

## Building resourcefulness in periurban areas : agroecological initiatives in two towns near Montpellier and Nîmes (France)



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## Context: The ABEILLE Project

**ABEILLE** = an action-research project  
on the creation of **agroecological initiatives** by **local public actors**  
in **periurban areas**

**A partnership with different local institutional actors, including**



**Municipality of Fabrègues (Montpellier Métropolis):**



**Municipality of Saint Dionisy (Nîmes Métropolis):**

# The ABEILLE Project

## Document local agroecological initiatives

- Scientific studies that respond to the questions posed by project partners



## Contribute to local agroecological initiatives

- Workshops that bring together diverse local actors

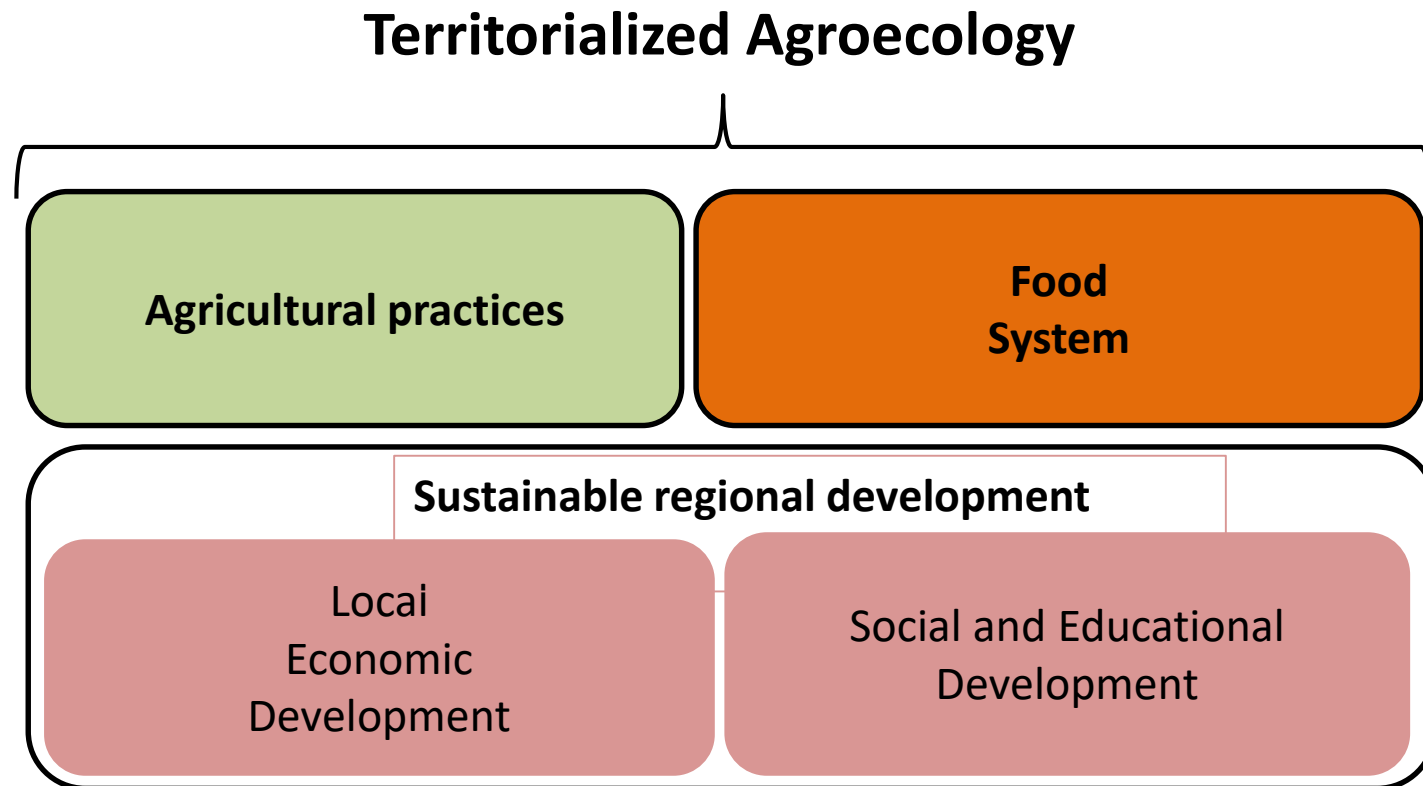


**Build a wider knowledge and practices community around agroecological initiatives  
(networking and communication)**

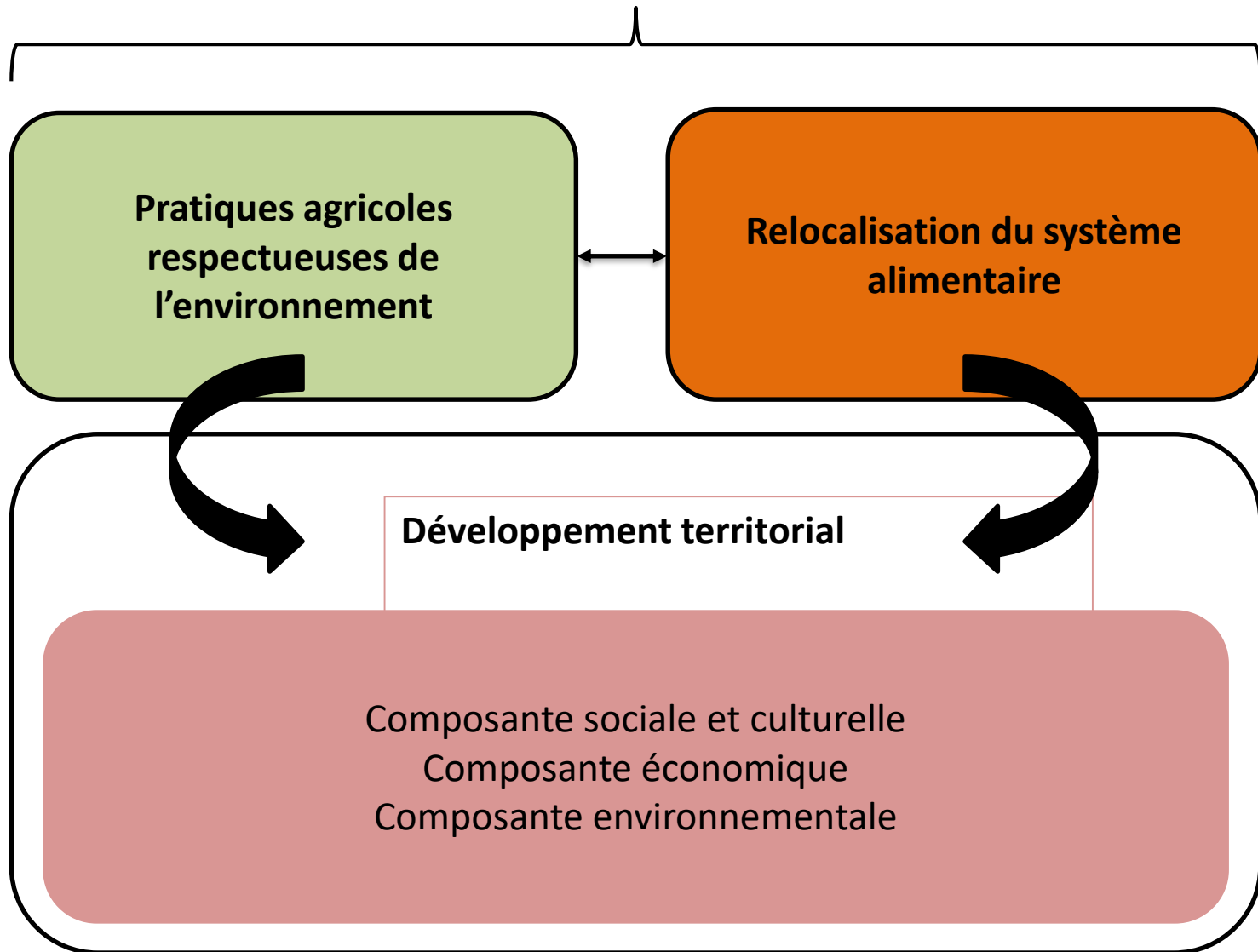
# *Analysis of agroecological initiatives led by local public actors in periurban areas*

