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Exploring farm-to-restaurant relations and the potential of a local food hub: A case study in the city-region of Groningen, the Netherlands

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Abstract

Urban restaurants are increasingly putting local food on the menu. How do farm-to-restaurant relations fit into the local food movement, and how can these collaborations be supported by food policies and programmes of urban governments? Through a qualitative case study in the city-region of Groningen (The Netherlands), this article explores the values urban restaurants, local food suppliers and urban governments attribute to local food, the trust and barriers these actors experience in their collaborations, and their views on the municipality's preliminary plans for a local food hub. In line with the concepts of reflexive localism and values-based territorial food networks, and taking into account the perspectives, benefits, pitfalls and conditions uncovered in this study, a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub would need to (1) embrace the complex and relational nature of place, (2) foster reciprocal and practical partnerships, (3) negotiate reflexive and values-based goals and (4) broker between and unburden the involved parties.

KEYWORDS
farm-to-restaurant relations, food hubs, local food systems, reflexive localism, trust, urban governments

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the 21st century, Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999, 2000) and Campbell (2004) noticed how food systems were largely ignored by urban planning scholars and practitioners and initiated a call for more visibility and action. Yet, the 'hidden' history of food system planning dates back hundreds, if not thousands of years ago (Vitiello & Brinkley, 2014). Thinking about how cities are fed and how cities are and have been shaped by food is fascinating and daunting at once. It is a relationship that you cannot unsee once you realise it is there as Steel describes in 'Hungry City' (Steel, 2008) and more recently in 'Sitopia' (Steel, 2020). In her books, the architect and writer (who also plays a small guest role in the case study discussed in this article) lays bare the reliance of cities on land, resources and people elsewhere to feed themselves. Through urbanisation, industrialisation and international trade, urban citizens have become increasingly alienated from the origins of the food they consume (Vitiello & Brinkley, 2014). Urban diets have dynamically evolved from food from somewhere to food from everywhere to food from nowhere (Campbell, 2009; McMichael, 2009), with serious repercussions in terms of ecological sustainability, animal welfare, farmer appreciation, workers' rights and public health.

Now that these social, economic and environmental consequences are becoming more known and increasingly visible, cities seem to be getting 'hungry' for change. More and more urban initiatives, platforms and organisations are adopting the notion of short food supply chains as a means to support the local economy, reconnect producers and consumers, advance sustainable development and bridge the urban-rural divide (Jarosz, 2008; Schmutz et al., 2018; Vittersø et al., 2019). Urban governments and planners are stimulating and supporting these initiatives by developing food policies, food councils, food charters, food procurement programmes and food hubs (Buchan & Cloutier, 2015; Buchan et al., 2019; Sonnino, 2016). Crivits et al. (2016) investigate, through a case study in the city of Ghent in Belgium, how local governments can become facilitators, mediators and innovators in sustainable development by implementing local food strategies and fostering democratic participation, bottom-up involvement and deliberative processes. Sonnino (2009) adds that urban municipalities need to collaborate with urban, peri-urban and rural stakeholders to move local food systems forward.

Next to urban and rural citizens, farmers, civil society initiatives and relevant organisations, this article advocates that restaurant chefs and managers would be relevant stakeholders for urban governments to involve in their local food system advancement efforts, for they can form bridges between urban and rural, and act as change- and tastemakers by introducing and promoting regional products and food traditions to their staff and clientele (Aaltojärvi et al., 2018; Broadway, 2015; Duram & Cawley, 2012; Inwood et al., 2009; Matta, 2018; Nelson et al., 2017; Pereira et al., 2019; Pesci & Brinkley, 2021; Trivette, 2018). Several studies have outlined how restaurants are increasingly showcasing local food products and dishes to boost the region's identity and attract tourists, build social and reciprocal relations in their local community, engage in environmental and political debates and movements or simply to keep up with or capitalise on the latest gastronomic trends (e.g., Bacig & Young, 2019; Bessière, 1998; Matta, 2018; Miele & Murdoch, 2002; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018; Pesci & Brinkley, 2021; Sharma et al., 2014; Sims, 2010; Tellstrom et al., 2005). Inwood et al. (2009) state that the (potential) role of chefs and restaurants in the local food movement is increasingly highlighted and appreciated but is not yet well understood and argue for more studies on the intersection of the local food movement and the culinary community.

Therefore, this article aims to investigate, through a case study, the relations between and experiences of the different stakeholders involved in farm-to-restaurant relations and explore how urban governments can support *values-based territorial food networks* (Nemes et al. 2023) between

restaurants and local food suppliers. The article concludes with a set of reflexive directions relevant to the case study along with other municipalities and stakeholders that would be interested in setting up a farm-to-restaurant-oriented local food hub. Academically, it contributes to and builds a bridge between food systems planning and food policy literature and food service and food value chain literature.

Desk research, interviews and a focus group were conducted in the city-region of Groningen, situated in the north of The Netherlands. Four research questions (RQs) have been formulated to guide this inquiry: (RQ1) Considering that farm-to-restaurant relations are territorial and cultural, how do urban restaurants and local food suppliers interpret local food, and what aspects do they consider when selling or buying locally? (RQ2) Considering that farm-to-restaurant relations are built on social relations and trust, how do urban restaurants and local food suppliers experience trust and reciprocity in the farm-to-restaurant relations they are involved in? (RQ3) Considering that farm-to-restaurant relations are strategic and may serve divergent interests, what barriers do urban restaurants and local food suppliers experience in establishing and maintaining farm-to-restaurant relations? Finally, (RQ4) considering that farm-to-restaurant relations may benefit from intermediation and support and urban governments are increasingly stepping up to the plate, how do urban government officials, urban restaurant chefs and managers, and local food suppliers construct and value the role of the municipality and the potential of a local food hub to support farm-to-restaurant relations?

The article is structured as follows. The Background section dives into the relevant literature and outlines four aspects to consider when reviewing farm-to-restaurant relations as local food system advancement efforts (laying the groundwork for the RQs as illustrated above). Subsequently, in the Methodology section, attention is given to the case study, the city of Groningen and its surrounding rural region, and the methodological design is outlined and justified. The Results section encompasses an overview of the outcomes of the empirical analysis structured according to the four RQs. Finally, the Discussion and Conclusion sections reflect on how the main findings contribute to the relevant literature and provide suggestions for future research and policy directions.

