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EVALUATING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM INNOVATIONS

A GLOBAL TOOLKIT FOR CITIES

Edited by

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11 Using Urbal to develop metrics for evaluation

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11.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the challenges that innovations face in structuring their project assessment in line with food system sustainability (FSS) regulatory frameworks at different scales. It argues that the Urbal approach (see Chapter 1) can be used as a preliminary step in the process of identifying and implementing indicators in a project's food sustainability assessment. Indicators produce relevant knowledge for both internal and external actors, enable knowledge transfer, and facilitate sharing the results of assessments guided by local and global FSS recommendations. Urbal can help frame the choice of indicators by prioritizing key factors that support or hinder the achievement of sustainability and by taking into account the context-dependent, place-based, subjective ranking of priorities. Furthermore, it can facilitate the interpretation of an innovation's contribution to sustainability according to multi-scale benchmarks, through the co-design of metrics drawing on local and global recommendations for FSS.

11.2 Developing meaningful indicators to assess the impact of innovations on food system sustainability

11.2.1 *On the use of indicators: How to evaluate the systemic complexity of sustainability with indicators*

Quantification is considered the most objective and rigorous method for assessing any human practice, yet it is also highly contested. Since the 19th century, the statistical sciences have spread to the point of shaping today's social world, providing tools to express and coordinate human activities. While statistical indicators initially only measured natural science objects, they gained ground between the 1930s and the 1950s with the rise of national accounting systems, to evaluate economies' performance and social well-being (Desrosières, 2008), and ultimately evolved into standards of consistency and exhaustiveness, used as quantitative descriptors of any social topic.

Indicators, which are continuously refined and adapted to better consider real objects based on contemporary governments' socio-environmental targets, are likewise recognized as a tool to support intended transformations. Indicators can be described as "the quantification of social and ecological conditions and can be used to assess the historical and current state of affairs, and predict future trends" (Levkoe & Blay-Palmer, 2018, p. 51). Although research suggesting alternative evaluation methods are multiplying, indicators are still widely praised for their ability to summarize and condense the complexity of our dynamic environment into a manageable amount of meaningful information (Singh et al., 2012) that can support policy and management decision-making (Ramos, 2019).

There are however limitations inherent to quantification methods, namely surrounding the selection and use of indicators, especially in the field of sustainability assessment. Scholars have pointed to the inadequate quality or the unequal availability of data, and the loss of information in the aggregation process (Bell & Morse, 2013; Schader et al., 2014). In FSS assessments, for example, gaps can involve missing or insufficiently detailed data about gender, health and socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nutrition adequacy, sociocultural well-being, geospatial location, food environments, agroecological conditions, production patterns, eating and purchasing habits, or even awareness of sustainability practices (Deconinck et al., 2021). Moreover, the streamlining and standardization operated by indicators through what can be described as a mechanistic worldview "reduces complexity and embellishes certainty" (Reid & Rout, 2020, p. 2), overlooking part of the peculiarity of local contexts (Molle & Mollinga, 2003) as well as the systemic intricacies surrounding sustainability, such as hidden feedback mechanisms and trade-offs (Grace & Pope, 2015; Wiek & Binder, 2005).

Another main limitation of the use of indicators is the false assumption regarding the objectivity of metrics and indicators, underestimating their social and political dimension. Indicators only provide information about the issues that they have been designed to measure (Bell & Morse, 2013). Indicator development is not just a technical exercise, since deciding to evaluate an outcome influences the allocation of human and financial resources towards its accomplishment, at the expense of other potentially relevant outcomes (Carlsson et al., 2017). The issue thus lies with taking responsibility for the choice of indicators. Since indicators are effective tools for public decision-making processes, the selection of indicators should be fully understood as a political process, focusing on the potential of indicators' use and influence to impact policy decisions (Lehtonen et al., 2016). According to Kaur and Lodhia (2018), it is paramount that indicator development involves understanding the specific needs, competences, and sustainability vision of local communities and, more generally, that it take into account the end users' needs and expectations. Several scholars also support the conclusion that local users have a more nuanced understanding of the variability of natural phenomena compared to the often

overly polarized approach of scientific assessment, which favours positive or negative results (Fraser et al., 2006; Thomas & Twyman, 2004).

