

Darly S., Torre A., 2013, Conflicts over farmland uses and the dynamics of “agri-urban” localities in the greater Paris region, *Land Use Policy*, 33, July, 90 – 99.

CONFLICTS OVER FARMLAND USES AND THE DYNAMICS OF “AGRI-URBAN” LOCALITIES IN THE GREATER PARIS REGION

An empirical analysis based on daily regional press and field interviews

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and its boundaries have for a long time been a core issue in the field of rural geography - defined as the study of the organisation of natural landscapes by human societies. But, as a result of the economic and social evolution of post-industrial societies, it has progressively shifted from the analysis of agrarian landscapes, to the study of low density areas characterised by an increasing diversity of uses and by a constant expansion of built land (Saraceno, 1994). In the field of periurban studies, this shift has been radical, as scientists neglected the agrarian and agricultural components of local societies in order to focus mainly on urban and energy issues linked to the “sprawling city” (Brueckner, 2000). A growing number of scholars shows however that peri-urban areas have also to be considered as the urban-rural interface (Bryant and Johnston 1992, Tacoli, 1998) and could even be better defined as “rural territories in the field of urban influence” (Bryant, 2009). The implicit consequence of this conceptual shift is that the study of changes in these areas has to combine both urban and rural “perspectives” in order to be relevant (Errington, 1994, Allen 2003, Masuda and Garvin 2008).

One of the key points frequently highlighted is that peri-urban areas, though they might keep a rural morphology (natural or agricultural landscapes, low density of built development), are transformed in order to fulfil various urban and metropolitan projects, which tends to disturb agrarian landscapes and social structures (Murdoch and Abram, 1998). As a result of this, frictions and conflicts between the different activities (agricultural activities vs. residential or industrial activities for example), the different economic or social groups (residents, farmers, developers...) or simply the different interests emerge (Henderson, 2005; Zérah 2007). These conflicts are interesting for they reveal the changing position of agriculture. They can also be considered as the changing factors of social dynamics in rural areas (Woods, 2003; Reed, 2004). In this study, we focus our attention on the observation of rural land use conflicts in order to explore the dynamics of rural localities located in peri-urban areas.

In order to undertake an empirical analysis of this question, we focused on the Greater Paris Region case. It is the national capital region of France, but also, and by far, the largest metropolitan area in France and can only be compared with two or

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three other metropolitan regions in Europe. Around the highly urbanised core composed of Paris and its suburbs, a peri-urban belt has received many residential and industrial activities that produce more or less urbanised rural landscapes (Iaurif, 2005). Within this peri-urban belt, the scarcity of well-located vacant spaces (well-connected to transport facilities and services centres) and the diversity of actors and interests that share the same rural environment raises many tensions and conflicts over farmland uses.

But the peri-urban belt is also an area where several local development and planning initiatives dedicated to farmland protection and farming enterprises survival are currently carried out, mainly by local authorities. Initially based upon the involvement and cooperation of local actors, these local programs have more recently been recognised by the Île-de-France (official name of the region) Regional Council, which gave them the generic label of “Agri-urban programs”, as part of an overall regional strategy devoted to metropolitan growth control and the protection of regional natural resources. The programs are defined and elaborated at the municipal or inter-municipal scale and are located close to the urbanized core of Paris and its suburbs.

Having been informally experimented all over France since the 1970s, Agri-Urban Programs are presented as major tools for the "conservation" of open spaces around large cities. Destined, more particularly, for the preservation of rural spaces, they were officially recognised in July 2001 by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Territorial Development (CIADT) through the financial support granted for seven of these programs in the Paris Region. These mechanisms have inspired the development of « *peculiar measures relative to the protection of rural and peri-urban areas* » that are part of the 2005 law concerning the development of rural territories¹. The programs are based on the notion of "a territorial project" and are based on flexible initiatives of partnership in which several parties can be involved: territorial communities, local associations, Chambers of Agriculture and local farmers. A "territorial project" is jointly defined by all interested parties and leads to the development and adoption of a program of action financed for several years and which all the partners involved commit to supporting and respecting. It is based on the cooperation between these different actors and is a place of experimentation of the tools of management of rural areas.

These programs are currently shaping, at different levels, the dynamics of the localities where they are settled. We therefore consider that they lead to the emergence of a specific type of peri-urban locality which can be referred to as “Agri-urban localities”.

They have become the object of great attention by policy makers and can be compared to the various other local initiatives that bring academics to model the functional complementarities and/or oppositions between rural land and urban systems (Bryant and Johnston, 1992; Halseth, 2010). Borrowing several concepts from economics, they put the stress on the negative externalities produced by urban activities upon agricultural production (Errington, 1994), but also on the quality of rural amenities sought after by citizens (Cavailles et al., 2004). Outside this

¹ Art. 73, Law n° 2005-157 dedicated to the development of rural territories.

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traditional urban/rural framework, the concept of multifunctionality is used to analyse how new social arrangements are negotiated between various stakeholders in order to share or manage open spaces (Wilson, 2007). But, by focusing on the cooperation dynamics between these stakeholders (such as the co-construction of landscape projects for example), they tend to minimize the omnipresence and the role of tensions and conflicts in the decision processes.

In this article, we wish to apply a methodology that combines both conflict and cooperation analysis and reveals their spatial and temporal interdependence as part of the driving forces that shape the dynamics of local development. This methodology is tested for the case of farmland use conflicts and their links to the cooperative Agri-Urban Programs (AUP) in the Greater Paris Region. By doing this, our aim is to connect quantitative methods and local analyses applied to agricultural land use conflicts. Our work follows previous research studies about conflicts conducted by a research group (Torre et al., 2006); More particularly it comes in the wake of studies based on the analysis of the Daily Regional Press (DRP) (Mc Carthy et al., 1996; Rucht and Neidhardt, 1999; Darly, 2009) and combines two levels of analysis, namely the analysis of the DRP on the one hand, and the exploitation of surveys conducted by experts and of other documents, on the other hand.