BACKGROUND

Throughout this article, the perspectives, results and recommendations will be critically embedded within the scholarship of reflexive localism (e.g., Born & Purcell, 2006; Cleveland et al., 2015; Dupuis & Goodman, 2005; Feagan, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2017; Levkoe, 2011; Mount, 2012). These are studies that acknowledge the complex, imperfect and relational reality of alternative food networks, local food movements and short food supply chains by highlighting their potential as well as their pitfalls. Below, I outline four considerations to take into account when 'reflexively' zooming in on farm-to-restaurant relations.

Farm-to-restaurant relations are territorial and cultural

Scholars have encountered that locality in the context of food is a highly ambiguous and stretchable concept that resists precise definition (Enthoven & Van den Broeck, 2021). Trivette (2015, p. 477) states that '(w)hile defining local must include some understanding of the role of location and proximity, local food also takes on a cultural meaning, both in terms of how particular

locations create a sense of place and meaning, and also in terms of the quality of the relationship between participants'. RQ1 explores how chefs and their suppliers view and operationalise local food and what values and principles are important for them when it comes to their food choices and collaborations. For instance, preserving regional gastronomy and culinary heritage can be of interest to restaurant chefs and managers, especially when they are located in touristic regions (Bessière, 1998; Broadway, 2015; Miele & Murdoch, 2002; Murphy & Smith, 2009; Tellstrom et al., 2005). Furthermore, quality, production standards, the uniqueness of the product, distance travelled, supporting local producers and personal communication have been found to play a role in chefs' motivations to source locally (Curtis & Cowee, 2009; Duram & Cawley, 2012; Inwood et al., 2009).

When operationalising local food, one should be attentive to the local trap (Born & Purcell, 2006). The local trap denotes the assumption that local is inherently good. In their article, Born and Purcell (2006) refute arguments of local being *de facto* more ecologically sustainable, socially and economically just or fresh and healthy than food produced through other scalar strategies. One cannot assume that social, environmental or ethical issues, which are commonly associated with global industrial food systems, instantly disappear when merely altering the scale of operations (Cleveland et al., 2015; Young, 2021). Born and Purcell (2006) explain that scale is socially constructed and represents the agendas, ideological investments and material practices of those who employ scale as a strategy to achieve their goals. In other words, chefs and suppliers involved in farm-to-restaurant relations should not focus on localisation as a sole aim; they also need to make sure that their interpretations, values, methods and goals are aligned to some extent.

Farm-to-restaurant relations are built on social relations and trust

Various authors argue that local food systems stand or fall by the strength of social capital among its actors (e.g., Bauermeister, 2016; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2012; Trivette, 2018). Putnam (1995, p. 67) defines social capital as referring 'to features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit'. Restaurant and local food suppliers need to form coalitions and partnerships and engage in multiple forms of interaction and knowledge exchange in order to overcome logistical barriers, reach new customers and instigate or take part in collective action and social movements (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018). According to Nelson et al. (2017), keys to success within the subculture of 'locavore' chefs are versatility and flexibility *vis-à-vis* the products that enter their kitchens, strong and supportive relationships with local producers and giving back to the local community. Hinrichs (2000) warns about overly sentimental and sanguine representations of face-to-face ties in direct agricultural markets; price still matters, and self-interest may be at play in local transactions. Consequently, embeddedness needs to be joined by notions of marketness and instrumentalism to gain a nuanced understanding of values-based territorial food networks.

Thorsøe and Kjeldsen (2016) and Roy et al. (2017) note that local food networks often involve fewer formal contractual obligations than conventional food partnerships and rely more on personal interaction, common values, loyalty and long-term commitments, in other words trust. This relationship allows consumers to trace the origin of their food and engage in a values-based dialogue, and producers to feel esteemed as individuals and take risks. RQ2 investigates how restaurants and their suppliers experience trust and reciprocity in the farm-to-restaurant relations they are involved in. Trivette (2017), who studied trust and reciprocity in farm-to-retail relations (sample also included restaurant actors), distinguishes three mechanisms through which

trustworthiness develops within local food systems: (1) reliable, positive relationships through clear communication, transparency and consistency; (2) demonstrations of goodwill towards one another through mutual accommodation of each other's needs; and (3) recognition of the importance of what others bring to the relationship based on a shared understanding of the value of locally oriented food. These mechanisms are being applied and reflected upon in the results and discussion sections.

Farm-to-restaurant relations are strategic and may serve divergent interests

What is already hinted at in the previous two points is that parties involved in local food system advancement efforts can have different and sometimes conflicting interests. In previous literature on farm-to-restaurants relations, several barriers have been put forth that hinder either restaurants or suppliers to engage in local collaborations. Obstacles for restaurants include the willingness of producers to meet special requirements, inadequate supply, inconsistent quality, lack of convenience, lack of information and the prices that consumers are willing to pay (Curtis & Cowee, 2009; Duram & Cawley, 2012; Inwood et al., 2009). For suppliers, Sharma et al. (2012) write, it is not always economically viable to sell to restaurants, as it costs time to cater to the specific needs of restaurants, while the purchases are relatively small. The authors also write that growers expressed a need for increased communication and interaction with restaurant buyers. RQ3 looks into some of the frustrations held by the participants in the case study of Groningen.

The critique of the local trap is also relevant here because when interests and strategies of food chain actors remain hidden, buying local may not always have the desired effect (e.g., in terms of animal welfare, fair payment of workers, soil health, etc.). If restaurants truly want to make a positive impact through the products they are sourcing, they need to examine whether the product and the producer's methods and vision are aligned with their values and demands. Conversely, suppliers need to be aware that their name is not just used for *localwashing* a restaurant's menu (Cleveland et al., 2015; Hughes & Boys, 2015).

Farm-to-restaurant relations may benefit from intermediation and support

Besides direct sales from farms, it is common for restaurants to rely on the services of intermediaries, for example, butchers, foragers or wholesale distributors, for sourcing their local food products (Duram & Cawley, 2012; Inwood et al., 2009; Pesci & Brinkley, 2021; Roy et al., 2019; Trivette, 2018). Such intermediary parties are vital stakeholders, as they help to unburden both restaurants and producers by saving them time (and often costs), bringing in new buyers or suppliers and carrying part of the risks. Therefore, these actors are also included in the local food supplier sample in the case study presented in this article. As stated in the introduction, municipalities are increasingly stepping up to the plate when it comes to advancing sustainable food systems. However, few studies or examples come to mind in which chefs are actively engaged in or supported by municipal food policies. Nelson et al. (2017), Bloom and Hinrichs (2010) and Paciarotti and Torregiani (2018) argue that local governments that want to support local food restaurants need to facilitate targeted development of production and distribution services and networks. Such services and

networks could, for example, take the shape of a local food hub, an idea that the municipality of Groningen was exploring at the time of data collection.