In line with Shen et al. (2011), we argue that indicators should be designed or selected following a collective process to reach an agreement based on a shared understanding, and subsequent revisions informed by emerging needs and the experience gained in individual cases should be welcomed. This is key to the sustainable development approach: first, it creates value for the actors and empowers them, and second, involving stakeholders in the indicator development process can foster the utility, transparency, and longevity of the tools chosen for evaluation (Ramos, 2019).

11.2.2 The challenges faced in the choice of indicators for food system sustainability assessments

In the field of FSS specifically, indicators have also taken on a growing role in benchmarking and tracking FSS, along with priority increasingly being given to including food in cities' and regions' planning agendas (Blay-Palmer et al., 2019). In 2015, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development issued a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by 2030, implying the development of indicators able to measure progress towards sustainability. The process involves data collection from 193 countries and is based on a set of 244 indicators. At the local level, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), fully dedicated to developing sustainable food systems, was also signed in 2015 by more than 200 cities. This international agreement includes a monitoring framework to support the implementation of the SDGs at local level, listing 37 recommended actions, organized into 6 categories. For each recommended action, there are specific indicators to monitor progress in the implementation of the Pact. As of 2017, the MUFPP offers 44 indicators, with 4–10 indicators per category. Other sets of indicators have also been developed in sub-national and more local contexts (for more information, see Blay-Palmer et al., 2019).

These SDG or MUFPP recommendations represent desirable objectives to avoid uncontrollable consequences for ecological, socio-economic, or even food systems, and valuable aspirational guidelines to refocus institutions worldwide towards a common strategy. However, there is a lack of planning and regulatory instruments for cities (Blay-Palmer et al., 2019). Furthermore, each region requires approaches tailored to its specific local subsystems, and the values of the actors bringing about change need to be taken into account (Meadowcroft, 2010).

Indicators are indeed context-dependent, yet they often remain disconnected from the specificities of local contexts. Global initiatives can thus be misaligned with local specificities (Carlsson et al., 2017), as “localities may experience substantially different cause-and-effect dynamics between the ecological and social variables peculiar to each context” (Carlsson et al., 2017, p. 3),

making it extremely complicated to match national and international exercises with local-level specificity (Moragues-Faus & Marceau, 2018, p. 5). This is particularly concerning, as this

disconnect between the design and operationalization of global, regional, or national level measurement and analysis, and the requirements of local-level stakeholders attempting to respond to these challenges on a daily basis inhibits communities' ability... to engage in strategic action that supports both sustainable community development, and a global sustainable food system.

(Carlsson et al., 2017, p. 3)

Thus, specific challenges surrounding the evaluation of food innovations' impact on FSS need to be addressed. These include the difficulty of interpreting the interactions between sustainability goals within the local context using indicators (Halla & Binder, 2020), and the need for consistency between sustainability targets at different scales. In fact, irrespective of the specific implementation instruments chosen, when looking at the situation on the ground at local level, the misalignment with the SDG framework is often obvious: urban innovations go further than these targets and develop concrete needs and knowledge which often have not yet been integrated into food policy strategies.

Moreover, in the field of food system assessment, indicators tend to be designed according to the dominant political economy of food and wielded by dominant actors. In 2016, the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) warned that "current systems will be held in place insofar as these systems continue to be measured in terms of what industrial agriculture is designed to deliver, at the expense of many other outcomes that really matter in food systems" (IPES-Food, 2016, p. 57). IPES-Food also called for more coherent approaches to assessment, pointing to the importance of breaking down disciplinary silos in order to understand the interactions between FSS sub-sectors, and stressed the need for FSS assessment to be inclusive, multidimensional, reflective, and continuous (IPES-Food, 2015). Although recommendations have consistently called for reconceptualizing the sustainability assessment process, what is required is not just an accumulation of indicators (Grainger, 2012) but a sustainability reframing, starting afresh with a focus on local stakeholders' diverse range of specific needs and visions of sustainability (Brockwell, 2019). Many scholars and practitioners have thus called for a better understanding of both power dynamics in the assessment of food systems and local contexts in the definition and use of indicators (Levkoe & Blay-Palmer, 2018).

Furthermore, in order to map the effects of innovations pursued on sustainability transformations, local-level food policies need to overcome the predominant reliance on pre-existing data, with no prior deliberation on what data would be most relevant for ascertaining an innovation's actual contribution to sustainability.