In order to explore the interdependence between conflicts and cooperation dynamics in the differentiation of rural spaces we test two hypotheses regarding the structural link between the conflicts and the AUP geographies:

- 1) The first one is related to the impact of the creation of Agri-urban programs on the nature of the conflicts that occur within and outside their geographic perimeters. We believe that the nature and the expressions of a conflict will be of a specific kind when located within a program perimeter and will therefore be of a different kind to those conflicts located outside, close to or away from this AUP.
- 2) The second one is about the impact of land-use conflicts on the creation of Agri-urban programs. Our hypothesis is that the spatial extension of the program’s perimeters and the type of actions that they promote are the results of territorial conflictual processes. We believe that Agri-urban programs can be the products of social coordination initiated as a result of the emergence of conflicts, which are the expression of antagonisms about land uses, and that the programs contribute, in parallel with the development of cooperative actions, to the regulation of antagonisms.

The paper is divided into three sections: their order reflects the analytical path that we followed in order to discuss these hypotheses. The first section lays out in detail the theoretical framework and methodology for the conflict analysis that we developed thanks to a multidisciplinary literature review. In the second section, we present the general characteristics of the conflicts over farmland uses as they are reported in the daily regional press. This regional analysis allows us to discuss our first hypothesis by showing how their nature varies depending upon whether they are located inside or outside the borders of an AUP. The third part is then dedicated to a discussion about the causality links between conflicts over farmland uses and the dynamics of AUP, which is based on the comparative analysis of several local case studies.

1. THE BASIS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO CONFLICT ANALYSIS

1.1. Conflict analysis conceptual framework

When dealing with land use management in peri-urban areas, local planners must respond to two public necessities that are both of public interest but which can also contradict each other. On the one hand, they are requested to control urban sprawl in order to prevent further environmental deterioration and the associated difficulties related to transport and to the provision of public services. To manage such a complex process as urban sprawl, one requirement is to put under legal constraint the rights to urbanize cultivated farmland by declaring illegal any urban housing or building activities on such areas (Brueckner, 2000). The second goal of public policies in this context is to provide the minimum amount of buildable lands necessary to respond to the legitimate demands for housing and services in rural areas. These two major constraints contribute to placing the questions of local agricultural dynamics firmly into the debate about the functioning and governance of peri-urban territories (Bryant and Johnston 1992; Allen, 2003).

This debate is regularly justified by concerns about the management of open, agricultural or natural spaces and to the conflicts that take place in these spaces (Ley, 1980; Cadène, 1990; Kaiser, 1993; Zérah 2006; Solana 2010). After having highlighted the problematic disappearance of the rural lands that used to surround towns and cities – a disappearance caused by the increasing urbanisation of society - some authors showed in the late 1980s how local communities are capable of resisting these phenomena despite the fact that the balance of economic power favours cities (Cadène 1993; Kayser, 1993). They drew attention to the spatial incompatibilities between the city and agriculture and the oppositions between the "native" rural communities and the urban society. In this perspective, the heterogeneity of the processes of resistance indicates that they are strongly dependent on the inherited historical and cultural resources of the rural communities. Since the late 1990s, conflicts in peri-urban areas seem to have again become an object of study for rural experts, particularly because of the increase in social concern about environmental problems (Solana, 2010), but also because of the “disappearance” of the distinction between rural and urban societies and the emergence of a new set of “rural” qualities which are socially constructed by local actors through new place-based governance mechanisms (Woods, 2003; Halseth et al., 2010).

Thus, as urban studies reveal the role and impacts of land use conflicts in place-based governance dynamics (Campbell 2000; Melé, 2004; Wester-Herber, 2004), ruralists and spatial economists have increased the number of local case studies in order to show how new hybrid territorial projects are currently emerging and how they can be interpreted as the beneficial result of crises between local actors (Doyon, 2009; Darly 2010). These territories are then considered as experimental models that help design sustainable agricultural systems at the scale of municipal or inter-municipal urban territories. However, this method makes it difficult to adopt more generic conclusions

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on the relation between conflicts and territorial governance which is only possible by articulating different levels of analysis (Torre and Traversac, 2011). The quantitative analyses that would usefully complement this case study approach have been driven today mainly by urbanists and planning experts (Ley, 1980; Joerin et al., 2006), whose works have highlighted the spatial link between land-use conflicts and socio-economic level of local communities at the metropolitan area scale.

The “credible commitment” framework

In order to define the conflict as an object of study, we used a conceptual framework based on criteria that have enabled us to differentiate the situations of tension, sometimes referred as “latent” conflict, from situations of open conflict. Though the antagonisms between the different uses of space generate many types of tension between the actors, the analyses based on Game Theory use the notion of credible engagement or commitment to distinguish conflict from tension (Caron and Torre, 2005; Joerin et al., 2006). Commitment manifests itself in more or less institutional forms (verbal opposition, written signs, registered letters, administrative proceedings...) or in more or less radical ways (assault, signs forbidding access, fences...). In order to be credible, this engagement necessitates a monetary or more hedonic investment. It is a constraint the actors impose on themselves and that determines their future positioning.

