

# **The challenge of land accessibility for Urban Agriculture. A Hybrid Governance Approach on the Brussels' case.**

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## **Abstract**

*Enabling urban agriculture and Local Food Networks in urban and peri-urban areas is a real challenge. Serious constraints relate to the access and use of land and related resources for urban agriculture: scarcity of quality land, urban development pressures, unfavorable planning systems, administrative fragmentation, etc, pose huge barriers to the enablement of urban agriculture.*

*Land being an essential and yet very contended resource, it becomes essential to sort out the ways access, distribution and fair use of land for urban agriculture are actually governed. To address that, this article capitalizes from recent theoretical and empirical work on the hybrid governance of alternative food networks (Manganelli and Moulaert 2017a, 2017b – in preparation). The hybrid governance approach identifies interrelated governance tensions among organizational, resource and institutional aspects, showing how these tensions condition the governance and the overall development of urban agriculture and alternative food networks. Having addressed organizational governance tensions in a previous work on the Brussels' GASAP consumers-producers' network, this article focuses on land-resource aspects, as primary sources of organizational and institutional governance tensions in the development of urban agriculture and local food networks.*

*The hybrid framework is applied to a case study – the Boeren Brussel Paysans (BBP) project – conceived to implement urban agriculture and local food networks in a peri-urban area of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) called Neerpede. Urban expansion as well as institutional complexity, due to the proximity with the Flemish Region, add on the land governance pressures to protect agriculture and develop local food networks in this area. The analysis of the BBP actor's network also shows how accessing and using land for urban agriculture is becoming a sensitive and contentious governance*

*issue not only at the local, but also at the Regional and, potentially, interregional scales.*

## **Keywords**

Hybrid Governance, Governance Tensions, land accessibility, Urban Agriculture.

## **1. Introduction**

Securing access and fair use of land and related resources (e.g. physical infrastructures, funding, labor, UA's produce) is a very sensitive and contentious matter for urban and peri-urban agriculture initiatives. This paper focuses on access to land. As the local food movement develops, struggles for accessing and securing land do not diminish. On the contrary, serious obstacles and dilemmas related to accessing land resources and their use keep threatening the life of local food initiatives (Cohen and Reynolds 2014; Angotti 2015). This has considerable impacts on the development of sustainable urban agriculture, as well as on the actual values and benefits of urban agriculture practices for local communities (Reynolds 2015; Tornaghi 2014, 2017).

Practical experiences as well as scientific contributions point to significant pressures and constraints on the land-resource(s) access and use. Urban agriculture practices in urban and peri-urban areas are first of all subject to strong urbanization pressures (Darly and Torre 2012; Aubry and Kebir 2013). Land speculation by real estate or other agents (Condon et al 2010), high land values (Angotti 2015), competition over the use of land (Prové *et al.* 2016) create considerable obstacles to the development of human scale agriculture and local food networks in urban areas. Established planning systems and land use regulations in general do not foster alternative land use practices such as agro-ecological food production, or different forms of urban and peri-urban agriculture (Thibert 2012; Tornaghi 2014; Prové *et al.* 2016). Other challenges to the development of (peri)urban sustainable agriculture concern legal and material aspects related to land-resource access and use, such as land contamination

(Kim *et al.* 2014), or the ownership and the right to use land and other material resources (De Schutter 2010; Borras *et al.* 2015; Follmann and Viehoff 2015; Wekerle and Classens 2015).

Overall, factors such as path-dependent planning and administrative practices, as well as contrasting cultures and visions over the use of land and other resources, have a considerable impact on the development of urban agriculture, as well as on its governance. These aspects should not be overlooked if urban agriculture and local food networks aim to contribute significantly to the local food security and sovereignty (Tornaghi 2014, 2017). In other words, it is arguable that claims and actions to increase local food access or reach a better food sovereignty are hardly achievable without carefully reflecting on the land-resource question and how it is governed (De Schutter 2010; Borras *et al.* 2015; McMichael 2015).