Local food hubs serve as coordinating facilities set up by regional food actors who join hands for the production, aggregation, storage, processing, distribution and/or marketing of local agricultural products and are built on a set of values shared by all members involved (Avetisyan & Brent Ross, 2019; Berti & Mulligan, 2016; Blay-Palmer et al., 2019; Brislen, 2018; Cleveland et al., 2014; Horst et al., 2011; Levkoe et al., 2018). Food hubs are targeted at lowering entry barriers, creating joint assembly points and improving infrastructure to expand regional food markets. Food hubs that have been studied in previous literature either link regional producers with a broad range of commercial and institutional players—including hospitals, schools, company canteens, and sometimes also restaurants—or are directly targeting citizens, households or specific communities (e.g., low-income groups, migrants or students; for typologies see Berti & Mulligan, 2016; Horst et al., 2011). Blay-Palmer et al. (2019), who investigated the benefits and challenges of local food hubs in Ontario, point out the financial precariousness of many operations in their sample. Food hub innovators need access to capital in order to expand and build vibrant and sustainable initiatives and infrastructures that benefit local communities. The authors describe various examples of how governments can provide targeted financial and policy support to enable local sustainable food systems and write that '(t)he connection between policy-based support and practical needs is central to achieving lasting results' (Blay-Palmer et al., 2019).

The needs and experiences of restaurants involved in food hubs have, however, received little scholarly attention (although I do recommend to read and will in the discussion come back to the articles of Furman & Papavasiliou, 2018; Givens & Dunning, 2019; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018; Pesci & Brinkley, 2021). This study cannot fully address this gap either because the food hub plans of the municipality of Groningen had not been formalised, communicated nor executed yet when the interviews were conducted. However, the idea felt promising and worth exploring further at the time, especially with the often-overlooked target group of restaurants in mind. In order to investigate if and how a municipality-initiated food hub could support farm-to-restaurant relations, I introduced my participants to the concept of a food hub near the end of the interview, told them the municipality was considering to set up such a network in Groningen and asked them about their views, wishes and ideas (RQ4). Based on their answers and the findings of the other RQs, the discussion outlines a set of recommendations for Groningen and other municipalities and farm-to-restaurant stakeholders that are thinking about setting up a food hub or similar type of values-based territorial food network.

METHODOLOGY

Case study

Groningen is a medium-sized city (approximately 230,000 inhabitants) situated in the north of The Netherlands. Because of its positioning in the middle of three predominantly rural provinces (Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen), which comprise a wide variety of soil and landscape types and sustain a range of agricultural activities, and its relative proximity to the Wadden Sea area, the city's inhabitants and visitors are able to enjoy a wide variety of local food products. Well-known products and food traditions of Groningen are, among others, potatoes, mustard, dried sausage and spiced cake.

In 2010, the municipality invited Carolyn Steel to translate the vision of her first book (Steel, 2008) to the local context of the cities of Groningen and Assen and their surrounding countryside. This resulted in the inspiration document 'FOODTOPIA: Towards a regional food vision' (Steel, 2010). Around the same time, Groningen was proclaimed '*Hoofdstad van de Smaak*' (Capital of Taste). It gave the city and its region the impetus to raise its profile in relation to food. Other activities included the establishment of a monthly local-products-only market, called the '*Ommelander Markt*' (Hinterland Market), the drawing up of a municipal food vision under the name '*Groningen groeit gezond*' (Groningen grows healthy) in 2012 (Municipality of Groningen, 2012), and several other projects. Groningen is a student city and has a vibrant restaurant and bar scene. Restaurants in the city are increasingly highlighting local food products on their menus but to varying degrees. It is confirmed in the interviews that at that time (spring 2018), restaurants were either sourcing their ingredients directly from the producers or through wholesalers. There was no sign of any local food collaborations with each other or with the municipality yet.

At the time of data collection, spring 2018, the municipality of Groningen was involved in three programmes with a connection to local food: (1) City Deal '*Voedsel op de Stedelijke Agenda*' (Food on the Urban Agenda), a Dutch exchange platform around local food policies; (2) Green Deal '*Verduurzaming Voedselconsumptie*' (Making Food Consumption More Sustainable) in collaboration with 'Dutch Cuisine', a partnership and label focused on changing the eating pattern of the Dutch through restaurants, retail and education; and (3) 'REFRAME: Towards a regional food frame', an international research project on shortening food supply chains and improving food system employment opportunities. As part of REFRAME, the municipality of Groningen has been exploring possibilities for creating a local food hub network.

The city-region of Groningen hence constitutes a pioneering case study in the field of local food systems and urban food governance that can help to illustrate the theoretical notions and considerations described above and to identify opportunities, bottlenecks and suggestions for improvement. Moreover, it is interesting to consider why restaurants do not yet seem to be involved in the municipality's food policies and programmes.

Research design

This study employs a qualitative approach in order to explore the views and experiences of urban government officials, urban restaurant chefs and managers, and local farmers, producers and distributors with regard to promoting local food products in an urban environment. The data collection consisted of three consecutive stages:

Restaurant interviews

Based on an extensive Internet search of independent (i.e., non-chain) restaurants based in the city of Groningen, 22 restaurants were identified that explicitly promote their sourcing of local food on their websites, menus (if provided on website) and/or social media pages (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). An email was sent to the restaurant owner(s), manager(s) and/or chef(s) of these restaurants, inviting them to participate in an interview of approximately 45 min. Due to a lack of responses to these emails (and reminder emails), the author decided to visit the restaurants to recruit the restaurant participants in person. Eight restaurants agreed to participate in an interview (see Table 1). The interviews were conducted over the course of May 2018. The interview

TABLE 1 Restaurant interview participants

#	Sex	Position	Restaurant information (size, type of services, opening times, price indication)
R1	Female	All	Small-sized, sit-down and take-away, 12:00–6:00 PM, €
R2	Male	All	Medium-sized, sit-down, delivery and take-away, 1:00–9:00 PM, €€
R3	Male	All	Small-sized, sit-down, 6:00 PM–12:00 AM, €€€
R4	Male	Manager	Large-sized, sit-down, 7:30–9:30 PM, €€€€
R5	Male	Owner	Large-sized, sit-down, 11:00 AM–11:00 PM, €€
R6	Female	All	Medium-sized, sit-down, 10:00 AM–10:00 PM, €€€
R7	Male	All	Small-sized, sit-down, 5:00–11:00 PM, €€€
R8	Male	Chef	Medium-sized, sit-down, 3:00–11:00 PM, €€€

guide largely followed the RQs formulated in the introduction, informed by relevant academic literature and desk research on the 22 restaurants. Halfway through the interview, a list was made together with the participant of the local suppliers from whom the restaurant regularly sourced local food products, and the participant was asked to answer a set of questions about each of these relations.

