

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5th European sustainable food planning conference (AESOP)</b> <b>Innovations in urban food systems</b> <b>29-30. 10.13</b> <b>Montpellier</b></p>
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### **A Food momentum**

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This 5th conference on sustainable food planning denotes the “food momentum” we are involved in, in which the **food issue is becoming an “evidence” for the research and practician world.**

For the first time in this conference history (since 2009), more than 30 countries were represented, with an important opening to the global south countries. If the conference had traditionally gathered geographers, planners and architects, it **broadened to the French agronomist scientific circle.** The official discourse was very keen on underlying that if the agronomist were traditionally “afraid” of the city, the **research future agenda was obviously in relation with the urban issues.** The research issues needed to focus on the new food systems models and on the sustainability of the future urban food systems. This “food momentum” is **creating new links and future collaborations** between the urban and agricultural research worlds.

To draw on with the idea of a general enthusiasm that the food topic carries as underlined by François Jégou post, the **researchers** working on the **topic are generally very implied with the topic** and they claim the importance of the researcher in the transition processes through the expertise he can bring. The researchers wondered about **how they can contribute to “bold futures for cities”** through the research studies without denying the importance of a reflexive thinking about that commitment.

### **The general atmosphere**

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The conference pointed out the fact that **cities are recovering a place in the chessboard of the food system** in a “flourishing context” of innovative place-based practices. As a result, the case studies presented focused on the relations between those two worlds (the role of the institutionalization in the innovative processes, the spaces of expression) and on the governance of the food issue (multi-level, urban region scale, connections between various stakeholders with different competences). The analysis tackled the **necessary cooperative process** to “organize the change” and pointed out the fact that **planners are mainly reluctant** and at least not motors in the process. Paradoxically, many studies were focused on those stakeholders because they demonstrated that if the institution was not a motor, the **institutionalization process could bring** the change and constitute **a strategical framework of expression for the “flourishing context”.** The “regime transition” is the theoretical framework of many presentations because one of the key issue that the AESOP thematic group is bringing is whether all this “flourishing context” is the witness of a transition path. As a result, many presentations were very “place-based” and focused on the favourable mechanisms that could lead to such a transition and on the existent barriers. **Research is as the very initial decoding stage** concerning the urban food topic.

On an other hand, the approaches presented were very urban centered (urban agriculture particularly) and related to alternative food networks, which is a bit in contradiction with the transition perspective.

## **Stakes to grasp to go on with the urban food issue in the Urbact network**

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In this perspective, the need to **tackle the role of the major food system stakeholders** from the distribution and transformation spheres was underlined in the conclusive discourse. How could we be “compassionate” with the “worst stakeholders” **without which a food strategy would be miss its goal?**

In relation with the **institutionalization** process, the necessity to **articulate** this process to the “**democratic imperative**” and the participative processes was pointed out.

This AESOP edition was also the occasion to raise the alarm regarding **the perverse effects that could accompany the development of such food strategies** that would not focus on access for the many and would end up in display green politic without.

To finish on a positive note, the presentations acknowledged the **vast innovative space** that the return of the food issue is opening for the role that cities could play of the food system chessboard.