## Territorialized agroecology

Agroecology territories : places for sustainable agricultural and food systems and biodiversity conservation (Wezel and al, 2016)



# Projet agroécologique



# Applying the concept resourcefulness to territorialized agroecology

## **Resourcefulness**

self-determination, possibility for the communities to access the levers of social change (Derickson and MacKinnon, 2013)

## **Territorialized agroecology**

mobilisation of local material resources and actors to create an integrated agricultural and food system (Duru et al., 2014)

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graph TD; A[Resourcefulness] --> D[Territories where land, water and biodiversity serve the needs of the people (rather than profit), while respecting the ecosystem and rehabilitating an human-sized agri-food system]; B[Territorialized agroecology] --> D;
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**Territories where land, water and biodiversity serve the needs of the people (rather than profit), while respecting the ecosystem and rehabilitating an human-sized agri-food system**



## The agroecological transition near cities : specific challenges for periurban areas (Hérault and Gard)

- Rapid urbanisation
- Rising land prices and speculation
- proliferation of unused farmlands



**How do municipalities engage in the agroecological transition and mobilize local resources to do so ?**

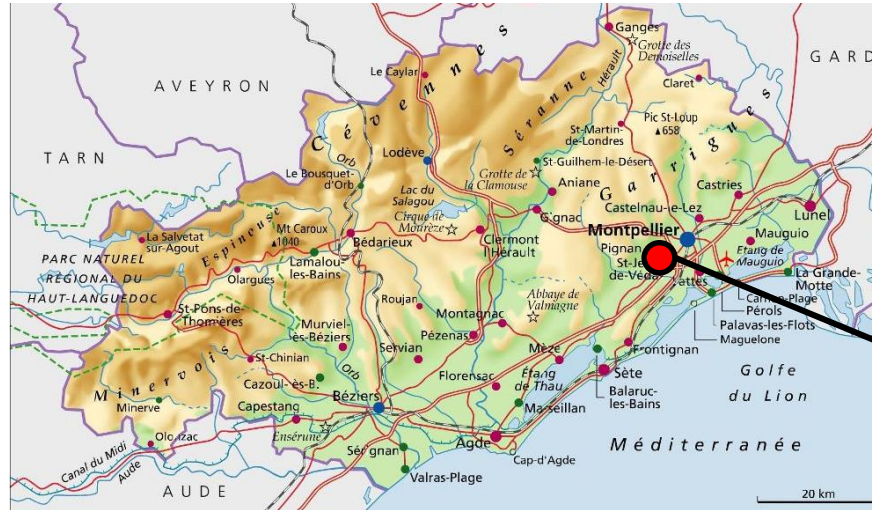
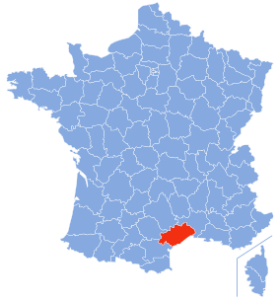
## Principal Research Questions

### **How do agroecological initiatives emerge in periurban territories ?**

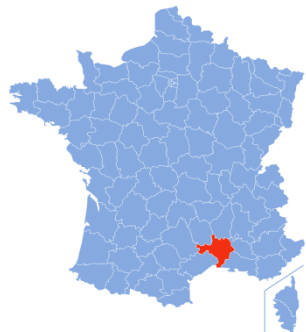
- Who are the actors behind these initiatives and how do they interact ?
- How do these actors put into practice the principles of agroecology and strengthen resourcefulness at the level of the territory?
- What factors tend to accelerate or hinder the projects' implementation ?