Given the limited accessibility of disaggregated local data (especially on food systems) (Blay-Palmer et al., 2019) and the considerable cost of data collection and management, it is essential to design the indicator identification process as a forum where different stakeholders can reflect on how to communicate the meaning of and reasons for their actions, before assessing these actions with quantitative parameters designed to monitor intentions other than those of the stakeholders (Alrøe et al., 2017). Moreover, taking into account multiple observers' points of view affords key insights not visible from a single perspective (Meter, 2010). In the three cases in a study conducted by Fraser et al. (2006), the participatory consultations with stakeholders to identify sustainability indicators provided a space to draw on the knowledge of local stakeholders and a wide range of views. This operation broadened the perspective and the knowledge of the individual participants and contributed to their empowerment (commensurate with the level of inclusiveness of the participation process itself). It also led to the identification of indicators not yet used that would be valuable to the stakeholders, and the continuous re-design of the indicators ensured that the assessment remained relevant as the stakeholders' needs evolved (Fraser et al., 2006). Despite the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the process of translating the results of participatory processes into strategy improvements or actual policy, these authors argue that when data are collected at the finest resolution possible, when aggregation is transparent, and when the interpretation of data is flexible, local participation in the identification of indicators can provide valuable material to enable decision-making to take local perspectives into account. Of course, the inclusiveness of this process depends on the nature and extent of actors' participation.

Positing that there are many challenges involved in measuring what is measurable in the context of innovation, Brockwell makes an interesting proposition to shift “from a convenience-driven technical approach (‘what can be measured’, using the methods and datasets that are currently available), towards a normative approach based on creative and critical thinking (‘what should be measured’)” (Brockwell, 2019, p. 105). Given these various challenges, we considered it worthwhile to explore a potential use of the Urbal approach in completing an impact pathway analysis for a follow-up evaluation using metrics. Urbal can enable reflection on the selection of indicators based on the specificities of local contexts, involving stakeholders in the process and taking broader sustainability assessment frameworks into consideration (SDG, MUFPP).

11.3 A framework to support the design of assessment metrics and orient stakeholders in a multi-level regulatory framework using Urbal results

Urbal is a qualitative and participatory evaluation method that provides innovators, decision makers, and donors with information on how innovations contribute to or impede the development of more sustainable food systems, thus

assisting them in determining which actions should or should not be taken (see Chapter 1). The main outputs are cognitive maps showing the impacts of innovations on sustainability. The evaluation process focuses on participatory reflection on impact pathways that allow for identifying a systemic theory of change for each innovation evaluated. Urbal is a qualitative method. It does not provide metrics or indicators. Yet we argue that it can prove very useful for the process of selecting relevant indicators prior to an evaluation and for addressing the main difficulties involved in selecting indicators.

In order to structure the choice of indicators in such a way that they reflect sustainability recommendations and are tailored to the innovation context, practitioners following the Urbal approach can undertake a collaborative exercise to articulate the Urbal results with local and international sustainability guidelines, building on the knowledge co-created in the workshop.¹

The output of this articulation provides groundwork on which urban-driven innovation practitioners can draw—it allows them to choose metrics from the large number of existing options, to develop their own customized metrics, or to improve their existing assessment system. We have formalized this exercise into a practical tool that can be represented in the form of an analytical framework.

11.3.1 Co-creating the tool with stakeholders

To develop this framework, the Urbal research team carried out a study drawing on foundations from a literary review on FSS indicator frameworks, and on an Urbal impact pathway analysis applied to the case study of Ma Cantine Autrement (MCA) the school catering improvement programme of the city of Montpellier, France (see Chapter 5). This programme draws on the sustainability targets set out in the Food Policy of Montpellier (P2A),² and was initially designed to reduce food waste and promote a sustainable diet for children.