Supplier interviews

Ten participants were purposefully selected from the list of local food suppliers that were mentioned in the restaurant interviews (38 in total), in order to gather a diverse sample in terms of types of products (e.g., vegetables, meat, dairy or a wide range of products) and roles in the food chain (e.g., farmer, manufacturer, distributor or multiple roles in one). One supplier declined the request because of the peak season of their produce. Consequently, nine supplier interviews were conducted in the first two weeks of June 2018 (see Table 2). The topics discussed were similar to the interview guide of the restaurant interviews (i.e., based on the four RQs) but formulated to fit the perspective of the restaurant supplier. The interviews varied in time, tone and setting.

Municipality focus group

Finally, at the end of June 2018, after the interviews had been transcribed and studied, the data collection was concluded by facilitating a focus group with four municipal officials involved in food policies and programmes in Groningen (see Table 3). This had three objectives: First, to gain insight into the municipality's current and planned activities related to and motives for promoting local food products. Second, to better understand how the municipality views its own role in relation to other stakeholders in the local food system. Third, to provide the municipality with direct input from urban restaurants and local food suppliers and other initial insights from the conducted study.

The interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded and transcribed. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The transcripts were coded in NVivo using an initial coding structure of parent nodes based on the research questions, subdivided into child nodes based on the questions and themes used in the interview guide. Whenever

TABLE 2   Supplier interview participants

#	Sex	Role in food supply chain	Type of products	Mentioned by # restaurant participants
S1	Female	Small-scale CSA farmer and market vendor	Vegetables	2
S2	Male	Regional independent catering wholesaler	Variety of products (mainly local)	2
S3	Female	Regional butcher, market vendor and distributor	Meat	3
S4[1]	Male	Small-scale manufacturer and entrepreneur	Coffee	1
S5[1]	Male	regional distributor	Fruit and vegetables	1
S6	Male	Small-scale butcher, caterer and shop-owner	Venison	2
S7	Male	Regional independent manufacturer and distributor	Fish	2
S8	Male	Small-scale farmer and market vendor	Meat and cheese	1
S9	Male	International chain catering wholesaler	Variety of products (only small share local)	6

[1]The interviews of S4 and S5 could not be fully transcribed because of issues with the recordings; the author did have notes of both interviews.

TABLE 3   Municipality focus group participants

#	Sex	Position
M1	Female	Policy officer, involved in REFRAME and City Deal
M2	Female	Policy officer, involved in Municipal Food Vision and Fairtrade Municipality
M3	Female	Account manager hotels, restaurants and cafes ('*horeca*' in Dutch)
M4	Female	Account manager healthy ageing

notable or recurring topics were discussed that did not fit any of the existing nodes, I created new nodes or added memos. During the coding process, I have reorganised and fine-tuned the codes several times, moving back and forth between the data and theory. Critical or unexpected remarks of participants were carefully examined, and preliminary findings were discussed with peers and participants. I also frequently made use of tables to create summaries of interviews or specific topics and to develop an overview of the external communication material (e.g., menus, flyers and webpages). All conversations were held in Dutch, so the quotes and paraphrases I refer to in the Results section have been translated. I purposefully use many quotes in order to accurately represent the experiences of the participants, giving the reader a glimpse of the words and stories behind the findings I describe in the accompanying paragraphs. As such, the results provide a predominantly descriptive and analytical account of the qualitative data, whereas the discussion contains my reflective and theoretical remarks.

RESULTS

RQ1: Interpretations and criteria

One of the first questions in all interviews concerned the participant's conception of local, that is, when the participant considers a food product to be a local food product. This triggered various answers. Most participants—restaurant, supplier and municipality interviewees—give some sort of geographical demarcation, such as the province of Groningen, the Northern provinces or a kilometre range, ranging from 20 to 80 km. Others feel that local is a stretchable concept, something that should be agreed upon and/or depends on the context or the product. S6, who gets his wild boar from Germany, for example, gives the following explanation of the meaning of local depending on the product:

> Wild boar, we do not have here of course. So you need to find the best, from as nearby as possible. If you buy a bottle of wine–well Dutch wine is undrinkable of course–so you buy wine from France, or Germany, or Austria, or Spain, Italy. That is nearby, relatively nearby for a bottle of wine. But not from Australia or Chili, that is ridiculous, that does not make sense at all. Let them drink that themselves. (S6)

Besides geographical demarcations, the two most common associations with local (mentioned by among others S4, S6, S9 R3, R4 and R7) are that farming or production activities need to be small-scale and/or include some type of artisanal craftsmanship. So for these participants, products from large industrial factories or fields would not count as local, even if they are produced nearby.

Almost all restaurant interviewees stress that quality is their number one criterion when sourcing products. Some do indicate that local products are not necessarily of better quality than products produced elsewhere, for example, R6: 'It is nice that we get our tomatoes from the province of Friesland, but they are not as tasty as tomatoes from Spain of course'. They rather link taste and quality to the production conditions or methods used (e.g., organic) and the love and attention devoted to the product. This indicates that the restaurant chefs and managers seem to be, at least to a certain extent, aware of the local trap (Born & Purcell, 2006). This awareness is also illustrated in the words of R3: 'Stating that a piece of meat is from a Groningen meadow cow does not say anything about whether it is good meat. [. . .] If a cow is not raised well, or slaughtered well, if the animal has experienced stress, the meat will not be of good quality'. Two participants also mention that local products are actually often less efficient regarding production and transport than more mass-produced products from further away. However, even with this knowledge, it just 'feels' better for them to source products from nearby. Most participants associate reducing food miles with maintaining a low carbon footprint, working with seasonal products and respecting animal welfare. Besides these criteria—quality, production methods and food miles—additional attention is often paid to price.