Conflicts over farmland uses

We define as conflicts centred on farmland uses any land-use conflict that fulfils at least one of the following three conditions: the contested land use is related to farming or agro-industrial sector activities; the contested land use jeopardizes the efficiency of the current farming run in the area; the agricultural legal nature of the land is threatened by the contested use.

1.2. Listing conflicts at the regional scale using Daily Regional Press

In order to perform a quantitative analysis of conflicts over farmland uses, we explored an indirect data source which is the daily regional press (DRP). In France, the DRP is the second most popular medium after television and each regional paper enjoys a quasi monopoly as there is generally only one DRP in each region. It is therefore a medium that is dedicated to local news. As it is published daily, the DRP is a potentially rich source of information in situations necessitating daily or weekly updates².

The data collected were used to complete the preliminary step of our study which was to assess, from an empirical point of view, the main characteristics and diversity of conflicts over farmland uses. In order to assess the processes of opposition marked by the credible engagement of an actor, we have consulted the numeric archives of all

² Several research results have confirmed the usefulness of this medium for similar objects of study, testing the data collected, *ex post facto*, using information cross-checking methods (Joerin, 2005 ; Ley, 1980). However this source presents some information bias, which makes the results of its exploitation dependent on choices of investigation and publication that are difficult to evaluate. Indeed, the list of events covered in an edition is determined by the journalists' availability and monitoring networks and by the editorial line of each newspaper (Torre and Lefranc, 2006).

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editorial articles published in the regional issues of *Le Parisien* (the daily regional paper in Île-de-France) and in each of its district issues³, in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005⁵.

Based on these articles and for each conflict's "story", the following elements have been identified and put into a relational database: the materiality of the conflict (in space⁷ and in time), the actors, their motivations and the manifestations of the conflicts. The search for articles enabled us to retain, initially, a total of 168 articles relating 85 cases of oppositions between actors. Thus, we were able to identify 177 municipalities within which are located parcels of land over which 83 conflicts have occurred. In two cases, the municipalities in which the land-objects of conflict were located could not be identified because the article did not provide the necessary geographical information.

1.3. Exploring the local interdependences between conflicts and the agri-urban programs through the analysis of synthesis documents and interviews

In the Paris Region, the ten agri-urban programs identified by the Regional Council, are mostly located in areas characterised by a high level of peri-urbanisation. The areas concerned by these programs are therefore, for the most part, situated to the West of the capital city, in the districts transformed by the diffuse urbanisation that started in the 1960s, in the *départements* of the *Yvelines* and of *Essonne* (see Figure 1). These programs are less developed in the eastern *département* of *Seine et Marne*, a *département* which has undergone the most recent waves of urban expansion. With the exception of *Rambouillet* and *Cergy* (two programs which have generated little local enthusiasm) most of these programs are located less than 30 km away from the centre of Paris (Poulot, 2006).

The process of construction of a local agri-urban program involves a more or less developed cooperation between several municipalities. Indeed, in order to initiate the process with their neighbours and to respect the coherence of the local functional rural space, the initiators of the project have generally identified functional perimeters that are larger than their own administrative territories. As a result, within these intended "agricultural functional" perimeters, some municipalities have been more actively involved than others in the practical implementation of the action programs. These perimeters are also characterised by a high level of internal socio-spatial heterogeneity. Indeed, they are all made of highly urbanised municipalities, of less built municipalities, and finally of predominantly rural municipalities.

³The *Ile-de-France* region is divided into six administrative districts, named '*départements*', which are: *Seine et Marne* (77), *Yvelines* (78), *Essonne* (91), *Hauts de Seine* (92), *Seine Saint Denis* (93), *Val de Marne* (94), *Val d'Oise* (95) and *Paris* (75). The Paris district issues were excluded from consultation.

⁵This work was conducted by S. Darly during her PhD through the numeric service platform www.europress.com.

⁷ In the absence of homogeneous elements of location for the set of observed cases, the spatial referencing of the conflicts is based on the notion of "land-object of dispute" which refers to the area within which the different uses are incompatible (Charlier, 1999). It is determined on the one hand by the material characteristics of the object (which already exists or is in process) of the conflict, but also by all the areas in which the uses have been identified as being "in competition". Thus we have been able to link to each conflict the list of municipalities in which the land-objects of conflict – such as they were referred to in the article – could be found.

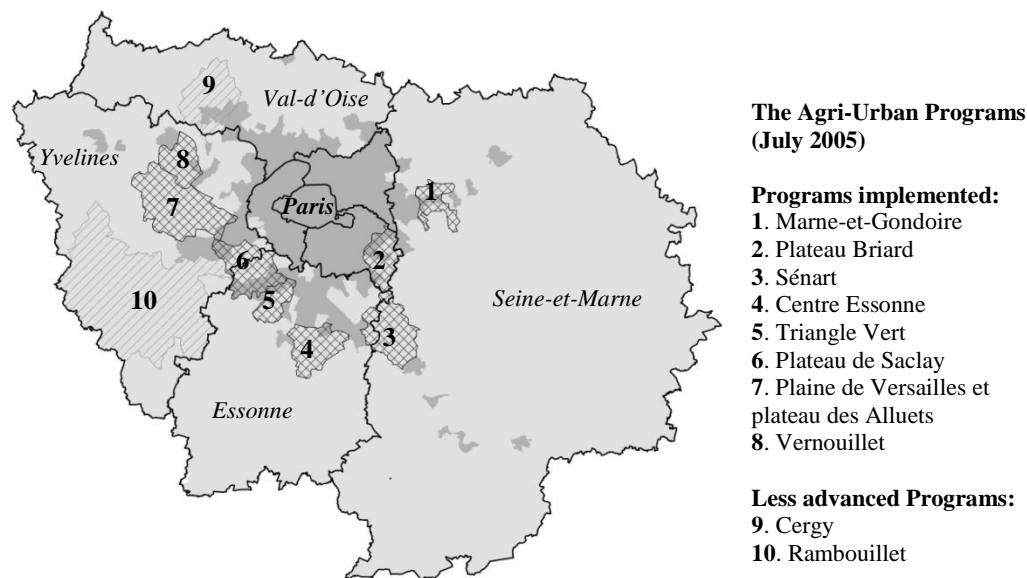


Figure 1: Perimeters of investigation of territorial projects in the Paris Region.
 The central grey area represents the urbanised municipalities of the Paris agglomeration.
 Source: Iaurif (2005)