At the request of the city's Food Policy Department, the results of this participative in-depth analysis of the change process generated by the MCA initiative were used to guide a metrics-based evaluation of the programme. The purpose of this evaluation was to revise the existing set of indicators used, so as to design an evaluation framework more in line with the specific issues identified by Urbal. It also aimed to better align the programme with existing normative frameworks. We thus undertook a collaborative exercise with the main stakeholders of the Montpellier school catering programme. In this exercise we were able to build and test a practical tool to structure the choice of indicators, taking in account priorities specific to the context and to local, national, and international sustainability guidelines. This tool is fully usable by urban-driven innovation practitioners. The exercise relied on meetings with small groups of innovators and experts.³ We adopted a co-design approach, guided by the principle that “users of goods or services are experts of their own needs and experiences, and therefore can usefully contribute to their [re]design” (Mackenzie & Davies, 2019, p. 6). By enabling a better understanding of users' needs, co-design

affords better-informed decision-making and greater motivation among the participants designing and using a tool or service (Moser, 2016).

11.3.2 A practical tool to support innovation assessment design

The analytical framework provides the basis for identifying appropriate indicators to assess the performance of the activities and resources used in support of the innovation and, in keeping with the theory of change, distinguishing between indicators relating to resources (inputs), indicators of short-term change or the results of activities (outputs) and indicators of medium-term change (outcomes).

The analytical framework is structured around the various elements based on which each selected innovation activity⁴ was evaluated as part of the *Urbal* process. The tool can serve as a roadmap and can be adapted depending on the users' priorities, needs and context.⁵ Figure 11.1 shows the logical sequence which was followed to feed the content boxes in the pilot case study and the stages of the process, which were supplemented with frequent information exchange. The boxes are grouped into six sections (Columns A to F), and each section indicates the data source, as outlined in the key. Boxes with a dashed border present the results of the interviews and the participatory workshop conducted in *Urbal* Steps 1, 2, and 3.

This is ideally a collaborative process involving the workshop participants, that is, the innovators, different stakeholders, and a researcher or expert.

The "Initial documentation" stage consists of an analysis of the FSS themes that emerged from the interviews and the participatory workshop (*Urbal* Steps 1, 2, and 3) in order to establish a knowledge base for subsequent meetings and a starting point for the identification of indicators.

The second stage consists in setting the objective of the framework. This can be to standardize the collected data to develop a set of indicators for the project's evaluation, to improve the project's current set of metrics, to select or adapt a number of existing sustainability indicators, or to prove the contribution of the project's actions to align with sustainability recommendations. The "Tool development" stage involves populating the first four columns:

- 1) Column "A" outlines the reasons for which each activity has been implemented in relation to the *Urbal* sustainability dimensions
- 2) Column "B" reports the positive and negative changes and impacts associated with each activity, as well as factors fostering or impeding change
- 3) Column "C" identifies the sustainability dimensions impacted and the ways in which the activity and other project activities mutually influence each other
- 4) Column "D" provides evidence regarding the activities, in the form of testimonials and accounts shared by stakeholders directly involved