# Study sites



**Fabrègues**



**Saint-Dionisy**

## Methodology

- Tool for the study of the initiatives : **Chronological Analysis**



- = a detailed history of the **actors** involved,  
the **actions** taken,  
the effects of **context** (municipal politics, environmental protection measures, etc.)  
and the **obstacles** encountered

# The agroecological farm project in Saint-Dionisy

Time

## Project « Managers » (technical experts)

Network for farm creation  
« Coup d’Pousse »

Chamber of Agriculture

Citizen association  
« Terre de Liens »

Society for rural land  
use (SAFER)

Financial  
partners:

County (Pays):  
LEADER funding

Cooperative Society (SCIC)

Citizen  
associations

Municipalities

Consumers

Farmers

## Project initiators

Municipal  
Team

Citizen association  
« Abeille et  
Biodiversité »

Community garden;  
educational garden

Farm property  
(11ha)

~~Sale to  
local  
vendor~~

One organic meal  
per week in  
school meal  
program

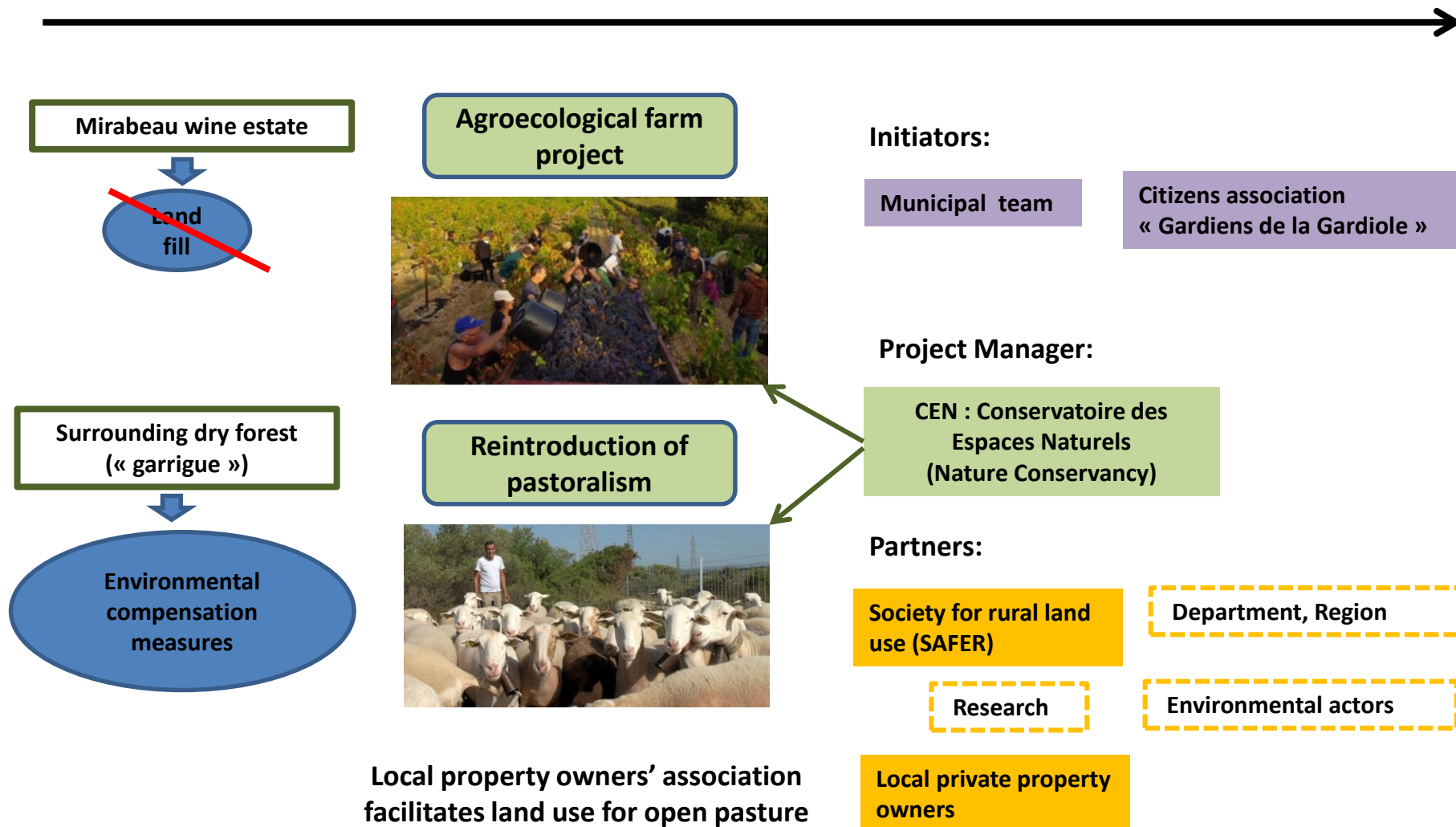
## Organic farm project:

