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Urban agriculture for a more sustainable and healthy food system in the Rouen metropolis, France

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Introduction:

Urban agriculture and gardening in cities is increasingly recognized through initiatives such as the Milan Urban Food Pact (MUFP, 2015). Moreover, there is a growing awareness on the part of citizens of the significant and positive contribution that a link with nature can make to our mental health and well-being (Capaldi et al., 2015). Urban agriculture is a form of farming aiming to ensure food security, maintain urban ecosystem services and improve the quality of life (Boukharta et al., 2024a). The present study focuses on the analysis of two urban agriculture practices in the city of Rouen, France, where an evaluation has been made of the value distribution created by the implementation of these urban agriculture practices, as well as an assessment of the benefits they bring through economic, social and environmental terms. This work analyses the governance structures of these initiatives, to identify the feasibility and financing of these urban practices as well as an evaluation of the urban planning and different indicators, that aim and help to implement these projects.

Methodology:

The approach used was to conduct interviews with the stakeholders involved in the operation, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of our problematics. Interviews were conducted with project leaders, managers, farmers, employees and volunteers. In addition, field visits for observation and experimentation were carried out for better analysis and investigation. The two cases evaluated are "Le Champ des Possibles" and "Le Jardin de l'Astéroïde", both located in the Rouen Metropolis (Figure 1).

Case 2: « Le Jardin de l'Astéroïde du petit prince »

Urban garden also located in Rouen (Figure 4), whose focus is on renting individual plots to local residents so that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables. Before the garden was created, it was an abandoned area where cars used to park. "Le Jardin de l'Astéroïde" does not organize social or educational activities for external guests.

Only members can benefit from the advice of an agronomist engineer who supports them and shares his knowledge, and also members can help each other (obviously each plot has its own owner). Members are not allowed to use chemicals, and composting is generally done by members or other volunteers