The restaurant participants also mention reasons for buying local products that are of a more relational nature, for example, supporting the local economy. Key words here are *'gunnen'* (a Dutch verb that does not have a direct English translation; it denotes wishing, allowing or granting someone something because you feel he/she deserves it) and reciprocity, which is nicely illustrated by the quotes of participants R5, 'What goes around comes around I always say', and R4, 'that you help each other with earning money, building a name, generating buzz'.

Furthermore, the restaurant participants truly appreciated the possibility of having personal contact with and receiving tailor-made services from local suppliers (see also next section). It becomes clear from the interviews that restaurants and suppliers need to communicate with each other a lot. R4 explains how this interaction also creates transparency: 'Transparency increases as something is more local, it becomes more tangible because you can visit the place'. R4 notes that when something is local, he is better able to create a bond with and tell something about the product and why it is made. Many restaurant participants mention that being able to tell the story behind a product is something they, and their customers, truly appreciate and that this is also a reason for them to use local products. Surprisingly, customers are not mentioned that often by the chefs. Only three participants explicitly admit that consumer demand for local food products was an important reason for them to promote their use of local food on their web pages and menus. Finally, some restaurants like serving dishes that are typical for the region, while others want to play with traditions by serving local dishes with a twist. Sticking to your regional cuisine feels restrictive, some participants mentioned. This is visible in the menus of the restaurants that were interviewed, which often include many different culinary influences.

The distributors and wholesalers who were interviewed also mention that it is important for them to support regional farmers because many small farms are struggling to survive economically. Participant S9, for example, is motivated by the idea that money that is spent in the region also stays in the region. Additionally, growing consumer demand for local products is an important incentive for distributors and wholesalers to localise their offers. The interviewed farmers and producers seem more internally motivated; they are not interested in selling their products outside or in other parts of The Netherlands; they purposefully sell locally to reduce food miles and be able to convey their message and vision, for example, S1: 'People have asked me if I wanted to sell my vegetables at the Noordermarkt in Amsterdam, but then I feel that is just too far; then it is not local anymore'.

RQ2: Trust and reciprocity

The three mechanisms through which trust develops, distinguished by Trivette (2017), guide the analysis of RQ2. These mechanisms were not explicitly discussed with the participants. They were asked whether they felt there was a relationship of trust with the local suppliers they had listed and what aspects contributed to or hampered these trust relations. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of Trivette (2017) came up rather naturally.

Positive relations

Aspects of the first mechanism—to establish reliable, positive relationships through clear communication, transparency and consistency—are also often mentioned first. For many of the participants, trust starts with honouring agreements and sustaining constant orders and deliveries; the other party first needs to demonstrate being a reliable partner. As trust increases, partners seem to accept more from each other and act less by the book. For example, R6 mentions: 'Sometimes someone forgets the debit card and then they just say, ah, you can pay the next time'. For R7, reliability has even reached the point where he entrusts two of his local suppliers with the key of his restaurant. The participants especially stress the informal part; through face-to-face visits,

restaurant and supplier actors get to know each other, each other's employees, or even family members. Even the deliverers become acquaintances, as stressed by S2: 'We do not work with parcel deliverers. We work with chauffeurs. Nine out of ten times our client is visited by the same driver. He knows you through and through, at the door, and this creates a bond'. Because of these informal relations, the participants explained that they would never hesitate to call or inform somebody when they are experiencing problems.

An interesting case is the business of S5. With no website or traceable email address, the small wholesaler's PR relies solely upon phone calls, face-to-face contact during deliveries and word-of-mouth of chefs. This, he explains, is only possible because of his long-standing and loyal client relations. As local farms and businesses often heavily rely on weather conditions, seasons and/or market developments, loyalty is very important for them. R2 acknowledges this: 'I am in for durable relationships. For ten cents less, I will not at once go to somebody else'. R4 agrees that trust grows with time; however, he feels it is also difficult to establish long-term relations with local suppliers, for the produce of small businesses and farms is often limited, temporary or unpredictable. S2 notes that many restaurants, even highly renowned ones, cheat (an interesting and recurring metaphor) on their local supplier when a cheaper deal is offered somewhere else.

Demonstrations of goodwill

The second mechanism—to demonstrate goodwill towards one another through mutual accommodation of each other's needs—is visible within the personalised services and agreements that exist between restaurants and local suppliers. A nice example is given by R1: 'He knows that it doesn't matter for me if the asparagus is broken and then he has a cheaper batch in the back for me so I can make asparagus soup early in the season'. Restaurant participants appreciate the spontaneity and tailor-made services of local suppliers as opposed to the more standardised services large wholesalers offer. They often point out that their local partners know exactly how they like their products and proactively act upon this knowledge as seen in the example of the broken asparagus. R6 gives another example of a supplier demonstrating goodwill: 'At first, we went there to pick up our produce, but then they said, we can also deliver it if you want? I think the owner just cycles by our place after work. I think that is very sympathetic'. Similarly, S6 states that a restaurant he regularly sells to often says to him that 'if you have something you need to get rid of, just call me and I will make something nice with it'. Finally, the mutual accommodation of each other's needs is also reflected in restaurants and suppliers promoting each other's businesses to their customers.

Shared value system

Following Trivette (2017), the third mechanism—to recognise the importance of what others bring to the relationship based on a shared understanding of the value of locally oriented food—is constructed upon two aspects: (1) the extent to which food system participants hold shared goals and values; and (2) their ability to demonstrate competence, both in what they themselves are doing but also in what their trading partners are doing. Excerpts of suppliers S1 and S3 nicely demonstrate the first aspect:

> The most important is that restaurants want to work with local products out of their own conviction, from the heart, because then you see their appreciation and willingness to pay. (S1)

> We could not work with people who do not share our ideas, who only want to sit in the front row for a dime [Dutch saying] and support mass production instead of fairness. (S3)

Conversely, restaurant participants often state on their websites or mention in the interviews that they only source from producers whom they know share the same principles, for example, producers who care about animal welfare. They learn about their producers' goals and values both in formal, for example, Fairtrade or organic certification, and informal ways, for example, having visited the farm or talked with the producers.