- Lease de land to **young organic farmers**

+ Storage buildings and  
local product shop

# The agroecological farm project in Fabrègues

Time



## Agricultural practices

Community gardens

**Creation of a diversified,  
organic farm on a property  
purchased by the  
municipality**

Reactivation of productive  
agricultural activities:  
pastoralism; wine, olive and  
vegetable production

**Local Economic  
Development**

## Food System

**School meals: local or organic  
(municipal subsidies)**

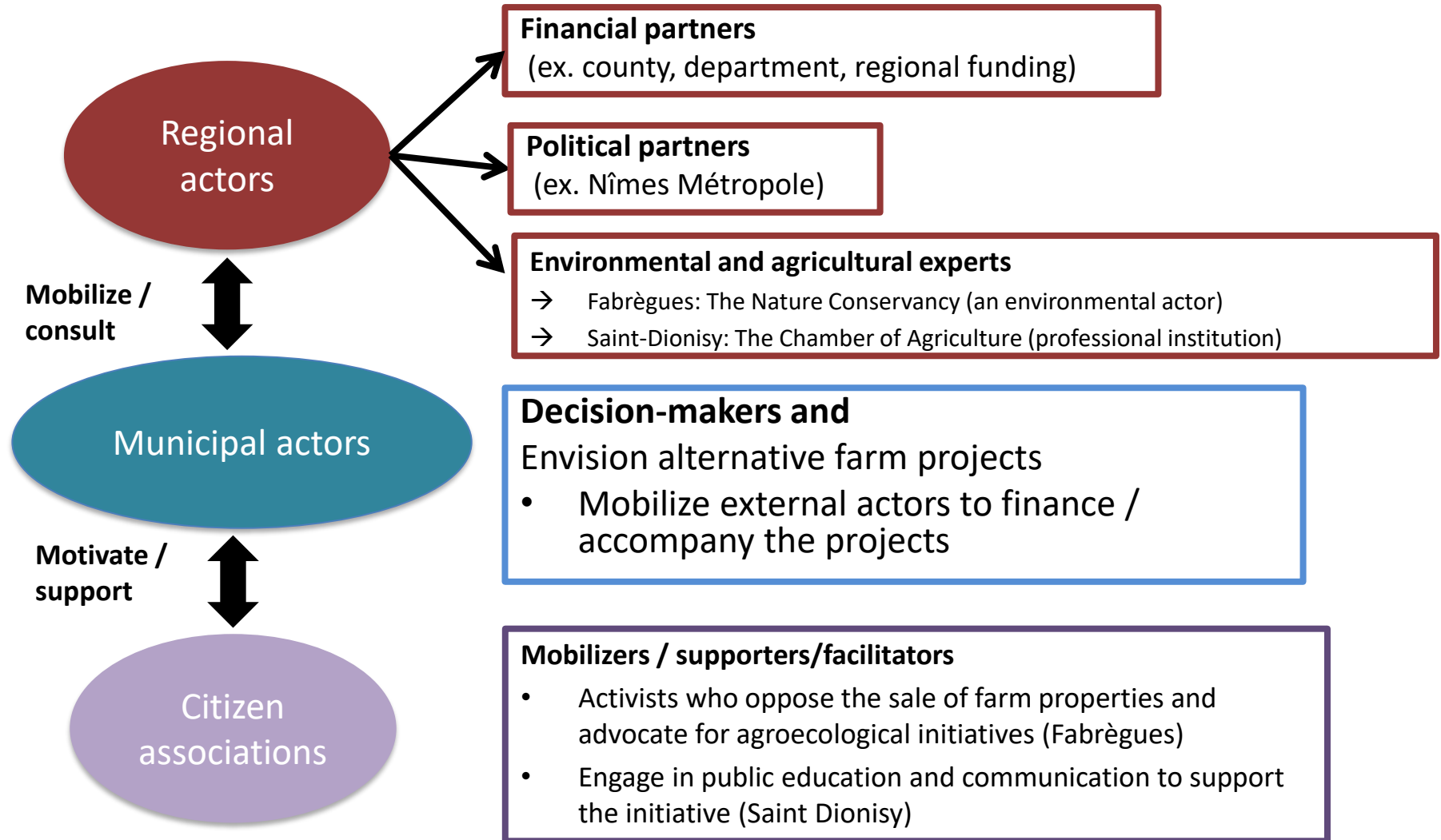
**Development of short value chains :**  
-farm shop  
- Product distribution in public  
cafeterias

