance and advocacy (from private and public sector); short circuits; composting; UA financing; and UA and food correlated events.

Initial contacts with promoters were made by email. After agreement, interviews were carried out face to face along with visits. During visits and interviews a semi-open questionnaire was applied covering different perspectives and actors profiles. This paper considers part of the information collected, nevertheless special emphasis is given on lessons learned and reasons that explain the success achieved so far.

In order to define who are the stakeholders involved on this large-scale process we adopted the actor profiles proposed on the report “Paris food state of art” (Mairie de Paris, 2016b), notably: 1) citizen’s initiatives and entrepreneurs from the social economy and solidarity sector; 2) private sector initiatives; 3) public and administrative sector’s ones.

The list, of initiatives visited and their related promoters, is presented on the table below. Even if not representative of all initiatives, it is a fair starting point to characterize the current trends of UA in Paris.



Table 1: Projects and initiatives visited and actor's interviewed

A	B	C	D		
INTERVIEW (I) AND VISIT (V)	ASSOCIATION (A) OR ENTERPRISE (E)	INITIATIVES	ACTORS PROFILES		
			CITIZENS, SOCIAL ECONOMY AND SOLIDARITY SECTOR	PRIVATE DOMAIN INITIATIVES	PUBLIC DOMAIN AND ADMINISTRATIVE
I.1	Marie of Paris	Programe Parisculteurs	X	X	x
I.V.2	CityBzz	Ruche Recyclerie	X	x	
V.3	Sinnu & Ooko	La Recyclerie	X	x	
V.4	Marie de Paris + Jardizneuf	Jardins passager – La Villete	x		x
I.5	CERVIA	Mangeon Local		X	x
IV.6	AEROMATE *	RATP - Toit		x	x
V.7	Marie de Paris + Aurore + Plateau Urbain + Yes we camp	Grands Voisins	x	x	x
IV.8	UrbAgri*	Potager de L'Hôtel de Ville		x	x
IV.9	Pepins production	Grand Voisins	x		x
IV.10	MUGO*	Jardin Arenes de Lutece		x	x
IV.11	Espaces	CULTICIME	X	x	
IV.12	Jardin Santerre	Jardin Santerre	x		x
I.13	Ville Ouverte	François Dealle-Facquez		X	
	AFAUP, Association				
I.14	Française d'AU Professional		x	x	
IV.15	La Boite à Champignons	La Boite à Champignons Design Vegetal + atelier La Boite à		X	
V.16	Cité de la Mode et Design	Champignons			x
V.17	Marie Paris + Citizens	Vila Fertile - Vincennes	x		x
I.18	Natureparif	Mission Agriculture Urbaine			x
V.19	Marie de Paris	La Maison du jardinage	X		x
I..20	Platform MIMOSA	Platform MIMOSA	X	X	
I..21	AMAP - Île de France	AMAP - Île de France	X	X	
I.22	La ruche qui dit oui	La ruche qui dit oui		x	

\* Winners of Parisculteurs first season (2016/2017). Only 3 of a total of 32 Parisculteurs sites were open to visits\* in Summer 2017 when our fieldwork was done.

Source: Author elaboration

Table 1 gives a brief overview of the initiatives and programs visited as well as actor's profiles involved directly or indirectly in them. It clearly shows that nearly every initiative comprises actors from distinct sectors (private, public and social economy) i.e. initiatives are happening in a context of strong connection among actors from different sectors and disciplines.

### Findings so far: what we observed

Based on our qualitative survey, Paris UA swift expansion can be explained by four critical factors, which could be grouped as follows: A facilitating policy framework [CP-A]; Unique promoters profile [CP-B]; UA initiatives as a holistic setting [CP-C]; A very conscious citizens and consumers mindset [CP-D];

A brief clarification on the reasons behind each critical point can be found below. The descriptions do not intend to be exhaustive however they help to open a much-needed debate:

#### A facilitating policy framework [CP-A]

1. There is a juridical window of short-term subsidized contracting of people that facilitates UA labour at low cost;
2. Paris public administration is fostering UA expansion through numerous programs, media visibility, charters and above all networking among actors;

3. UA is part of the Paris Local Urban Plan;
4. There is a UA diagnostic being done through the UA Observatory (NATUREPARIF) sponsored by the Ile de France region;
5. The region of Paris is also encouraging UA and local agriculture development through CERVIA, (see Mangeons Local). Other example, Regional Agency for Digital Innovation (Agence numérique d'Ile-de-France) opened in 2015 a contest to raise connectivity among UA initiatives.

In summary, they have a positive impact on Paris as such there is political support and commitment either at municipal level (Paris) or at the Regional level (Ile de France), which creates windows of entrepreneurship opportunity. There is, as well, a clear political effort on better connecting actors. An illustrative example of this is the platform "Acteurs du Paris durable", or the meet-up page created by the city council under Parisculteurs programme. Lastly, public administration has political comprehensible and quantitative tangible objectives to achieve: e.g. 50% sustainable municipal food supply; 100 hectares of green spaces including 33 of UA; are examples that point up some of the goals that must be achieved until 2020 (Mairie de Paris, 2016.b).