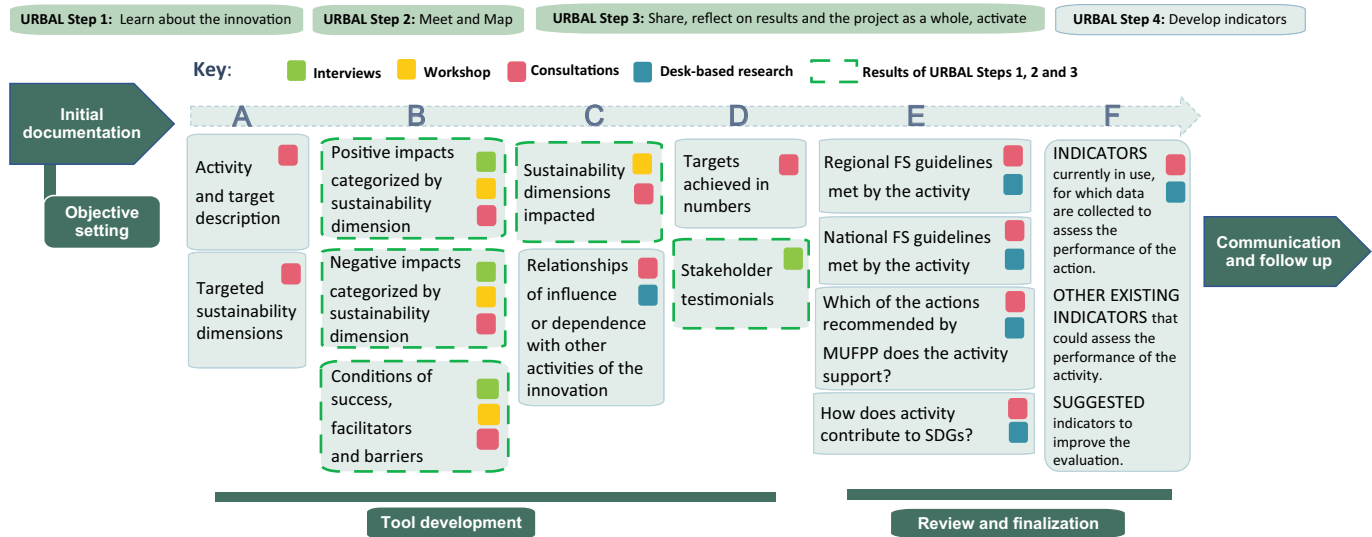


Figure 11.1 Analytical framework development process, content of the sections, and source: example of the content established for a single innovation activity.

The feedback and knowledge collected serve to model the analytical framework to develop a new draft for the “Review and finalization” stage. During this fourth stage, participants reflect on how the activity relates to different FSS guidelines, thus populating Column E, and proceed to identifying indicators. This involves reviewing the activity’s pathway, outlining topics of interest based on the activity’s objectives and contributions to different FSS frameworks, defining questions to ask in order to explore the topics, and identifying appropriate metrics through which to actually address these questions based on factual capabilities and the viability of data collection (Section F). Once completed, this process results in an analytical framework that provides the basis for continuously improving the innovation’s assessment.⁶

The criteria informing the selection of indicators should be established according to the context and scale of the innovation. These criteria include the indicators’ relevance to the needs of the people involved in the innovation, the accessibility and affordability of data collection, and the extent to which the indicators align with local, national, or international FSS guidelines (Carey & Cook, 2021).

11.3.3 Application to the Ma Cantine Autrement programme

We can look at a few examples from MCA’s school catering programme to learn more about the value of the Urbal approach for setting up a quantitative evaluation. Previously, the MCA’s evaluation system was based on a set of indicators reflecting the overall impact of the programme, without a distinct evaluation of each of the actions comprising the programme, nor of the stages of the innovation process. Identifying these stages and characterizing the obstacles or facilitators along the impact pathway allowed MCA to choose indicators that account for specific stages of the innovation pathway. These can be material or contextual resources that enable the action, activities implemented to generate change, any levers or obstacles encountered, or long-term effects on the system. For instance, the MCA action “Finer allotment by product or family of products” aims to split the procurement process into a larger number of batches to encourage applications from a more diverse pool of producers and processors, particularly small, local businesses. The impact pathway mapped collectively with Urbal showed that “sourcing” (i.e., the consultations carried out to identify potential suppliers), is a favourable precondition for the success of the action. An ad hoc indicator was therefore added to the existing set of indicators.

The analysis of the impact pathways thus allowed indications to be identified in order to improve the evaluation of the programme’s sustainability, drawing on existing and new data sources. In particular, multi-stakeholder dialogue yielded insights that made it possible to include indicators in the evaluation that took into account the interests of the diverse range of actors

involved, beyond the project leader alone. For example, during the participatory workshop, the agents who facilitate the children's meals at the canteens indicated that the tools in the "Cutting kit"—designed to facilitate the agents' cutting work and reduce fruit waste—could entail a risk of injury. Taking this into account will ensure better working conditions and prevent an increase in healthcare costs. In this case, as tracking these incidents' occurrence would be difficult for privacy reasons, anonymous questionnaires with a mixture of closed- and open-ended questions could be envisaged to take into account the agents' perspectives, so as to monitor the improvement of the safety process.

The Food Policy Department had also decided to reflect on the articulation of the programme's monitoring-evaluation system with normative sustainability frameworks at different scales (P2A Charter, EGalim national law, MUFPP, SDG). The characterization of change proposed by Ural through the mapping of impact pathways facilitated this articulation by highlighting the programme's contribution to the different dimensions of sustainability (economic, social, environmental, health/nutrition, and governance).