Cultural activities on the site

**Fabrègues: Community wine  
harvest, social reintegration  
program (vineyard), farm  
education centre**

**Social and Educational  
Development**

## Key Actors behind Peri-Urban Agroecological Initiatives:



# First conclusions

1. **Who are the actors behind periurban agroecological initiatives and how do they interact ?**
  - a diversity of the actors **whose function is not principally in the field of agriculture** :
    - urban actors (municipalities, Metropolis, citizen associations)
    - environmental and agricultural institutions

**Farmers** are integrated into decision-making processes, but usually in the later project stages:

definition of the project  
by institutional actors

collaboration with  
partner  
institutions

proposal to farm  
candidates



# What tools do local institutional actors mobilize to strengthen resourcefulness ?

In order to preserve farmland and make it available to farmers...

- **Modification of local land use plans** to render construction / urbanisation impossible;
- **Land purchase** (via a Cooperative Society of the General Interest, SCIC) and **land sharing** (via Property Owners' Association)

In order to ensure agroecological production in the long term...

- **Environmental leases** (conditional upon the respect of organic practices)
- **Land tax exemptions for organic farmers**

## 2. How do these actors put into practice the principles of agroecology / strengthen resourcefulness ?

For these actors, developing « resourcefulness » hinges upon :

- securing **access to local farmland** via land purchase and leases to farmers
- ensuring **sustainable production** methods via agri-environmental leases with technical specifications (cahiers des charges)
- Mise en place de farm shop and de lieux de sensibilisation à l'agroécologie et à l'alimentation
- **reintegration programs** or young farmer settlement on municipal properties
- Giving **inhabitants the possibility to participate** in the projects (cooperative society; property owners' association)

- Open question: **When and how should farmers be engaged in the project?** Would their integration into earlier stages of the planning process improve the success of the projects ?

# Thank you for your attention



### 3. There is a strong demand by municipal actors for the development of new skills and knowledge of available tools in the agriculture and food sector

Action research can serve as a tool to strengthen resourcefulness in agroecology

→ **ABEILLE web site:** tools library for « periurban agroecology » to share relevant knowledge for the development of agroecological initiatives



Experiences from the field



Useful tools (land use planning; financing; environmental standards...)



Networking