Acknowledging these challenges, this article focuses on the ways the use of land and related resources and the fair access to them are actually governed. Use is made of a conceptual framework on the **hybrid governance**. This framework (developed in Manganelli and Moulaert 2017a, 2017b in preparation) shines light on interrelated **resource, organizational, and institutional** governance tensions, conditioning access and use of land for urban agriculture. Hybrid governance is analyzed theoretically but also applied to an empirical case study.

The selected case study is a peri-urban agriculture project and actors' network, called Boeren Brussels Paysans (BBP). This project has developed as a consortium or coalition of diverse actors, from bottom-up advocacy organizations, to institutional actors, around the implementation and enhancement of urban-peri-urban agriculture and local food networks. The BBP has implemented small scale agro-ecological agriculture in a peri-urban area of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), called Neerpede (Municipality of Anderlecht – BCR). However, searching for accessible land in the whole Brussels Region is also part of the project's objectives. Thus, an intention to scale out access to land for urban agriculture is

observable. In addition, further scalar dynamics relate to the connection with the neighboring Flemish Region. In the view of the project's partners as well as of key Brussels' institutional actors that bordering Region has the greatest potentials to contribute to the Brussels' food security. How to bring the land question to this wider spatial scale is, however, still an open question. The multi-layered and fragmented administrative and planning systems in the BCR as well as in the Flemish periphery (Messely *et al.* 2010; Messely 2014) do not help to achieve shared visions and actions on the land-resource access for urban and peri-urban agriculture.

Thus, for the above reasons this case study clearly shows the sensitivity of the land question and its governance. It shines light on critical scalar dynamics and tensions related to the enhancement of urban agriculture and local food networks<sup>1</sup>.

While **section 2**, following this introduction, gives a conceptual and methodological explanation of the hybrid governance approach, **section 3** applies the framework to the case study analysis. By combining diverse governance theories, the hybrid framework conceptualizes access to the land-resource(s) as connected to both, organizational as well as institutional governance dynamics and tensions. This gives structure to the empirical analysis, which looks at the interconnectivity among agential, organizational and institutional dynamics related to the land-resource(s) governance in the specific case of the Brussels-BBP. Thus **section 3.1** looks at how the BBP organization developed through actors' mobilization, as well as divergent claims and contradictions, around land protection and access to land and resources for urban agriculture. **Section 3.2.** then digs into the key tensions on the governance

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning scale and scalar processes, we refer to governance and human geography traditions that understand scale in a relational and dynamic way, rather than in a simply static and hierarchical manner. See for instance Jonas (2006), referring to scale reconfiguration through strategic actions and narratives. See also Swingedouw and Heynen 2003; or Swyngedouw 2004

of the access to land for urban agriculture in Brussels, as they are experienced by the BBP coalition and by other actors. **Section 3.3.** looks at the ways Brussels' institutions are responding to the land-resource challenges, partially in dialogue with claims and values emerging from the BBP actors' network. The last section (section 4) summarizes the key learnings for a more sustainable governance of the land-resource for the Brussels' institutions and other key agents.

## **2. The conceptual framework and the methodology**

This section explains the conceptual-methodological framework adopted to carry out the empirical analysis. The methodology makes use of empirical categories, derived from the interactions between empirical insights and conceptual work (see below). Thus, the ways these categories informed the empirical investigation on the BBP case is specified. This section also explains the practical methods of data collection adopted in the analysis.

The hybrid governance concept, developed in Manganelli and Moulaert 2017a, 2017b – in preparation, casts light on critical tensions affecting the governance of urban agriculture and alternative food networks. These tensions are summarized analytically in terms of **organizational, resource and institutional governance tensions** (*ibid*). The interrelation among these tensions is also considered in the hybrid governance analysis. The framework draws on different governance literatures: **social innovation and collective action** perspectives (Moulaert et al. 2005, 2007, Della Porta and Diani 2006), **political economy and ecology** approaches to governance (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003; Swyngedouw and Kaika 2014; Classens 2015; Tornaghi 2017), **sociological-institutional and multi-scalar governance** perspectives (Jessop 2002, Moulaert et al. 2005, 2013, Healey 2006, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006), as well as **relational approaches to governance** (Allen 2009, Allen and Cochrane 2010, Jessop 2002, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006). These theoretical perspectives help to conceptualize the real-life governance dynamics of local food networks, as these initiatives need to

cope with a number of tensions and struggles to build alliances, networks and coalitions, often with the purpose to increase access to resources and/or to have a greater voice and impact on the organization of local food systems. Clashes inevitably occur among diverse cultures, values and professional practices of key agents, organizations and institutions of the local food and institutional environments. Also focusing on the interrelations among the three types of tensions, the hybrid governance approach offers a way to disaggregate these dynamics and to understand the ways they may hamper or foster a sustainable governance of local food systems.