The method used to explore the links between conflicts and the local governance dynamics in the borders of peri-urban programs is inverse to that used for an exhaustive inventory performed on a larger area. The conflicts were examined using local archives and interviews of actors involved in some of the agri-urban programs.

In order to limit the number of case studies, the analyses have concentrated on only five territories of more or less consolidated AUP. These five territories were selected from among the total set because their programs had been in existence long enough to enable us to perform a temporal analysis (De Biasi, 2005). A brief description of each territory is given in Table 1.

For each program, one or two founding documents (heritage audits, consulting firm reports, on-the-job-training or administrative reports) were identified among the archives of the program facilitator. They describe the challenges of the territory, the different competing land uses and the conflicts that this program will aim to prevent or solve⁹. The consultation of archives was supplemented by field interviews with local actors (representatives in charge of the programs, elected representatives) or with experts from outside the territory but who were involved in the follow-up and the evaluation of the territorial dynamics. The purpose of this stage was to cross-check reference information so as to gain a better understanding of the different conflictual processes described in the synthesis documents. The field interviews were conducted between 2005 and 2007.

⁹All the documents consulted were produced between 2000 and 2004.

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2. THE SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DISTRIBUTION OF CONFLICTS AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF AGRI-URBAN PROGRAMS

Agri-Urban Programs (AUP) are often presented as tools of management, for the prevention and arbitration of rural land use conflicts. One could therefore expect a lower number of conflicts within the borders of such programs. This relation is tested here, by confronting the results of the research studies conducted on the basis of articles published in the DRP between 2003 and 2005 to the AUP geography.

2.1. Conflicts over farmland uses in the greater Paris Region: an insight from the Daily Regional Press

The exploitation of the data provided by the DRP enables us to tackle the characteristics of conflicts over farmland uses in general before looking at their geographic distribution inside and near AUP³.

What are the main contested farmland uses?

Half of the conflicts arise to prevent an action that has not yet happened, whereas the other half aims to stop or reverse the actual consequences of some past or present unwanted land uses. Preventive conflicts, in which the impact of a particular use or activity is anticipated, have therefore been distinguished from remedial conflicts (in reference to the terms used in the medical world), in which the effective consequences of the contested uses have actually been observed.

If we bear in mind this distinction, we find that most of the so-called preventive rural land-use conflicts (i.e. 31 out of 44) are contesting the creation of permanent or temporary urbanised sites: seven are related to road transport infrastructure, four to waste management (dumps, incinerators), four to the production and transport of energy (wind turbines, transformers), two to the opening of a quarry, four to housing (Social housing or camping sites for itinerant people), three to the construction of public utility infrastructures (prison, high school), and finally, seven to recreation and tourism facilities. Preventive conflicts related to agricultural activities are few (only 9 conflicts out of 44). They are related to the spreading of sewage sludge (4), to some agricultural techniques that are considered risky (the use of pesticides, of genetically modified organisms, well-drilling for irrigation – 4 in total), as well as to the nuisance associated with the transport of agricultural products (notably beet).

So-called remedial farmland-use conflicts are caused for the most part by the degradation, through non farming uses, of resources that are meant to be exploited for agriculture (23 conflicts out of 41). Among those non agricultural uses are the setting up of temporary caravan sites (9), the illegal or unwanted construction of housing development or other facilities (3+1), of storage and management of waste products considered hazardous (incinerator, dump, scrap metal dealer (5)), and also of motor-sport (1) or outdoor activities (4) (hunting on large private estates). Note that these land uses are not specifically related to agriculture, but that they are obstacles to the farming use of land. To a lesser extent, the consequences of agriculture on the state of

³ For a more complete presentation of the quantitative analysis see Darly and Torre (2011),

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environmental resources are also at the origin of seven conflicts, for which farming practices are criticised by the population.

Our results show that rural land-use conflicts seldom result from an opposition to farming activities or from the involvement of the farming community. These cases represent a minority of the conflicts compared to those that result from non-farmers’ mobilisation against urbanisation. The conflicts discussed in our commentary are therefore related mostly to disagreements between the various non-farmers concerning land development, and seldom to differences of opinion between farmers and others. This is highly consistent with the hypotheses drawn recently by several authors about the social construction of the new rural qualities by local actors (Mormont, 2006; Halseth et al., 2010)

Who is fighting over farmland uses and how?

A conflict is a social process. Though the contested uses are key-elements of its emerging process, the profile of the actors involved constitute a major differentiating factor of the conflict processes.

Four main opposition categories can be listed: local authorities (some of which are supported by associations) opposing representatives of the State Authorities (approximately 30 conflicts); associations opposing elected representatives of the local authorities, in particular when the latter campaign in favour of unwanted land uses (approximately 20 conflicts); elected representatives of local authorities opposing the representatives of other neighbouring local authorities or of higher ranking authorities (approximately 20 conflicts); the elected representatives of authorities opposing the representatives of private commercial organisations, often in coordination with associations (approximately 20 conflicts).