The second aspect, demonstrating competence, relates more to understanding and appreciating each other's industries, pressures and needs. Participants do mention that they understand their partners' flaws or struggles, but this is usually followed by a 'but' rather than a 'so'. The transcripts include several references to conflicts arising or partnerships being ended because of mismatches, for example, when a supplier's offer is too dynamic, or a restaurant's demands are too high (see also the next section). R5 appreciates surprises from his suppliers: 'Now and then I send one of my boys from the kitchen there with a list full of things, and then he comes back with something completely different. I love that'. R5 knows how the cheese shop operates and trusts the competence of the shop owner in providing him with the right products. With the same partner, R5 organises meetings when he is creating a new menu to brainstorm about which wines and products to serve with the cheeses. Providing advice on which products are good when and how to serve them is an important service that local suppliers can offer and is very much appreciated by restaurants.

RQ3: Perceived barriers

The barriers urban restaurant chefs and managers and local farmers, producers and distributors experience in establishing and maintaining farm-to-restaurant relations (RQ3), ranging from specific issues with particular partners to more systemic problems, are reducible to three categories:

Time and effort

First, restaurant and supplier participants encounter issues regarding logistics. Restaurant participants explain that sourcing locally requires effort because they need to communicate and make arrangements with many different suppliers instead of one wholesaler. R6 told me smiling: 'My colleague who does the administration keeps complaining about the fact that we have so many different receipts all the time'. The restaurant participants also explain that they struggle with needing to pick up products at unsuitable times or places and finding time to establish new relationships. R7, for example, states, 'Preferably I would spend half of my time with purchase, driving around and making contacts, but well, I also need to cook, and that occupies most of my time'. Furthermore, when restaurants order products from local farmers or producers, the delivery time is generally longer than with large wholesalers. R6 struggles with this: 'I can only do it if I plan

well ahead, as most of the time it is only on Sunday that I think of what to put on the menu for next Tuesday'. Suppliers also mention that administration and logistics take up much time and that this does not always feel balanced against the rather small amounts restaurants purchase.

Lack of continuity

The following excerpts demonstrate how restaurants and catering wholesalers long for consistency in availability and quality from their local suppliers but do not always experience this:

> You are a business, and you have customers. So, you need to be able to deliver a certain standard and consistency, and they are not always able to do so. What happens a lot is that you collaborate with someone two or three times, and then they do not manage to pursue, it lingers, they do not take the next step. (R4)

> It needs to be constantly available. […] There can be no fluctuations in quality. If a chef designs a menu, it is often for 3 months, so then I need to be sure that I have these products for the next 3 months because they have big posters and menus. If we are out of goat cheese, you cannot cross the goat cheese from the list. Or if you say you have a goat cheese from a specific farm, it cannot be a different one. (S9)

It is a reason for the restaurant of R4 to disclose from communicating their local producers and products on their website; the availability of ingredients is simply too dynamic. Sometimes farm-to-restaurant partnerships are ended because of this, for example, in the case of R6: 'We used to go to the cheese lady on the market, but she often did not have certain things. Her offer changes too much, so that does not work for us because we like to purchase the same things again and again'. Vice-versa, local suppliers also experience barriers related to continuity; a number of participants mention the quick changes in chefs. When a chef leaves a restaurant, the relationship with that restaurant often fades, as it is often the chef who is passionate about using local products and who they have contact with. At the same time, the career moves of chefs can also work out well for them when chefs start sourcing from them again at their new restaurants.

Knowledge and discourse gap

The third category denotes barriers regarding unfamiliarity with each other's businesses, resembling the third trust mechanism. R3 describes them as language differences, which especially become apparent in order agreements and price negotiations: 'I have spoken to a fisherman from Lauwersoog once, but well, we just do not speak the same language. I can't just… he talk fisherman's language, he thinks in way larger numbers of kilos, and thinks, "what I catch, you will just buy" or whatever'. Conversely, suppliers are annoyed when their restaurant clients do not seem to understand or respect their production process, for example, when restaurants purchase only small amounts, but still demand low prices, when they order products that are out of season and then afterwards complain about the quality, or when restaurants expect that they can place last minute orders for products that require time to grow or prepare, for example, S1: 'You notice how restaurants are quite used to ordering from big catering wholesalers. […] If restaurants want to place big orders, I need to know a few weeks in advance. That is difficult for me

to make them understand'. S6 explains that he has had mostly negative experiences with restaurants and feels that most restaurants only use the term local as a marketing story and fail to truly commit to their local partners. He forms an exception; the other supplier participants are fairly positive about their relations with restaurants, as are the restaurants. The participants I spoke to may have ended some of their collaborations because of frustrations and barriers outlined in this subsection but did remain engaged in other farm-to-restaurant relations (otherwise, they would not have been in the sample). It would also be interesting to hear from restaurants that are not sourcing local products at all (anymore) to hear what holds them back or why they withdrew.

RQ4: Role for the municipality and local food hub plans

In terms of how the research participants value the role of urban governments in supporting farm-to-restaurant relations (RQ4), it is striking how most restaurants, farmers and producers have no clue about the municipality's current food governance efforts and programmes. One of the municipal participants notes that restaurants are indeed quite difficult to approach. When I ask why, she replies that the restaurants are probably too busy and not available for meetings or events because they have to be in the kitchen at those hours. She says she is not sure about this because most restaurants simply do not reply to emails from the municipality, something I also experienced when sending out my interview invitations. The only participants who mention that they are in regular contact with the municipality and are aware of or involved in the programmes outlined in the Methodology section are catering wholesalers S2 and S9. S9 participates in a knowledge exchange and collaboration network on food initiated by the municipality, called the '*Ketentafel Voedsel Stad en Ommeland*' (Chain Table Food City and Hinterland). S2 provides the catering within the municipality's canteens and feels that 'a municipality needs to act as a role model, and the municipality is doing that very well'. In the focus group, the municipal officials affirm that this practice-as-you-preach attitude is a conscious strategy. There are also critical remarks. For example, R5 appreciates the municipality's actions regarding local food procurement but also sees policies that contradict this objective:

> A number of large magnates have made their entrance in the city [mentions examples of chain restaurants], and that is being stimulated by the municipality [...], because they are o so happy that such big chains want to come to Groningen, because that will really put Groningen on the map. But who is waiting for this? They will not source anything from our local suppliers, you know? Who says A, must also say B. There cannot be double standards. (R5)

Although the restaurant and supplier participants' awareness of the municipality's current activities is low, they do like to brainstorm about possible roles for the municipality. Some ideas that come up are as follows:

> Set up an advertising campaign for example. They have a very nice slogan, which I fully support: 'Nothing tops Groningen'. Amazing, but why not make something like this to present some of your local suppliers? (R5)

> It would be nice if there was an app that people can see where they can get their local food. (S3)