Building on the above, this paper addresses the interconnected governance tensions starting from the land-resource challenge. Accessing and using land for urban agriculture are major sources of governance tensions. Organizational governance mainly relates to actors' organization, movement or coalition building in order to acquire, negotiate and secure the access and use of land and other resources (Block et al. 2012, Wekerle and Classens 2015). Urban agriculture advocates may enter into tension with other agents, organizations as well as institutional structures which have an impact on the ways access and use of land are practically enacted, controlled and regulated (Borras et al. 2015). This connects to institutional governance tensions, which refer to the role of diverse institutional cultures, institutional practices and processes, regulatory and power structures in affecting access to land for urban agriculture. The right to use land and the (more or less) fair allocation of the land-resource are also part of these institutional governance tensions.

The conceptual framework is empirically informed by the analysis of the BBP's case study. The BBPs and the wider land accessibility challenges for urban agriculture in Brussels, clearly cover all the important aspects of the land governance tensions: i.e. material and legal constraints over the use of land, agential and organizational dynamics, such as the building of actor's networks and coalitions, institutional-administrative fragmentation as well as scalar

challenges to address the land questions. Thus, empirical categories were identified and fine-tuned with the insights from the case study analysis. These categories - presented in the scheme below (scheme 1) - cast light on 'factors of tensions' - i.e. the factors instigating hybrid governance tensions - and 'nature of tensions' - the ways governance tensions practically manifest. 'Factors' and 'nature' of tensions were defined through several steps during the field-work, confronting initial assumptions with preliminary and intermediate results from the empirical investigation. This has allowed to bring the categories more in tune with the specificity of the case. Furthermore, a last column of Scheme 1 - titled 'ways of improvements' - provides suggestions to improve the governance of the land accessibility towards more sustainable directions on the basis of the observed hybrid governance tensions (see section 4).

Proximity of the authors with Brussels' local food actors and policy dynamics allowed to follow the project throughout its development, up to the current stage. A first round of data collection was carried out between September 2016 and February 2017, whereas a second round was accomplished in September-October 2017. This allowed to refine the analysis and follow up on the recent stages of the project.

Multiple qualitative methods were used for the empirical investigation. In-depth face-to-face interviews were carried out with every partner of the BBP's coalition. Interviews have also addressed public officials from both, the Municipality of Anderlecht (planning and sustainable development divisions) as well as the BCR (administrations of planning and environment). Key actors and informers from the Flemish Region have been also interviewed: three employees of the Flemish Land Management Agency VLM (Vlaamse Landmaatschappij) and an independent practitioner and researcher from the University of Gent. These actors are knowledgeable about or personally involved in the support of small-scale locally oriented agriculture and local food networks in the Brussels' hinterland. They

provided valuable insights on the administrative and policy dynamics of Flanders and Brussels and the challenges to develop collaborations between the two Regions. Furthermore, participatory observations in the site of implemented urban agriculture plots in the Neerpede area, allowed to hear the voice of few representative producers supported by the BBP's coalition.

Further methods of empirical investigation concerned the study of the local-regional administrative and land use systems, to understand their impact on the preservation-development of land for urban and peri-urban agriculture. This was achieved by the means of web-site and document analysis of zoning regulations, other key planning documents, surveys and policy briefs, as well as secondary literature analysis. Finally, the tutoring of a master thesis about urban and peri-urban agriculture in Neerpede allowed to deepen the overall understanding of the physical characters as well as the institutional dynamics of this area.