The conflicts reported in the DRP are mostly marked by the intervention of the State within the local territories (intervention experienced during development projects or in situations when laws and regulations are violated) on the one hand and by strong competition and rivalry between neighbouring territorial communities (which underlie the current processes of differentiation and specialization of peri-urban territories) on the other. However, this categorisation into types of opposition ‘pairs’ does not account for the great diversity of the types of coordination (cooperation or conflict) that develop between the different actors in order to engage collective credible commitment.

Among the conflicts reported in the DRP, the recourse to legal action is the most common mode of action (it was either mentioned or actually undertaken in 43 conflicts). The creation of a circumstantial association, observed in 10 conflicts, is also often closely related to the first stages of legal action.

In parallel with legal actions or threats of legal action, targeted communication and strategic poster campaigns (42), as well as various forms of demonstration activities (petitions, protest marches, banners, ...) which require more coordination (31) are often used, particularly by private stakeholders and local associations. The representatives (elected or otherwise) of the State authorities tend to intervene in the

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context of existing administrative procedures (35) or implement regulatory measures when they have the authority to do so (10). In some cases, the actors who have the power to do so (elected representatives, land owners or residents) choose to intervene directly on the disputed land (technical acts) (12), or to call for the services of police officers to enforce a right (10). This is the case, for example, of the conflicts related to the occupation of land by caravan dwellers; in these cases the mode of action most commonly used by municipal representatives is police-supported eviction.

The arguments provided by these actors involved mostly emphasise the incompatibilities between the contested uses and the residential function of the neighbourhood. Even when the disappearance of farming land is the issue, the protesters put forward the impact of this disappearance on the living environment and the landscape, rather than on the negative economic impacts on farming.

Location of the areas in which conflicts occur

The conflicts are scattered over 177 municipalities (Figure 2), that is 10% of the municipalities of the Paris Regions (excluding Paris). Almost half of these are located in the western *département* of the *Yvelines* (47.4%). The rest are distributed in the *Seine-et-Marne* (24.4 %), *Essonne* (17.7%), *Val d'Oise* (8.1%) and, in an anecdotal manner, in the almost totally urbanized *département* of *Seine-Saint-Denis* (two municipalities).

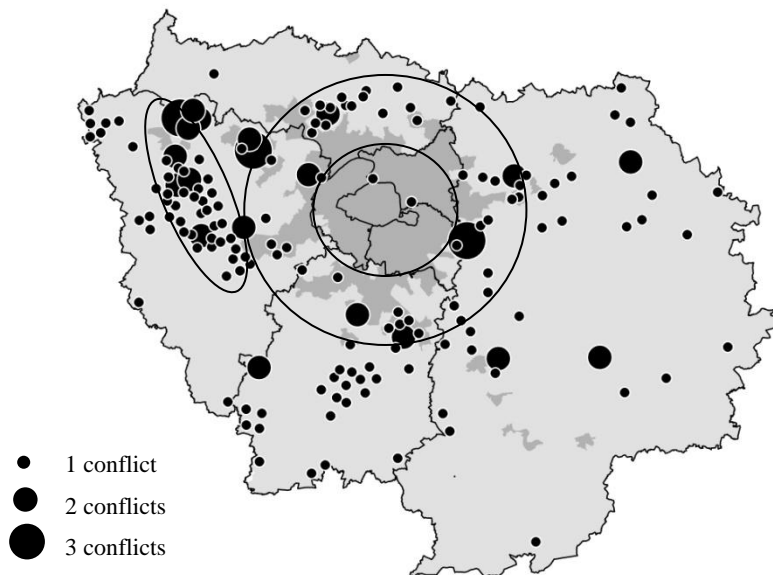


Figure 2: Location of the areas in which conflicts occur

The size of the dots is proportional to the number of conflicts that affect the municipality. Note: conflicts affecting several municipalities are represented by one dot for each municipality in which the conflict occurs.

Source: *Le Parisien* 2003, 2004, 2005. Prepared in Darly (2008).

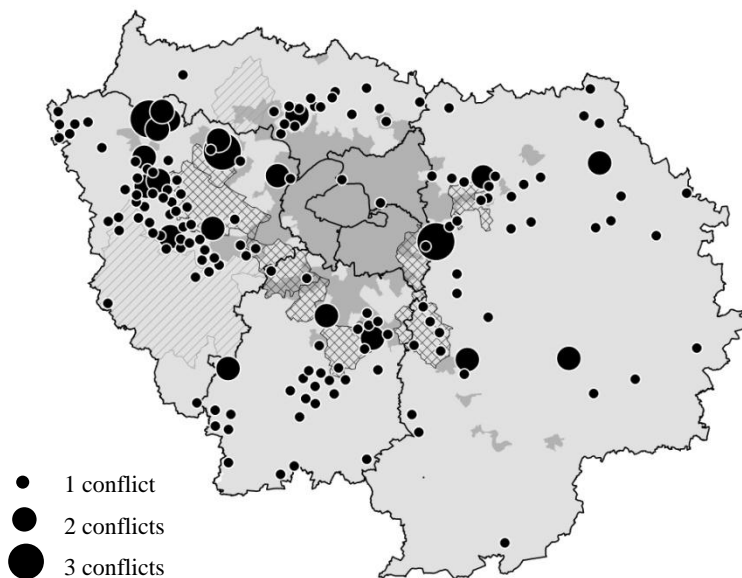
When looking at the geographic distribution of the conflicts, we observe three dynamics. Firstly, there is an almost complete "belt" of conflict land which is located in close proximity to the urban core of Paris agglomeration. Secondly, a large area in the *département* of the *Yvelines*, 30 to 40km to the west of Paris, seems to be wedged in a stranglehold between the *Jouars-Pontchartrain* Valley (Western limit of the Regional Nature Park of the High Valley of the *Chevreuse*) and the town of *Mantes-*

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la-Jolie (Southern limit of the Nature Park of *Vexin*). Finally, there is a series of more sporadic areas – between 40 and 55 km away from Paris - forming a semi-circle from the *département* of *Seine et Marne* in the East, via *Essonne* in the south, to *Yvelines* in the West, within what is called the rural belt of the Paris Region.