## Unique promoters profile [CP-B]

1. Promoters are extremely skilled scholars and professional;
2. Most of them come from academic and professional backgrounds not necessary close to Agriculture related disciplines. They are managers, web designers, environmental engineers, landscapers, urban planners, and former bankers;
3. Partnership among promoters is a mainstream practice based on complementary expertise
4. They are generally extremely young, empowered and highly motivated
5. They stand for a new generation of entrepreneurship that merges social, environmental and business approaches.

In brief, they are able to work in “discomfort areas”, open to change, plus extremely well connected. Some examples can be given as illustrative: founders of CityBzz, *La Boite à Champignons*, Platform MIMOSA, Jardin Santerre compost leader, among others, come from backgrounds far from Agriculture related disciplines. They recognize UA as a multidisciplinary field that needs complementary expertise. At Culticime the technical assistance of the roof is done by Topager, but human resources management, production and distribution is made by Espaces. The “Potager de l’Hôtel de Ville” is a partnership between Nadiplast Siplast that works with innovative solutions for roofing, the Loiseleur group is in charge of the development, whilst the management is under UrbAgri accountability. Need as well to underline INRA-Paris academia crucial role on the scaling up of processes: INRA implemented the first productive research rooftop in Paris: and, was the incubator of the French professional association of urban agriculture, that gathers today a considerable number of UA enterprises ensuring UA critical mass.

## UA initiatives as a holistic setting [CP-C]

1. Initiatives are tested on a small scale before large investments are made (star-up model);
2. UA is considering its wide spectrum of activities: production, distribution, technical support, pedagogical events or even research;
3. Initiatives are balancing complementary activities e.g. linking production and services;
4. Initiatives keep being social and environmental but are strongly rooted on economic sustainability;
5. UA is essentially a collaborative task, involving partnership and federation;

6. UA initiatives are deeply rooted in innovation and research along with strong communication;

Our observation leads to conclude that resilient UA initiatives are based on complementary and collaborative activities what makes them more adaptable to challenge. For example Pépins Production is doing pedagogical workshops along with selling baby plants. Aeromate is producing aromatic plants along with drying them. *La Recyclerie* merges a café and restaurant with a social association that develops UA events. Mugo does beekeeping, landscape as well as pedagogical workshops, etc..

In addition, they use partnerships to gain scale and skills; e.g. Culticime et *le Potager de L’Hotel de Ville* are joint-ventures between Topager, who manage the technical part of the roof and Espaces and UrbAgri respectively. Another example, Mimosa and “*La ruche qui dit oui*” with other enterprises founded a platform called “La ferme électronique”. Finally the AFAUP (*Association Françaises d’Agriculture Professionnelle*) is the best example of UA partnership approach.

## A very conscious citizens and consumer mindset [CP-D]

1. Consumers are sensitive to agro-ecological consumption not only but also, because of ongoing food crisis;
2. Consumers have relatively high purchasing power, at least in Paris;
3. Consumers recognize local products best nutritional and flavour quality, preferring whenever possible, these to products sold in large commercial chains;
4. Citizens’ share ideological values concerning the support of local agriculture an local production;
5. Civil society is well informed and able to struggle for better supportive food and urban agriculture policies.

There is a significant number of consumers, from individual ones to catering, which are keen to local consumption and able to pay for it. This explains the significant expansion of food short circuits as AMAPs or “La Ruche qui dit Oui”. Moreover consumer’s expectation for more health food short circuits is growing, according to the report on food state of art in Paris (Mairie de Paris, 2016). Last but not least civil society, either organized or not, is truly committed in UA development and protection. The collective memory filed under the public inquiry for Paris Local Urban Plan (2015) clearly demonstrates citizen’s awareness.



## Discussion:

Back to our research question: which are the critical points that explain such a lively process? Findings underline that political support and commitment exist, and is actively promoting processes of collaborative governance with local actors [CP-A], which is aligned with existing literature (IPES-FOOD, 2017, RUAF-ICLEI, 2013).

On a second level there is clear evidence that initiatives and projects are being upheld by a unique promoters profile from various backgrounds [CP-B] with a holistic vision [CP-C]. Why is this important? We believe that those actors' distinct profiles are feeding UA holistic vision generating a critical mass. This strengthens actor's influence and ability to negotiate with decision-makers, notably by insuring that long-term political commitment to initiatives is guaranteed. Finally, need to underline consumer's mindset keen to buy UA local production, which we believe is critical to close the loop and ensure a successful food policy [CP-D].

## Preliminary Conclusions

Lessons learned from Paris can be summarized as follow: Political support and commitment seems again to be the critical factors needed to shift from projects to policies. However an empowered civil society, able to add value to UA and food products along with consumer purchasing power, closes the loop, which is critical to its success. Important for Portugal those lessons are showing that UA sustainability need to be a collaborative multi-actors and multi-disciplinary process, supported by political long-term commitment. In summary the first critical step for Portugal could be to place UA in the political agenda.

On UA Paris sustainability some questions remain open and need further exploration: 1) Are those critical factors enough to ensure UA processes long-term sustainability?; 2) Is the current collaborative governance model working for the actors involved today the most appropriate for a long term perspective?; Those are some critical questions to feed upcoming debate.

## Keywords

*Urban Agriculture; Food Policies; Paris*

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