## Scheme 1 – Hybrid Governance Categories.

Type of Governance Tension	Factors of Tension	Nature of the Tensions	Ways of improvement
<p><b>RESOURCE</b></p> <p>Tensions in the governance of the access to and use of land and other key resources (funding, physical infrastructures, food,...)</p>	<p><i>Perceptions and tensions around the availability, quality, and use of the land resource</i></p>	<p><b>Searching access to and control of land</b> and key material resources fostering diverse governance dynamics, responses, conflicts</p> <p>Tensions between <b>diverse visions and logics of land allocation</b> (e.g. efficiency vs solidarity, market vs 'commoning', public vs private) as expressed by a diversity of actors (state, corporate, communities, organizations)</p> <p>Challenges related to <b>legal and material aspects over land</b> (e.g. land quality, property, right to use)</p>	<p><b>Giving support to key organizations which can help to coordinate land demand and supply</b></p> <p><b>Working on alternative land use contracts</b></p> <p><b>Sensitizing and partnering with a diversity of actors</b> (e.g. land owners, planning and territorial management actors), <b>influencing the access and use of land for urban agriculture</b></p>
<p><b>ORGANIZATIONAL</b></p> <p>Tensions and struggles in urban agriculture's organizations as for their will to access and use land</p>	<p><i>Diverse agents and organizations mobilizing/competing for the access and control of the land resource.</i></p>	<p><b>Interactions bottom-up food networks top-down state/corporate systems</b> for negotiating/ claiming access/control of the land resource</p> <p><b>Coalition building</b> at different spatial and institutional scales to increase the access and use of land</p> <p><b>Tensions in principles, behaviours, identities</b> among organizations</p> <p><b>Strategic leadership</b>, forms of proactive conflict management and <b>cooperation</b></p> <p><b>(Dis)enabling organizational arrangements</b> affecting the capacity to access land</p>	<p><b>Cultivating relational proximity among actors and giving incentives to the formation of targeted coalitions or actors' networks</b> (sustainable in timeframe and resources)</p>
<p><b>INSTITUTIONAL</b></p> <p>Tensions in the socio-political and socio-professional governance structures embedding the governance of urban agriculture.</p>	<p><i>Institutional and regulatory structures interfering with the allocation of land and related resources</i></p> <p><i>Power struggles between UA's advocates and state/corporate institutions at different scales</i></p> <p><i>Divergent values, behavioural routines, agendas among agents, organizations, institutions (state, corporate)</i></p>	<p><b>Constraining vs. enabling multi-level regulatory structures</b> (e.g. planning systems or funding regulations) with respect to the allocation and use of the land resource</p> <p><b>Hybrid actors' and policy networks negotiating</b> supportive policy/institutional spaces</p> <p><b>Socio-political transformative forces</b></p> <p><b>Relation building towards participatory governance institutions</b></p>	<p><b>Improving leadership and vision on land accessibility and use at the institutional level</b></p> <p><b>Improving communication, trust and coordinated action among institutional actors and civil society or hybrid organisations</b></p> <p><b>Fostering greater public conversation and greater awareness among Brussels' institutions</b> (including planning and territorial management actors).</p>

### **Section 3 - Hybrid governance tensions in accessing and using land for urban agriculture in Brussels. The Neerpede-BBP case.**

This section, divided in 3 subsections makes use of the hybrid governance methodology to tackle the empirical case study. A first subsection retraces the ways the BBP's began to form and developed as a consortium of actors. Organizational governance tensions affecting the partnership's formation and development are highlighted. A second subsection digs into the governance tensions to scale out land accessibility for urban agriculture in Brussels. To complement the analysis, the third paragraph depicts the type of responses to the land question as they emerge, with some ambiguities, from Brussels' institutions. To highlight the ways hybrid governance tensions manifest, direct reference is made to the hybrid governance categories presented in Scheme 1.

#### **3.1. At the origins of the BBP's consortium. Organizational governance tensions on land.**

Even if the approval of the EU funding 'ERDF' (European Regional Development Funds) in 2014 signed the formal start of the Boeren Brussel Paysans (BBP) project, the actual genesis of the coalition began before. We can argue that "perceptions and tensions around the availability, quality and use of the land-resources for local agriculture and food networks" (see scheme 1), were core factors of the coalition.