> What I think is important with regard to local products, is that it is formally checked that the produce that is being delivered is really local. There lies a task for the government. (S7)

Furthermore, establishing a local market stall, supermarket or food hall and organising events are often mentioned in the interviews, which all touch upon the food hub idea the municipality was exploring around that time. When I explain the food hub plans to the participants, they are very interested, for example, R7: 'I cannot drive around the entire province every day to pick up my produce, but if there would be a place in the city centre, which provides a certain amount and range, I would definitely go there'. However, some also have doubts or say that there are already businesses and initiatives working within this market, for example, S7: 'I think that they should just talk with businesses about this because there are already a lot of things, paths and entry points there. Then you can look at how to improve these of course'. The conditions under which the interviewees would be interested in participating in such a food hub network are good quality, structural availability, reasonable price, convenience and that logistics and marketing experts are involved. S6 warns the municipality: 'I think it will be difficult to get all noses into the same direction. [Dutch saying]' R4 adds: 'You really need to engage people; you have to make it their thing'.

In the focus group, several of these ideas and conditions put forward by restaurants and local restaurant suppliers are discussed. The municipality officials agree that most are relevant points and good ideas but that they see more of a facilitative role for themselves. M4, for example, mentions that 'We need market parties and organisations to join; we cannot do it alone'. Moreover, M1 and M2 discuss how their role lies mainly in bringing local stakeholders together:

> The actual implementation we cannot do, but we can… (M2: …bring people together) We know many people of course. Once, you were in the canteen with the brewers (M2: the cider club) and I was with the urban gardeners of [local initiative], and I said, o well, and then they immediately decided to sit together. (M1)

The municipality participants discuss that they want to change their image from being perceived as an imposer of rules and regulations to a municipality that solves problems, educates and connects people. The municipality participants also state that they are more and more aware that the city cannot prosper without its surrounding areas and is increasingly networking outside of its municipal borders.

DISCUSSION

The case study in Groningen shows that restaurants, suppliers and urban government officials can have very different needs in conceptions of and experiences with promoting local food products. This section reflects on the implications of these findings with regard to developing fair, profitable and sustainable food hub arrangements for all stakeholders involved by building on the four considerations and some of the studies discussed earlier in the article. Each paragraph ends with a reflexive direction. These are relevant for Groningen, as well as other municipalities and stakeholders that would be interested in setting up a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub.

Farm-to-restaurant relations are territorial and cultural

Many of the participants were taken aback and struggled to explain their conception of local. After thinking about it, most gave an indication of a distance range or geographical area, often combined with concepts and attributes other than scale and proximity to illustrate their idea of local. Schnell (2013) describes how local indeed goes beyond distance and food miles but that the concept of place does matter, as the values and narratives people associate with local food are embedded in relations with particular place-based contexts and practices (see also DeLind, 2011; Feagan, 2007; Jongerden et al., 2014; Levkoe, 2011; Trivette, 2015). In the case study of Groningen, you could clearly sense that many of the participants are fairly proud of being 'from the north' and therefore eager to support other northern businesses. Moreover, because of the physical proximity, restaurants and suppliers are able to visit each other's businesses, learn about how the products are made (or served) and get to know each other. Communication and transparency were very much appreciated by the interviewed farm-to-restaurant actors. It allows producers to tell the story behind their product and restaurants to pass it along to their customers, enriching their dining experience.

Based on the literature, one would expect regional cuisines and food traditions to also play a role in such stories. However, an interesting finding from this study is that various chefs stated that they prefer to play with traditions, serve local products in novel ways and add their own personal twist. Through such storytelling and innovative dishes, chefs can inspire their customers to become more aware of where and how their food is produced and to also become creative with and purchase ethically and sustainably produced local products. A farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub could stimulate and support chefs to responsibly take up this advocate role, but then it would need to **embrace the complex and relational nature of place**. This requires a certain commitment and proactive engagement from all members involved in the food hub, namely, that they are transparent about their values, practices and views and willing to communicate, both internally and externally, about the place-based narratives behind the products that are distributed through the food hub. Such commitment could, for example, be achieved through cooperative or coopetition-based business structures (Berti & Mulligan, 2016; Diamond & Barham, 2011; Feenstra & Hardesty, 2016)

Farm-to-restaurant relations are built on social relations and trust

The findings demonstrate many interesting examples of feelings of trust and reciprocity between restaurants and their local food suppliers, from very personal and loyal ties as part of the first mechanism of Trivette (2017) to surprising forms of needs accommodation representing the second mechanism. The two codes for the third mechanism, sharing values and demonstrating competence, show more heterogeneous results; many of these references describe matters that hamper the trust relation (also described in the third obstacle identified: knowledge and discourse gap). Both restaurant and local supplier participants feel frustrated sometimes about not feeling understood by their business partners. Urban restaurants have very specific and strict demands in terms of logistics, quality and continuity, which local restaurant suppliers are not always able to or do not want to meet. 'It is difficult for me to make them understand…' was a recurring phrase on both ends of the relation. Perhaps the third trust mechanism of Trivette (2017) should not so much focus on having shared goals and values but instead on the *processes* through which goals and values come to be shared (Mount, 2012). A farm-to-restaurant-oriented

food hub could facilitate such processes. Food hub staff can, for example, handle and talk people through orders and production planning, share information about the latest restaurant trends or what is in season, or organise member meetings and tasting events to bolster trust and stimulate interaction (Brislen, 2018; Givens & Dunning, 2019; Pesci & Brinkley, 2021).

It is often suggested that upscaling to a formalised platform such as a food hub might affect feelings of trust and reciprocity and other benefits of direct exchange markets because a middleman is added to the supply chain (Furman & Papavasiliou, 2018; Mount, 2012; Rosol & Barbosa, 2021). Pesci and Brinkley (2021) write that food hubs can also nurture trust and reciprocity and play a key role in expanding the network of a restaurant and conveying information and constructive feedback: 'When new farmers joined the network of purveyors through the referral of someone already affiliated with the restaurant (such as foragers, food hub managers, or other farmers), they were more likely to assimilate to the previously established expectations for trust, reciprocity, collaboration, and lower relevance of market forces'. In his article on trust, Trivette (2017) also briefly touches upon the food hub idea and writes that actors would have to carefully think about the implementation so that it does not limit communication channels or reproduce the power dynamics of the conventional food system. Regional wholesaler and butcher S2 and S3 demonstrate that through events, newsletters and invested staff members, trust and communication channels can also be facilitated via intermediated channels. Consequently, a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub would need to **foster reciprocal and practical partnerships** within the network, acknowledging the need to tend to ideals and values as well as the practicalities of food production and consumption (Sims, 2010).