2.2. Areas of conflicts and agri-urban program perimeters

The comparison of the conflicts reported in the DRP and of the perimeters of agri-urban programs aims to examine the role they play in the genesis or management of conflicts.



	<i>In the area of conflict (DRP)</i>	<i>Outside the area of conflict (DRP)</i>	<i>Total number of municipalities</i>
<i>AUP perimeter</i>	29 municipalities	142 municipalities	171
<i>Outside the AUP perimeter</i>	105 municipalities	1004 municipalities	1109
<i>Total number of municipalities</i>	134	1146	1280

Figure 3: Spatial overlapping between the municipalities in which conflicts occur and the Agri-Urban Program municipalities - AUP identified in July 2005 by the DRIAF. The values in the table help to quantify the phenomenon.

Sources: Iaurif (2005), *Le Parisien* (2003, 2004, 2005). Based on Darly (2008).

Approximately one fifth of the municipalities affected by a conflict reported in the DRP are located within an Agri-Urban program perimeter, whereas only 13% of the municipalities of the Paris Region are covered by one of these perimeters (see the table in Figure 3). Furthermore, within the perimeters, 17% of the municipalities are affected by a conflict, whereas outside the perimeters, this percentage drops to 9%.

These two results illustrate the fact that the municipalities – in the Paris Region - situated within a Program's perimeter experience proportionately more conflicts than those situated outside those perimeters. However, this finding must be qualified by the fact that the majority of the programs concern areas situated within 30km of Paris (see the map in Figure 3). Thus, if we only consider the districts located within a 30km distance circle around Paris, it is likely that the number of conflicts outside and

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inside the programs’ perimeters are quite similar. What we learn from this quantitative analysis is that the AUP are neither conflict-free nor conflict-generating areas. This result strongly suggests that the impact of the AUP must rather be considered in terms of differentiating the nature of the conflicts depending upon whether they are located within or outside its limits than in terms of a high or low level of number of conflicts.

The object of conflicts located within Agri-Urban Program zones

The cases where a conflict area is completely located inside an AUP borders exist for the “*Plateau de Saclay*” program and the “*Plaine de Vernouillet*”. If we refer to these cases, the conflicts located within the borders of an AUP are mostly related to farmland strategic planning and public infrastructure projects (for road development projects) or to repetitive and illegal non-farming uses of open lands (as dumping or occupation of fallow land by caravans).

The objects of conflicts located in close proximity to a Program zone

The majority of the municipalities experiencing conflicts reported in the DRP are located outside AUP zones. However, the geographical distribution of these municipalities is not entirely independent of the topography of the Program zones. Indeed, some of the municipalities affected by conflicts are situated in the immediate proximity of program zones, 5km at the most from the borders of the program zones.

In these cases, in addition to the contested uses mentioned above and that we found also in the direct proximity of the AUP, the articles mentioned the existence of two highly controversial contested uses: wind turbine installations on farmland and liquid manure spreading by farmers. We can elaborate only two hypotheses in order to explain this phenomenon. The first one is that the governance mechanism of the AUP manages to prevent the tensions and protests linked to these farmland uses by facilitating dialogue and cooperation between local actors. The second one is that the governance mechanism manages to prevent tensions and protests by excluding from the territory the controversial objects and activities, using legal regulations or external communication, leading these to be planned just outside the AUP border. As no wind turbine installations or manure spreading activities have been mentioned or observed during our data collection, we consider the second hypothesis the more realistic.

The nature of the objects of conflicts that take place outside the program zones draws attention to the possible deterring effects of the regulations implemented in the framework of the programs, which can push the actors to relocate their conflict-generating activities to neighbouring territories. However, this hypothesis needs testing and could be a topic of further research.

The objects of conflicts located away from the Program zones.

The third configuration is that of a relative spatial independence between the conflict zones and the agri-urban program zones. This is the case of the conflict zones located at the fringe of the Region, in the *départements* of *Yvelines* and of *Essonne*, or in

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areas with stronger rural characteristics in the *département* of the *Seine et Marne* to the north of the Paris agglomeration.

In these conflict areas, we can find the highest diversity of contested uses. In addition to all the uses contested inside or near the AUP, the protests located in remote rural peri-urban areas concern also heavy industry infrastructures (incinerator) and controversial natural resources extraction installations (quarry, well drilling), the location of which is purposely planned in the lowest density areas.

The main conclusions that can be drawn from this comparative analysis is that if AUP local areas are not conflict free, they tend to deal with a simpler set of protests and oppositions, which are mainly related to farmland long term strategic planning, public infrastructure projects, and unwanted illegal farmland uses.

3. THE CONFLICTUAL DIMENSIONS OF THE “AGRI-URBAN” LOCALITIES DYNAMICS: an insight from the Agri-urban program case studies

The fact that the AUPs seem to share the same set of conflict categories prompts us to formulate the hypothesis that there is a functional relationship between some types of conflicts and the dynamics of these programs. In order to develop this hypothesis, we have analysed the content and the conditions of creation of several of these territorial projects, using the same grid of conflict analysis as that used for those reported in the press, but on the basis of field interviews and document analysis.