Perceived urbanization pressures on land in the proximity of the Neerpede region, solicited concerned administrative and policy officials of the local Municipality of Anderlecht to mobilize and advocate for controlling urban expansion while preserving and enhancing the rural character of the area (interview with the Division of Sustainable Development of Anderlecht). Regional land use regulations - declaring Neerpede as a rural-ecological region but foreseeing

areas of urban transformation in its very proximity<sup>2</sup> - contributed to foment this perception of threat and urgency in some sections of the local administration. Thus a dimension of urgency, together with contrasting claims and practices over the use of land, show up as relevant instigating factors, contributing to raise the issue of land as a governance problem and fostering initial agential-organizational dynamics and tensions (see scheme 1 – Resource governance tensions).

Concerned members of the local authority started therefore to connect with institutional actors at the Regional level, in particular with the Ministry of the Environment. Having common interests on the protection of Neerpede and its agriculture and natural features, the Regional Environmental Ministry was open to collaborate and form a partnership<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, interactions of state agents with bottom-up food networks also played an important role in the genesis of the BBP coalition (see scheme 1 – organizational governance tensions). Urban agriculture activists – namely the no profit association *Début des Haricots* (DDH)– started to build relations with these local government agents in order to negotiate access to land for urban agro-ecological agriculture. Thus, first implementations of urban agriculture plots in a small scale took place even before the official start of the project. This implementation occurred in small scale municipally owned plots<sup>4</sup>, benefiting from project-based funding from the Ministry of the Environment, which at that time was running a program on “Food Systems Transition”, part of a wider inter-governmental program<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See the Regional Land Use Plan of the BCR, called PRAS (*Plan Régional d'affectation du Sol*), adopted in 2001 and so far still in force. The land use map can be consulted here: <http://www.mybrugis.irisnet.be/MyBruGIS/brugis/> [accessed on October 8 2017].

<sup>3</sup> This was facilitated by a favorable political climate, since at that time, around 2013-2014, a ‘green’ coalition was in power. This coalition was the first to develop institutional policies and programs on sustainable food in the Brussels Region.

<sup>4</sup> The implementation areas are two for a total of about a hectare at the moment.

<sup>5</sup> For further elucidation on programmatic axe on Sustainable Food, see, among others, this document: ([http://www.environnement.brussels/sites/default/files/user\\_files/rap\\_aee-alim\\_rapport2014\\_fr.pdf](http://www.environnement.brussels/sites/default/files/user_files/rap_aee-alim_rapport2014_fr.pdf)). For a scientific evaluation see also Chevalier et al 2015 (<https://cidd2015.sciencesconf.org/51214/document>). [Accessed on October 8 2017].

Thus initial tensions and partially converging claims around land preservation and use for local agriculture had a critical role in mobilizing actors, triggering organizational dynamics as well some scalar interactions between local and regional levels. This gave place to an initial hybrid network of actors, including the Municipality of Anderlecht, the administrative agency of the Ministry of the Environment, called IBGE<sup>6</sup>, and the no profit association DDH - which is constituent part of the nascent BBP's coalition.

It is this core coalition that produced the project proposal for obtaining European Funds (ERDF), with the goal to conceive a pilot project which could implement and scale out small scale agriculture and more re-localized food chains in Neerpede-Brussels. Two other key actors entered the emergent coalition during the conception and elaboration of the project: *Terre en Vue* – an organization that focuses on facilitating access to land for small scale agro-ecological agriculture, mainly in the French speaking side of Belgium, and CREDAL – an agency that, among others, supports and facilitates access to credit for small entrepreneurial activities, including food and agriculture related<sup>7</sup>. The analysis reveals that the development of this partnership and its composition was favored by previously established knowledge networks among these participants, due to previous contacts and forms of collaboration among these actors in the local food arena. These proximity relations have undoubtedly helped to form the partnership.

The next paragraph moves further into the analysis of the land-resource governance tensions. This is done by showcasing challenges to address land accessibility and use for urban agriculture as they emerge from actions and perceptions of the projects' partners as well as from the wider institutional landscape of the BCR.