The activity "Generalization of waste sorting and recovery of biowaste" was previously evaluated using the indicator "Number of school restaurants sorting bio-waste", generally associated with SDG 11 "Sustainable cities". The Ural results allowed for identifying the impact of this activity on the creation of renewable energy sources from bio-waste and on the reduction of waste through prevention, recycling, and reuse. This resulted in a more accurate evaluation by highlighting a connection with SDG 7, which aims to ensure access to reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all and SDG 12, which aims to establish sustainable consumption and production patterns.

11.3.4 Variables to consider for an effective use of the framework

Regarding participation in the indicator identification process, a few factors need to be taken into account. The configuration of the group of participants, including the number of participants, the different levels of interest in presenting results, and power dynamics between participants, may influence the level of collaboration among the stakeholders and their appropriation of the assessment tool. To ensure that the co-design process is effective and inclusive, it is necessary to provide sufficient time and appropriate information material to enable each participant to understand the process and make a valuable contribution.

Despite the many benefits of this approach, potential barriers to the use of the Ural process are the small number of participants involved (15–20 maximum) and the necessary involvement of external facilitators. Moreover, monitoring an innovation project's impact over time implies strong stakeholder engagement, with a commitment—primarily on the part of the project leader—to continuously improve the evaluation system.

For this case study, the results obtained through the Urbal process not only helped the innovation project leader (the Food Policy Department of Montpellier) to communicate about the project to internal and external stakeholders but also contributed to the creation of a monitoring committee for the city's school catering system. This committee aims to ensure transparency in the actions taken and the choices made by the municipality regarding school catering, and will be comprised of elected municipal representatives, technicians, researchers, farmers, teachers, parents, and a dedicated children's council.⁷ Such collective involvement has a strong positive impact on the continuity of engagement and funding for long-term project assessment, since periodic meetings can support actors' knowledge and the setting of priorities, common goals, and strategies for monitoring implementation as well as improvement. Moreover, the existence of a multi-actor committee to monitor progress provides more guarantee of a lasting commitment to monitoring and evaluation, irrespective of any changes in the project leadership.

11.4 Discussion: What solutions do Urbal results offer to address issues surrounding the assessment of innovations' FSS?

The dialogue around place-based knowledge stemming from the Urbal approach provides stakeholders with a better understanding of the process and context of the innovation by shedding light on different perspectives regarding internal or external practices that interact and facilitate or hinder the implementation of innovation activities, and which relate to multiple unexpected dimensions of FSS in its broadest sense. This allows practitioners to develop the ability to identify, develop, and carefully use a set of indicators tailored to the specificities of the innovation, including the subjectivity of the actors involved and the innovation's evolution process.

Thanks to the analytical framework developed to use Urbal results, instead of selecting metrics that measure a situation or characteristic abstracted from its context, practitioners can identify metrics that capture complexity and specificity where they work and are making change, thus enabling the results to be place-specific. This is crucial both for framing problems and for guiding decision-making.

With regard to benefits for evaluation, the proposed framework helps to avoid a standardization of indicators, embedding them instead in the narrative process of the innovation, taking into account social, physical, economic, and cultural intervening or interacting factors (Cohen, 2019). In practice, this allows for better matching of indicators to specific stages of the innovation changes and impacts pathway, based on material or contextual resources that enabled implementation (input indicators), activities implemented to generate change and their effects (activity and output indicators), and long-term effects on the system (outcome indicators), as shown in Figure 11.2.

MCA programme action “Generalization of waste sorting out and recovery of bio-waste”