The analysis of the archives and of the interviews of actors involved in the agri-urban programs reveals the existence of three main categories of conflicts. This enables us to identify the actors and the most frequently used modes of conflict management.

3.1. From the original "crisis" to the bases of a territorial governance network

The various actors often tell of a moment of local "crisis" that awakens collective concerns for the preservation of the rural landscape. These "crises" are mainly related to the planning of major urban infrastructures by central authorities: the establishment of the CEA (the French nuclear energy agency) in *Saclay*, or the construction of collective apartment buildings on the *Plateau Briard*, in *Marcoussis* in the *Triangle Vert*.

Negotiation between the elected representatives during locational conflicts

Negotiation between the representatives of neighbouring municipalities and of the Regions or State often occurs when such locational conflicts arise. This is when the preservation of rural landscapes is negotiated with the institutional and neighbouring partners. In the case of the *Plateau Briard*, for example, it was definitely in the context of campaigns against several projects of real estate development by the Deposit and Consignment Office – projects related to the development of the neighbouring town, *Créteil* – that the municipalities of *Mandres-les-Roses*, and above all *Périgny-sur-Yerres*, adopted a voluntarist land policy which led, in the mid 1970s, to the creation of two agricultural estates developed by the local authorities.

Inter-municipal cooperation

In parallel to their engagement for land protection through land use planning, the municipality’s representatives are encouraged to present an inter-municipal project if they want to be supported by regional or central state budgets. This inter-municipal coordination can result in these institutions financing a local facilitator who has a role of mediator and information conveyor for all the member municipalities (in the case of the *Triangle Vert*, of the *Plateau Briard*). The institutional structure of the cooperation can be that of a public administration association (as in the case of the *Communauté de Communes* of the *Plateau Briard*) but it can also be a new non-governmental association. In the case of the *Triangle Vert* for example, the programs federates municipalities that belong to three different inter-municipal administrations. But this “inter-municipality” constraint can also explain the failure or incompleteness of some program zones, the limitations of which are related to the fact that old antagonisms between the different territories have not been taken into account. It is the case, for example, of the town of *Villejust* situated within the *Triangle Vert* program zone.

3.2. Local planning conflicts as a farmland speculation regulating process

Besides these "exogenous" crises (triggered by projects of regional or national interest), the effort of preservation of the local rural landscapes is confronted with several conflictual processes that are structural in nature and that have a long term influence on the coordination between the various actors. These processes are of two types: the first pertains to land use planning and development, for some of the projects of regional or national interest are regularly re-put on the agenda; this is for example the case of the *Plateau de Saclay* scientific centre, or of the improvement works on the N19 in the *Plateau Briard*. The second is related to landscape and real estate management.

The conflicts related to development seem to have triggered concerns about local agricultural activities. These events have revealed how land pressure has led to the progressive abandonment of certain types of agricultural activities and have contributed to the implementation of local rules which aim to regulate conflicts between the city and the rural world.

These conflicts, which in most cases develop between the local authorities and estate owners, generally arise when an urban scattering "threshold" has been reached and leads to the massive discontinuation of rural activities on a site. This situation fosters the rapid growth of fallow land and accelerates the deterioration of the landscape, as in the case of the *Plaine de Versailles* or *Vernouillet*, but also of the municipalities of the *Triangle Vert*. The instability of the urban development documents and the insufficiency of the protection of rural land encourage this land speculation by the owners, most of whom no longer work in the farming sector and wait for their land to be declared “building land”.

Because the land in question is inaccessible to the local farmers still in operation, and because it is fragmented and neglected, its enhancement through agricultural activities has little by little been abandoned and been replaced by the expansion of

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abandoned farmland dominated by herbaceous or shrub vegetation. This neglected farmland and the development of a parallel land market create a situation that is conducive to illegal constructions (*Triangle Vert*, *Vernouillet*) which the elected representatives and the residents protest against. The placing of caravans on fallow land by communities of itinerant people – during religious pilgrimages, but also for longer periods of time – is also particularly controversial in *Saclay* and in the *Triangle Vert*.

Preventive planning and coordination of the pre-emptive procedures

All the territories implement legal land control actions. These actions, which are aimed to counteract the phenomenon of land speculation and to assert the agricultural purpose of the land, require a reinforced coordination between the municipal and inter-municipal authorities on the one hand, and the Region or *Département* on the other hand. Thus, pre-emption is a tool that is particularly frequently used, through the right of pre-emption financed by the *Département* (within Sensitive Natural Areas), by the *Région* (within regional perimeters of actions on land) and by the municipalities (often in the framework of watch-keeping agreements with the SAFER⁴). In this regard, the debates that take place in municipal council or inter-municipal meetings concerning urban development documents and the establishment of rural land conservation easements are places where different interests confront one another. The elaboration of documents of urban planning and development on the *Plateau de Saclay* is particularly characteristic of this situation.