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<sup>6</sup> IBGE stands for....

<sup>7</sup> For further information see the respective websites (<https://www.terre-en-vue.be/?lang=fr>) and (<http://www.credal.be/>), [accessed on October 8 2017].

### 3.2. Emerging land-resource governance tensions.

As previously stated (see introduction and section 2), together with the creation of more re-localized food networks, enhancing access to land for urban agriculture, is one of the pursued objectives of the BBP's coalition. Indeed, two of the project partners – i.e. *DDH* and, most of all, *Terre en Vue* – have the specific role of searching for potentially usable land, both within Neerpede as well as in the wider Brussels Region.

Hybrid governance tensions on land access emerge at different levels. First, on a very practical level, tensions and constraints are around material and legal aspects of land accessibility and use (see also scheme 1 – resource governance tensions). Lack of supportive attitudes of land owners and land holders makes it difficult to find space for urban agriculture and scaling food production out geographically across the Region. *Terre en Vue* and other partners clearly underline the 'patrimonial' and speculative attitude over land by a large part of land owners or land occupants in Brussels.

*“There is a multiplicity of owners, both private and public, and thus land parcels potentially suitable for urban agriculture are very fragmented. In addition, most of the owners - private as well as public - advance speculative practices on land. Thus there is no vision as well as no coordination among different owners of the land towards the fostering of alternative land use practices (...) Creating a consortium that stimulates coordination among different owners would be desirable, although very challenging”.* (Extract from the interview with *Terre en Vue*).

This makes it difficult to arrange land use contracts which can be mutually beneficial for land owners as well as for potential producers.

Furthermore, land occupancy in some circumstances is also a problem. Where potential agricultural land is available in Brussels as well as in its peri-urban area, it may be occupied by conventional farmers which hold the land on the basis of

very rigid land agreements. This constraints the transition of land towards different types of agricultural uses, such as small scale/locally oriented agriculture<sup>8</sup>.

*“If we consider the whole Neerpede, for instance, there is a high potential to expand small scale agriculture; however, land is already used, partly by professional farmers who perform conventional types of agriculture. We cannot simply ask them to go away or implement another kind of agriculture”*  
(Quote from one of the project partners).

This connects to the ‘diverse visions and logics’ with respect to land allocation, here visibly impacting land accessibility and use (see scheme 1 – organizational governance tensions).

Secondly, in general local administrations and land use regulations in the Brussels Region are scarcely open towards alternative forms of land use, such as agro-ecological food production. It is true that urban agriculture in Brussels has so far mainly developed as a spontaneous movement “in spite of local planning and administrative regulations” (interview with a planning expert)<sup>9</sup>. An open question is therefore how to address these cultural-institutional barriers and tensions, i.e. whether or not they should be tackled hands-on, and by whom. This point will be further addressed in the last section.

In general, controversial and ambiguous perceptions among diverse agents, organizations, and institutions are readable around the availability and usability of land for urban agriculture within the Brussels Region. While key civil society actors and urban agriculture advocates of the BBP push for searching land within the Brussels Region, other actors within the core partnership as well as in the wider Brussels’ food arena, are more dubitative. Controversies and discussions mainly revolve around the actual availability and usability of land for urban agriculture within the Region.

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<sup>8</sup> The legal system in force is called “Bail a’ Ferme”, which protects rights of conventional farmers. This system of rented land and protection of land rights to conventional farmers is in force in the Flemish Region as well (interview with VLM actors).

<sup>9</sup> Among the numerous references on the informal/spontaneous character of urban agriculture and the challenges to give an appropriate socio-institutional space see, for instance, Colasanti 2012; Thibert 2012; Certomà and Notteboom 2017; Tornaghi 2017;

*“The limited agricultural land in the Brussels Region is in competition with an increase in the population (+ 20% in 25 years) and the consequent need for infrastructures. Such pressure mortgages [FR: hypothèque] agricultural projects over the long term. Collaborations between the Brussels Region and the Provinces of Flemish Brabant and Walloon Brabant – being these two provinces the rural and food belt of Brussels - must favor the installation of an agriculture for Brussels”* (Extract from one of the project partners).