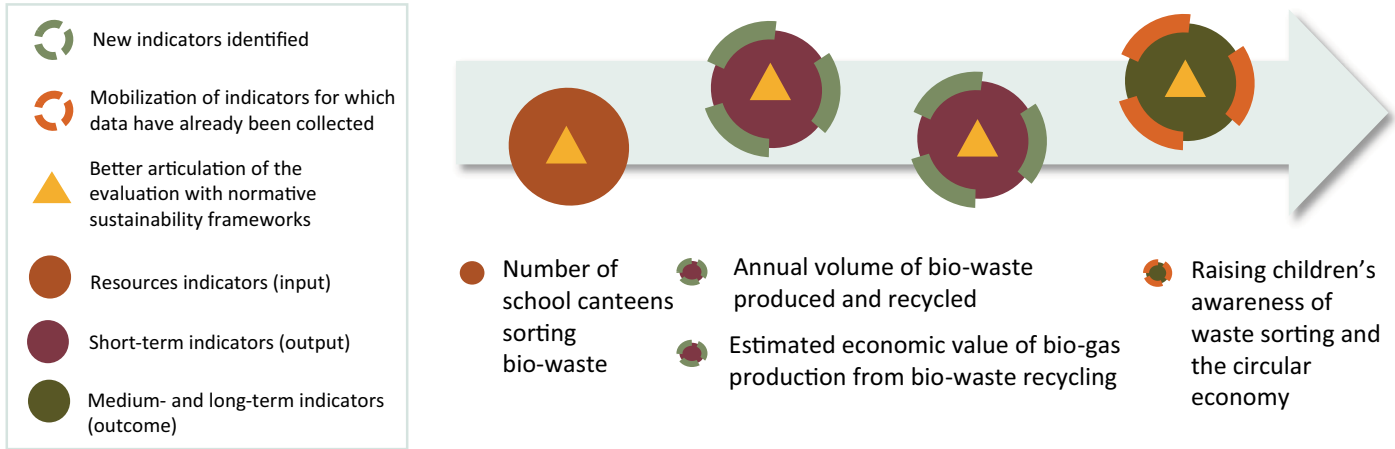


Figure 11.2 Example of how the Urbal approach can facilitate the elaboration of quantitative evaluation.

The articulation of Urbal with local, national, and global targets requires reflection on the connections between specific sustainability issues, as identified by official declarations at different scales, and the concrete ways in which these issues are addressed by the actions carried out as part of the innovation. Such reflection sheds light on the variety of approaches to and points of focus surrounding sustainability issues that can be adopted for different scales, and thus allows:

- 1) identification of missed parameters by envisaging the creation of metrics informed by “unstructured” place-based data, and inclusion in the evaluation not only what is expected to change, but also the conditions required for impact pathways to occur, unforeseen changes, and stakeholder feedback
- 2) extension or improvement of the application of indicators already in use
- 3) improved targeting of the indicators’ contribution to meeting the SDGs as well as local and national guidelines

By providing support to frame the interpretation of standardized FSS objectives, the Urbal approach enables practitioners to situate the innovation action within the regulatory evaluation systems established at local and international level, thus facilitating project communication. This could allow for a degree of comparison across study sites.

Thanks to the Urbal approach’s context-specific interpretation regarding the fulfilment of FSS objectives and the nuanced understanding it affords of the innovation process, ideas and best practices can be more effectively disseminated, a wider range of actors can use and interact with this knowledge, and integration into urban FSS programmes is more accessible.

Moreover, documenting this diverse range of data on resources, practices, processes, and orientations can provide a valuable resource for similar innovations operating on a different scale and in a different context to compare the dynamics of change, detect criticalities, and improve their strategy. Indicators developed following the Urbal process allow for comparing the ways in which different innovations conduct activities, based on the vision guiding the innovation, the change and impact pathway, the people involved, the resources available, the institutional and cultural context, and the approaches used.

Figure 11.3 summarizes the field of application in which Urbal results can help address the challenges that FSS innovations face in assessment design, and how local and global FSS recommendations articulate with this process.