3.3. Neighbourhood conflicts and the local construction of the “rural” qualities

The other conflicts and tensions mentioned are related to an incompatibility between neighbouring land uses or to the overlapping of rural and urban activities:

The dumping of rubble or refuse on or in proximity to fallow land has given rise to many actions centred on communications in the *Triangle Vert* (reminding the residents that public construction contractors must give them a certificate that proves they dumped their rubble in an official and legal dumping site) or to coercive actions in *Vernouillet* (eviction of itinerant people, initiation of legal action against an individual or group of individuals for neglecting their farmland);

The presence of certain urban facilities is denounced because of the negative impact they can have on rural products and landscapes. In *Saclay*, the *Triangle Vert*, the *Plateau Briard* and the *Plaine de Versailles*, the question of the inability of the roads to handle agricultural machinery has been one of the main preoccupations. In *Vernouillet* and the *Triangle Vert*, the main source of concern is the facilities for the management of runoff water, which frequently floods the fields situated at the outlet of the drainage ditch. The destruction of the drains and ditches as a result of road improvement works is also a major preoccupation in *Saclay* and *Vernouillet*;

Outdoor recreational land uses are only controversial in the *Triangle Vert* as a result of the damage caused to the farmers' land and of the thefts suffered by the latter. The thefts the rose growers of the *Plateau Briard* are victims of are strongly denounced,

⁴ *Société d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural*, public body which legal objective is to regulate farmland market and to facilitate farmland access to farmers.

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but they cannot be attributed to the recreational activities that take place on the territory.

Finally, the agricultural land uses themselves can generate opposition; for example, the presence of large agricultural vehicles on expressways (*Saclay, Plateau Briard*) can cause congestion and damage the lanes (*Plateau Briard*); some agricultural irrigation (*Triangle Vert, Plateau Briard*) and riverside management practices have been criticised by the public organisation in charge of water resources management (DIREN, syndicate of waterway management). Phytosanitary treatments are also denounced by the elected representatives and the residents because of the nuisance they can cause to people in the neighbourhood and of the lack of appropriate prevention measures.

Few reported instances of legal action except in cases of land occupation by caravan dwellers and of waste dumping

With regards to the tensions related to the illegal settlement of people on non residential land parcels, few tools of conflict resolution are really implemented, apart from the land control tools which are meant to prevent the development of an informal land market. Mediation and eviction by the authorities can be used in cases of unauthorised occupation of fallow land by caravans

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this article has been to help gain a better understanding of the interdependences between conflict processes and the frame of local governance, by examining the example of the Agri-Urban Programs of the Paris Region and their relationship to conflicts over farmland uses. The various data sets utilised (DRP, direct interviews and document analyses) have enabled us to reveal a strong tendency: collective actors explicitly consider agriculture as a means of protection against undesired land uses in peri-urban areas, as well as an activity that contributes to the identity of a territory.

Indeed, the main conflicts are above all related to the use of farmland reserves which competes with other more immediate uses, such as the construction of housing or of various types of infrastructures, and the development of undesired or unlawful activities within zones that are little or not exploited for sustainable agricultural purposes.

The spatial relationship between the zones of conflict reported by the press and the geography of the AUP zones can be interpreted according to two analytical approaches:

- The first consists in analysing the structural link between the social interactions resulting from conflictual processes and the implementation of local governance mechanisms. In the context of this reflection, we focus more particularly on cases where the zone of conflict reported in the press has a strong spatial relationship with the program zone. The conflicts reported in the press and those mentioned in the framework of the elaboration of the program are very similar. The AUP mechanism is, then, less a tool of conflict resolution than a framework of regulation where some conflicts are used as a possible and necessary farmland

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preservation procedure (conflicts still occur but the position of the actors as well as the opposition procedures are clarified).

- The second approach focuses on the dynamics of territorial specialisation within the peri-urban belt, illustrated in our case by the characteristics of the conflicts whether they are located or not in a program zone. Some objects of conflict are similar (real estate development) but in most cases they are different in nature (for example, the establishment of wind turbines or spreading authorisations). In these cases, one can wonder whether the institutional process of implementation of the AUP might not also be a factor contributing to the territorial exclusion of the objects at the origin of the conflicts, thereby concentrating the projects, and therefore the related tensions and conflicts, within the zones that are "outside the program zones". This hypothesis naturally needs to be tested more specifically, by taking into account the specificities of the conflicts mentioned above, and by comparing the conflict zones with perimeters of another mechanism of rural land use management, that of the four Regional Natural Parks of the Paris region, located more specifically within the peri-urban rural belt of the region.

Table 1 Brief description of the five agri-urban programs studied

Agri-urban program name and location	State of the program in 2007 (when the interviews where held)
The <i>Plaine de Versailles</i> , twenty one municipalities located in the north-east of the <i>Yvelines</i> , some of which involve a heritage site.	A heritage charter, signed by all the partners involved at the end of 2006, identifies six main areas of actions which the actors commit to promote
The <i>Triangle Vert Association</i> , an area composed of five municipalities in West <i>Essonne</i> .	The municipalities finance, on the basis of a local charter, an association dedicated to the management of the rural spaces in the territory
The <i>Plateau Briard</i> , comprising six municipalities grouped into an inter-municipal partnership.	A charter was signed by the farmers and the different institutional partners (Region, <i>département</i> , Chamber of Agriculture, Community of municipalities), a program of action is financed, a part-time local facilitator is provided by the community of municipalities.
The <i>Vernouillet</i> zone, in the Valley of the <i>Seine Aval</i> .	The first charter of agricultural development was signed in 2000. A program of action, as well as the validation of a Protected Rural Zone, have been implemented in <i>Vernouillet</i> , which is the facilitator of the project.
The <i>Plateau de Saclay</i> , comprising sixteen municipalities located on the northern edge of the <i>départements</i> of <i>Essonne</i> and <i>Yvelines</i>	A heritage charter was in its project phase in 2005. The recent declaration of implementation of a National Interest Operation zone (OIN) makes the process increasingly uncertain despite the still active mobilisation of the local actors

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