Urbanization pressures on land - also considering the expectations of demographic growth with the consequent need for housing and services, declared and embraced by regional planners and decision-makers<sup>10</sup> – are among the most visible constraints from a planning perspective.

*“We are in a phase of important demographic growth. Hosting this demographic growth is, since few years, one of the main challenges for the Brussels’ government. Both agriculture and housing require space”* (Interview with a planning expert).

Thus, how to tackle these tensions over legal and material aspects on land is an open question to the Brussels’ food debate and practices.

The next paragraph further develops these and other issues, addressing the kind of institutional responses on the land-resource question gradually emerged in Brussels, not without controversies and ambiguities.

### **3.3. What institutional responses to the land question? Grasping advancements and ambiguities.**

If we look at the institutional responses to the land question, and the role of the BBP’s coalition in that, we acknowledge both, some advancements as well as some drawbacks and contradictions.

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<sup>10</sup> See the “*PRAS Démographique*”, i.e. the revision and adaptation of planning guidelines in the light of the foreseen population growth. <http://urbanisme.irisnet.be/pdf/pras/brochure> [accessed on October 8 2017].

As mentioned in section 2, it is arguable that one of the biggest questions is at what scale(s) the land challenge for Brussels should be addressed. Some agential-organizational dynamics preceding the formation of the BBP coalition showed attempts to bring the land question to a wider institutional scale, involving a dialogue with the Flanders' Region. Voices from both sides - the BCR and Flanders - converge in highlighting the difficulties to work across spatial-institutional scales. On this point the BBP's partners give accent to the constraining nature of the organization of the ERDF funds in Brussels, which does not facilitate collaborations with the Flemish side. In other words the way European funds, such as the ERDF, are managed by Brussels' institutions follows a Regional-administrative logic, not allowing projects or actions to take place cross-border or outside administrative limits.

In summary, we acknowledge that administrative, institutional, but also more widely, cultural barriers are present, which hamper a collaboration. This confirms the relevance of institutional (and scale) governance tensions on the land-resource question as highlighted in scheme 1 – 'institutional governance tensions'.

On the side of Brussels' institutions concerned with urban agriculture and sustainable food systems, we observe some advancements as well as shadows and ambiguities. New incentives to the development of urban agriculture show up, at least in the discourse, in the newly approved Food Strategy. Launched by the new coalition of the Environmental Ministry in 2015<sup>11</sup>, the 'Good Food Strategy' seems to recognize the importance of urban agriculture in general, and of access to land in particular<sup>12</sup>. On the one hand, the importance of building relations with Flemish agents to sustain local agriculture in the Brussels' hinterland is stressed (personal communication with the manager of the strategy). Looking at urban agriculture from a wider spatial perspective seems to be considered a fundamental step in the purpose to enhance the food security base and the

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<sup>11</sup> With some change of regional competence the new Ministry - Céline Fremault - is responsible for "Housing, Quality of Life, Environment and Energy".

<sup>12</sup> See the axe 1 of the Strategic Document, "Increasing sustainable local food production", available here: [http://document.environnement.brussels/opac\\_css/elecfile/Strat\\_GoodFood\\_FR](http://document.environnement.brussels/opac_css/elecfile/Strat_GoodFood_FR) [accessed on October 8 2017).



provision of more healthy local food for Brussels<sup>13</sup>. This seems to be acknowledged by both, the BBPs partners as well as the wider Brussels' food institutions. On the other hand, we can argue that actions and steps in this direction remain so far at a level of intentions.

Overall, uncertainties on how to tackle land accessibility and use for urban agriculture at different scales and levels persist. Some recent institutional actions seem to focus on the Regional administrative territory, highlighting legal-planning constraints and potentials to use land and spaces for urban agriculture within the Regional boundaries<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Section 4. Concluding discussions and reflections.**

From the above conceptual-empirical analysis it is possible to draw some understandings and lessons on how the governance of the access and use of land for urban agriculture can be improved towards more sustainable directions in the Brussels case.