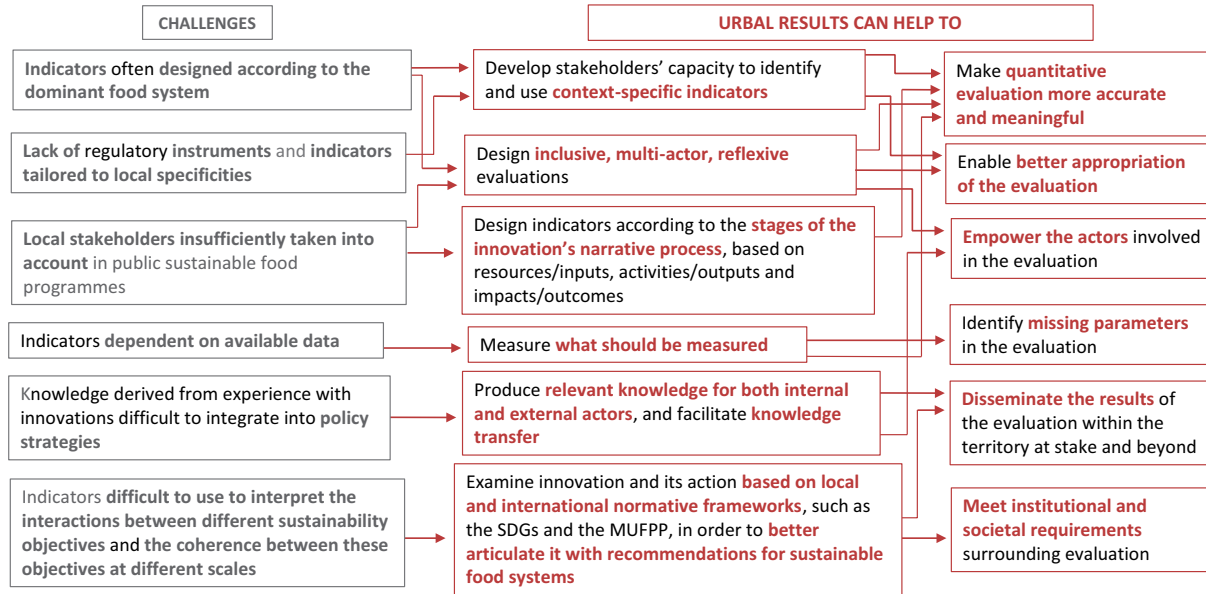


Figure 11.3 The potential contribution of URBAL to address the planning and evaluation challenges of innovations.

11.5 Conclusion

Developing methods for collectively designing indicators with or in agreement with local users proved to be crucial to the effectiveness of quantitative evaluation. We have addressed this need by proposing a framework to build on the change and impact pathways captured by the Urbal approach. This framework helps select relevant indicators for innovators and future users seeking to improve and communicate their long-term impact on sustainability, while orienting their action in the sustainability frameworks established at local and international level, such as the SDGs, MUFPP, FAO-SAFA, etc.

The application of this framework involves using the results produced by the Urbal approach in a process of collaboration between the innovators and stakeholders. It allows for inclusiveness and multidimensionality, embracing the subjectivity of the stakeholders participating in the evaluation, a subjectivity which reflects the variability of the needs at play in a local food system. It also unlocks a number of potentials, including the potential to enhance the actions carried out within the framework of innovations and to support the joint action of interconnected and multi-scale processes at work to reshape the food system. Finally, it shows one of the possible uses of Urbal as a way to prepare quantitative assessments or to select indicators, laying the foundations for future applications of the Urbal approach.

Notes

- 1 If the conditions needed to run the workshop cannot be met for various reasons (power imbalances between actors, hierarchical relationships, social and cultural context, etc.), several other options involving participative methods can be used (see Chapter 1 of this book or the Urbal guide on this topic).
- 2 The Food Policy of Montpellier, known as P2A (“*politique agroécologique et alimentaire*”), aims to improve access to sustainable food for all by developing an agroecological food system and redirecting local products towards local supply chains. As of 2019, the school catering improvement programme is a mandatory requirement set out in the French Food law, EGalim, the outcome of the “*États généraux de l'alimentation*” (French National Food conference) held from 20 July to 21 December 2017. The EGalim law seeks to provide fair remuneration for producers, to guarantee the safety, environmental and nutritional quality of food products, and to promote healthy, safe, and sustainable food for all.
- 3 It is however important to note that the process could also rely on bigger meetings, using focus groups. The focus groups would ideally include the stakeholders of the innovation project, some participants from the Urbal workshop, and a researcher/expert in the field or a member of the Urbal research team to facilitate the indicator identification process.
- 4 The Step 2 of the Urbal process involves the selection of six to nine of the activities included in an innovation project, to be evaluated during the workshop. The selected activities are those that are most innovative or most likely to generate the greatest impact on FSS. For more information on the activities collectively evaluated as part of the MCA programme, see Chapter 5 this volume.
- 5 To find out more about the Urbal approach used to identify or modify existing or future impact indicators and to establish the articulation with various normative

FSS benchmarks, please see the results [Booklet](#) and [Poster](#) produced for the MCA programme in the “[Resources](#)” section of the Urbal website.

6 Ibid.

7 For more detail on the City of Montpellier’s school catering monitoring committee project, see <https://www.montpellier.fr/evenement/25242/3624-lancement-du-comite-de-suivi-de-la-restauration-scolaire.htm>

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