Farm-to-restaurant relations are strategic and may serve divergent interests

Hinrichs (2000) reminds us that social ties in direct agricultural markets are appropriately seasoned by self-interest, marketness and instrumentalism. In the case study of Groningen, this is visible in some of the criteria and barriers restaurants and suppliers are putting forth. Customer is king, and local is also a good marketing strategy. Although not many restaurants dare to admit that explicitly. It is revealed by the ways in which restaurants are prioritising quality, the need to have a consistent menu and storytelling. Nevertheless, restaurant chefs and managers, farmers, producers and distributors, and government officials also refer to various altruistic concerns and stimuli, including reciprocity, loyalty, education, reducing one's ecological footprint, animal well-being and supporting the region economically. Scharber and Dancs (2016) and Cleveland et al. (2015) argue that local food movements and initiatives need to put more effort into articulating such values and goals as well as actions and indicators that help to achieve and monitor progress towards these goals and only then determine if and how local fits into the picture.

Blake et al. (2010) write that local is an open concept that is negotiated in place by actors with different agendas. Indeed, continual negotiation, not a fixed set of prescribed shared values and goals, is key to recognize and reconcile this diversity of actors, interests and priorities (Mount, 2012). Mount (2012) propagates that scaling up local food systems requires a responsive, inclusive and open governance process in order to create a sense of mutual understanding, shared responsibility, identity and legitimacy. Becoming part of a food hub collective could help to stimulate such a reflexive mindset, as stakeholders are forced to communicate their preferences and motivations towards one another and come to common agreements, concessions and commitments. Crucial in this phase is that localisation is part of the strategy of a food hub, never its sole purpose.

Simply buying, serving or promoting local, without questioning underlying interests, is unlikely to achieve, or might even hamper, environmental sustainability and social justice (Born & Purcell, 2006; Cleveland et al., 2014, 2015; DeLind, 2011; Dupuis & Goodman, 2005; Scharber & Dancs, 2016; Trivette, 2012). In sum, a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub would need to **negotiate reflexive and values-based goals**.

Farm-to-restaurant relations may benefit from intermediation and support

Many participants stated that they wished they could engage in more farm-to-restaurant relations but simply did not have the time or the means to explore and establish new partnerships. Based on my own struggles to find restaurant participants for my interviews, I can confirm that restaurant staff indeed have busy schedules and odd working hours. Perhaps this also explains the gap identified in this study between restaurants and the municipality. While both sectors actively propagate the local food discourse, restaurants are largely unaware of the food policies and programmes their municipality is involved in, and the municipality has trouble to get in touch with, engage or support urban restaurants. During the brainstorming about municipal support, the farm-to-restaurant actors were excited about the food hub idea but indicated that they did not see an active role for the municipality in such a platform. The municipality should leave it up to a professional party, who already has a network and knows the local context, to coordinate and expand such a network. The person or persons who would take on this task should, as the participants point out, know their way around and speak the languages of both worlds. The farm-to-restaurant stakeholders see a role for the municipality as a provider of financial and administrative support for local businesses as an organiser of food events and awareness campaigns and as a role model.

The municipality officials in the focus group tended to agree with the interview statements I presented to them and emphasised that they indeed intend to play a facilitative role. In 2019, after the study described in this article was finished and recommendations were shared, the municipality initiated a local food auction for restaurants and regional producers, called *Lokaal kilo's schuiven* (moving kilo's locally). Although the municipality did not continue with its food hub plans, this auction initiative does meet many of the needs identified in this research. The municipality outsourced the assignment to a professional with an existing network, the events and activities are low-threshold and organised at convenient times for restaurants, and the initiative brings together supply and demand with the option of personal contact and tailored services. At the end of the day, a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub (or other type of values-based territorial food network) would need to **broker between and unburden the involved parties**.

CONCLUSION

This article has enhanced insight into the values the interviewed stakeholders attribute to local food products, the positive and negative experiences of urban restaurants and local food suppliers in establishing and maintaining farm-to-restaurant relations, and their views on supportive roles for urban governments and local food hubs. The participants are generally satisfied with and experience trust and reciprocity in the farm-to-restaurant relations that they are involved in, but various barriers prevent them from engaging in more relationships and taking their mission

to the next level. These barriers relate to the time and effort both parties have to invest, a lack of continuity in supply and demand and a lack of understanding of each other's profession or situation. Urban governments could facilitate local food system advancement efforts of restaurants by encouraging professional and reflexive collaborations based on negotiation and the incorporation of diverse perspectives and priorities (Mount, 2012). If hypothetically, such collaborations would take the shape of a farm-to-restaurant-oriented food hub, this network would need to (1) embrace the complex and relational nature of place (*farm-to-restaurant relations are territorial and cultural*), (2) foster reciprocal and practical partnerships (*farm-to-restaurant relations are built on social relations and trust*), (3) negotiate reflexive and values-based goals (*farm-to-restaurant relations are strategic and may serve divergent interests*) and (4) broker between and unburden the involved parties *(farm-to-restaurant relations may benefit from intermediation and support)*. These recommendations are illustrated in more detail in the discussion.

Larger and more representative samples would need to be studied to gain a full understanding of the different intentions, experiences and views of farm-to-restaurant stakeholders and the potential for a local food hub network in a specific city or region. Nevertheless, the explorative nature of the inquiry, the comprehensive range of topics covered in the interviews and the reflexive considerations and directions discussed provide relevant recommendations for practitioners and include various angles for follow-up research. Future research could, for example, look further into the intentional and unintentional continuation of reasoning infected by the local trap in restaurant marketing and public campaigns (e.g., DeLind, 2011; Hinrichs & Allen, 2008; Schnell, 2013), explore how customers experience and influence a restaurant's decision to source local food products (e.g., Aaltojärvi et al., 2018; Bacig & Young, 2019; Murphy & Smith, 2009; Sims, 2010), and develop methods and tools that help urban food governance stakeholders to collectively negotiate the values they want to uphold and achieve within their territorial food networks (e.g., Chiffoleau et al., 2019; Moragues-Faus et al., 2020; Prost, 2019; Smaal et al., 2021). Above all, research that introduces and (re)connects new or neglected food system stakeholders should be greatly encouraged.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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