By connecting into a partnership some of the key players on urban agriculture, the BBP coalition has the value of building a certain momentum around urban agriculture in Brussels. This has the potential to trigger greater institutional and civil society awareness on urban food production. In addition, the BBP has also started to address key resource needs of urban agriculture initiatives. Some urban agriculture implementation, the search for further accessible land and the provision of consistent support for the startup of potential urban farming activities, are relevant actions in that direction fostered by the BBP.

From the analysis emerges, however, that a big question for the Brussels' governance of urban agriculture and access to land, concerns how to take into account multiple spatial and institutional scales. This encompasses making space

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<sup>13</sup> Among others, the Strategy declares a target of 30% of fruits and vegetables that should come from the Brussels hinterland in a radius of 10km by 2030 (see the strategic document).

<sup>14</sup> The reference here is to a recent study launched by the Agency responsible for agriculture issues in Brussels, tackling the understanding and removal of legal and planning constraints for urban agriculture in the Brussels Region. Currently the study is in process of completion.

for urban agriculture within the Region, but also developing relations with the hinterland.

We could argue that the development of urban agriculture in the Region may benefit from a wider conversation with key planning and territorial management decision-makers in Brussels. Can urban agriculture, in its variegated forms and adaptations, be part of alternative/sustainable land uses for Brussels? What consequences in terms of urban development guidelines for the Region? Similar questions have not yet entered into a wide public debate. The new Strategy and the building of momentum for urban agriculture through the BBP project, may help to foster this dialogue. Yet, attention should be put on possible consequences of over-regulation of urban agricultures' land uses, as they may bring some tensions to the spontaneity of the urban agriculture movement (Raja 2014). Thus, public awareness, social pressure and debate should be perseverant in order to channel these tensions into positive directions.

We also acknowledge that a coalition like the BBP is a valuable starting point to address some of the tensions over access and use of land for urban agriculture. Agents such as *Terre en Vue* and *ad hoc* organizations can help to coordinate supply of land with demand for land by potential urban farmers, also helping to overcome some of the obstacles connected to land resource accessibility and use (e.g. working on land use contracts, mediating among land owners and project holders, advocating for alternative land uses, etc. – See scheme 1 first row – 'resource governance tensions'). Thus, giving incentives and support to the development of targeted coalitions or actors' networks, that build on achieved knowledge and actions, is a valuable way forwards (see Scheme 1 – fourth column 'organizational governance tensions'). Such coalitions should be sustainable in terms of resources and timeframe, in order to be able to operationalize some targets. Despite difficulties in coordinating and cooperating, relational proximity among actors composing these networks can help to foster collaborations.

From the institutional side, a good coordination between the work of actors' networks and the wider policy objectives at the institutional level should be achieved (See scheme 1 – fourth column, 'institutional governance tensions'). In the case of Brussels, for instance, the institutional agency responsible for urban agriculture in the frame of the new Food Strategy, experiences some weaknesses in resources and human capital. Thus, lack of vision and good communication between institutional level and urban agriculture organizations do not help to build trust and foster a more coordinated action on the land question.

A final open point concerns scalar challenges related to widening the land question to the Brussels' hinterland, as the most extensive and quality land resides outside Brussels. Some actions fostering connections with the hinterland are partially already in place. Responding to Regional public markets, organizations such as *Terre en Vue* are starting to target the hinterland<sup>15</sup>. New urban-peri-urban agriculture projects, helped by the connection of new farmers with Community Supported Agriculture's or other short food chains' networks, is a tool that is partially adopted in Brussels and that can be improved or used in a more systemic way. Thus, it is possible to work from the bottom-up. However, scalar challenges remain that need a wider institutional support as well as a greater coordination of decision-makers between the Flemish and the Brussels' Region. These issues encompass, among others, the reform of land use contracts towards greater support to small scale farmers; the development of cross-border projects and collaborations among the Brussels's Region or Brussels' municipalities and bordering local authorities, in order to find win-win agreements for land preservation and development of short food chains.

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<sup>15</sup> A recently initiated project concerns the development of small scale agriculture in a 5 hectares area close to Brussels, called Overjise: <https://terre-en-vue.be/les-projets/bruxelles/appel-a-candidatures-overijse/?lang=fr> [accessed on 20 October 2017].

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