



# From crisis to utopia: crafting new public–private articulation at territorial level to design sustainable food systems

Patrick Caron<sup>1</sup>

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Increasingly numerous authors and evidence call for an urgent and profound transformation of food systems (Caron et al. 2018). Despite the remarkable and necessary increase of food availability in a context of intense demographic transition, food insecurity has not been eradicated, with a persistent number of persons suffering from undernutrition while obesity spreads dramatically in all countries. In addition, diets (Willett et al. 2019) and food systems stand at the heart of a nexus that links nutrition, health, the viability of ecosystems, climate change, political stability and social justice, and can be considered a lever to address the whole 2030 Agenda. Yet, although we have been claiming for 30 years "business as usual is not an option", we continue performing as usual and this procrastination may be explained by conflict of interests, increasing asymmetries and the difficulty to enforce right based approaches and agreements (HLPE 2017).

The world will change, as a result of the systemic crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Change is not taking place since we wisely decided to do so and to craft a sustainable world, but under an unexpected mobility constraint. Most of us rightly focus on the best way to cope with the current nightmare. The priority for mitigating its impact calls for safety nets for the most vulnerable and for preventing the breaking risk of supply chains and associated speculation.

What was unthinkable and taboo yesterday is becoming a reality and, beyond such a drama, a new architecture of food systems will emerge. New connections between the environment, health and the food sectors are already made (Morand et al. 2016). New behaviors and norms will affect

consumption and international exchanges rules and patterns. The lock-in of frontiers, supply disruptions and global trade dysregulation will contradict the governance doctrine which has prevailed for the last decades to ensure food supply. The unquestioned faith in the trade capacity to ensure supply will give way to sovereignty, a forgotten approach at the national level and left to promote local alternative to globalization. As local processes will undoubtedly gain traction, organizing the right balance between local, national and international supplies will be challenging, in order to ensure access to healthy food everywhere, at all moments, at an affordable price, while limiting loss and waste and preventing global overproduction and related impact on the environment. Opposing scales is not appropriate, as processes taking place at each of them are strongly articulated. National and international contexts and regulations should not be omitted as they influence the potential of local initiatives to serve as models and to structure in return national action and global frameworks.

Along with the concentration in agricultural value chains and States' dispossession of part of their power to the benefit of large enterprises and social networks, claims grow for the private sector to play an important role in transitions (HLPE 2018). This lead Biénabe et al. (2017) to urge public and private actors to invent regulations in agri-chain. Time has come to do so, providing that social and greenwashing are avoided. In innovatively articulating long and short distance supply chains, territory will play a key role. This is the level at which consistency and arbitration between economic, social and ecological dimensions of all sectors may be politically achieved through inclusive process. Commons offer an asset (Ostrom 1995) and the design of common projects a way between State and market for addressing future challenges. Territory can be considered an alternative to embed and anchor economic dynamics into political regulation. Territorial development may contribute to reframing public action and policies at all levels and open an avenue to transform the world (Caron et al. 2017).

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✉ Patrick Caron  
patrick.caron@cirad.fr

<sup>1</sup> University of Montpellier, Cirad, ART-DEV, Montpellier, France

The risk exists to forget about the crisis and continue until the next one as if nothing happened. It is amplified by the irreducible dualism which has taken place between those who deny sustainability concerns and oppose any change and those who advocate for a revolution to prevent an announced collapse. All are convinced they defend the general interest. Strategies to delegitimize opponents of all sides, as well as doubt or certainty selling behaviors will not make transformation easy. All knowledge resources will be required as well as reshaping the role of technology to move beyond binary opposites between positivism versus reject stances.

As we are facing a crossroad for better or worse, moving forward calls for mediation, with special focus on transcending lock-in and strengthening collective intelligence at all scales. This implies moving beyond the fragmentation of expertise, to confront convergences and divergences and to explore possible sustainable futures. Crisis is the right time to be proactive rather than reactive, to build new paradigms and craft an utopia based on a renaissance of the articulation between collective locally driven processes and international cooperation.

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**Patrick Caron** Vice President for International Affairs, University of Montpellier, France, Patrick Caron holds a PhD in development geography. He has been the Director-General for research and strategy of CIRAD from 2010 to 2016. He chaired the High Level Panel of Experts of the UN Committee on world Food Security (HLPE/CFS) from 2015 to 2019.