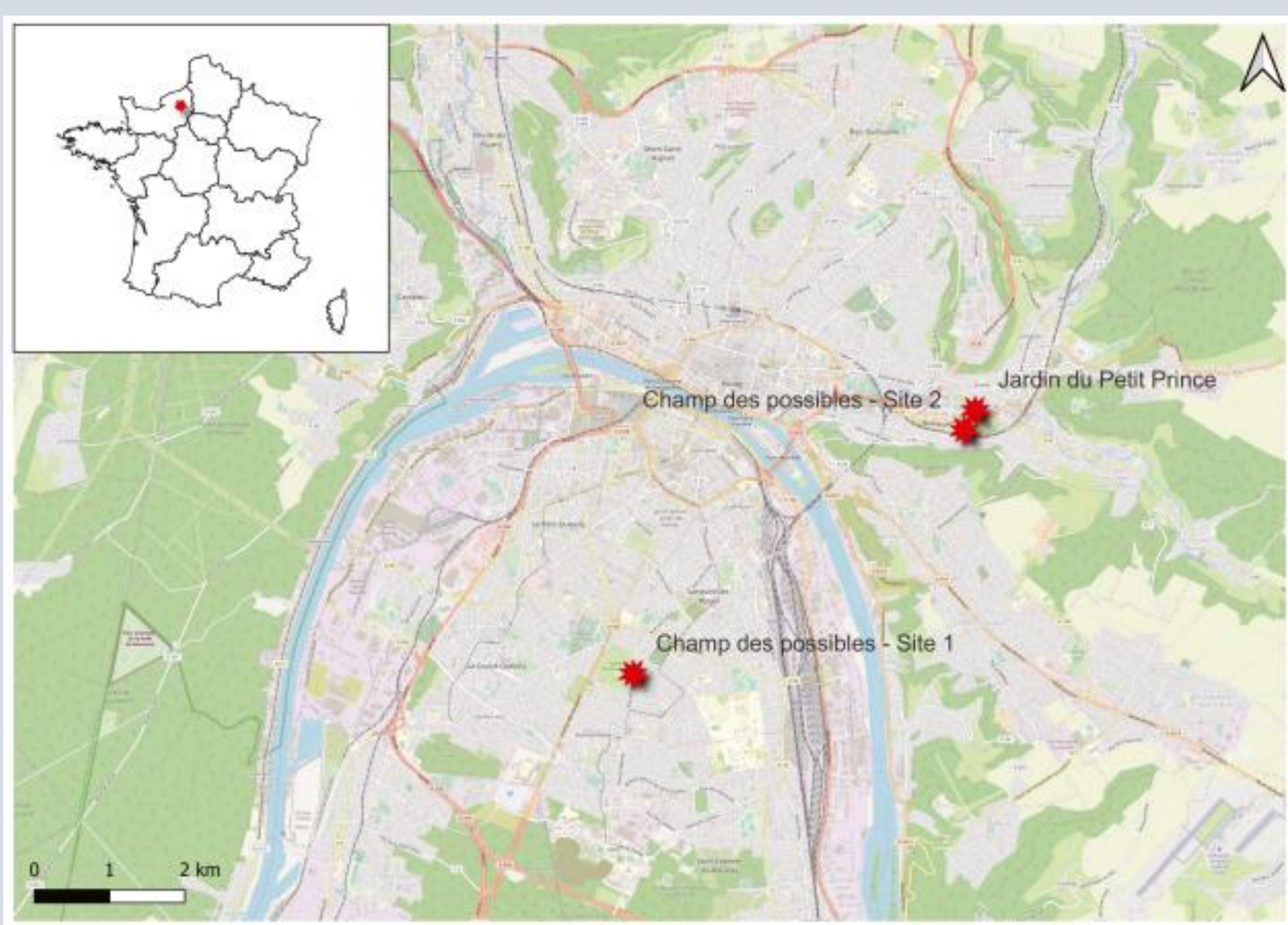


Figure 1: Location of the initiatives evaluated in Rouen using QGIS Software. (Source: the authors)

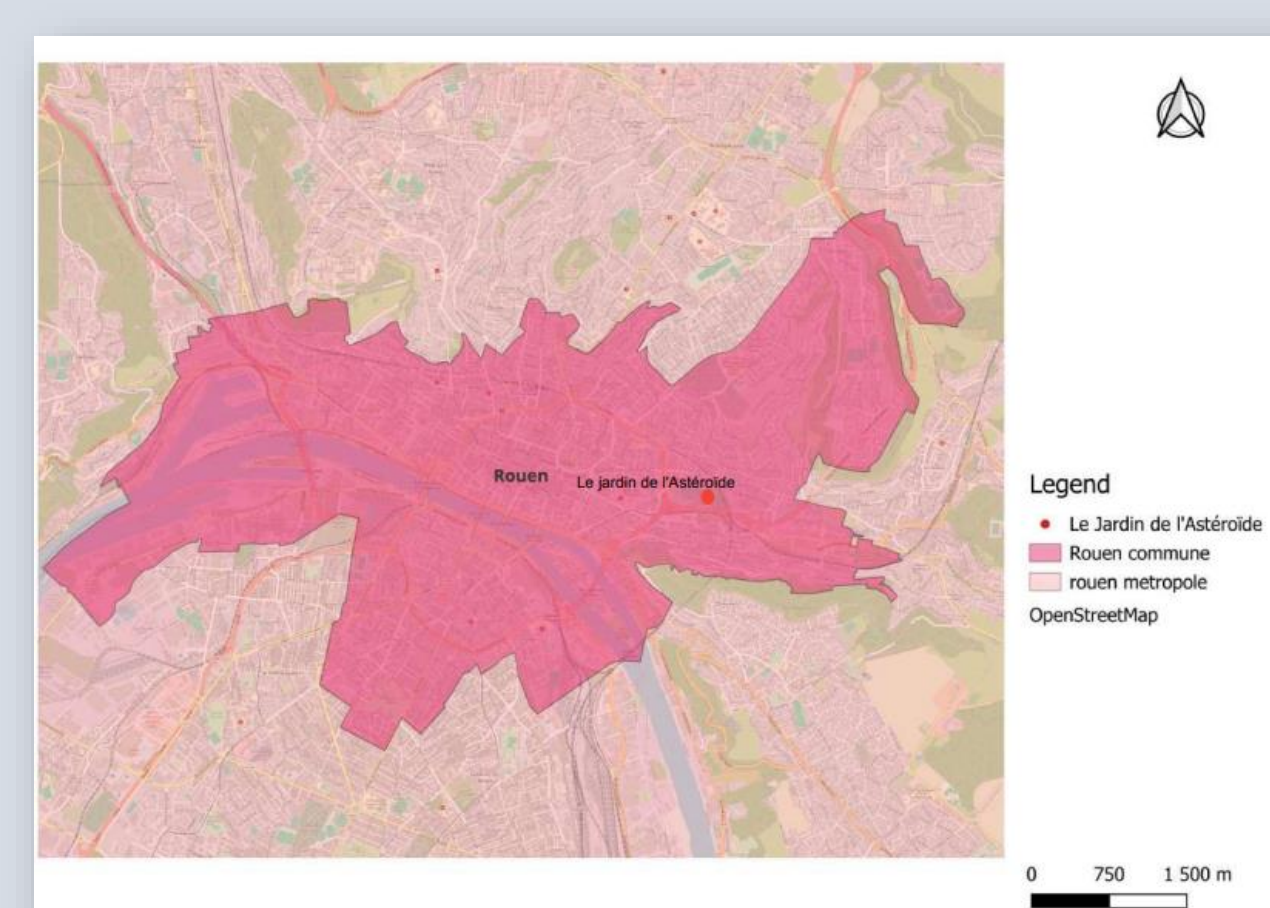


Figure 3: Location of both sites of "Le Jardin de l'Astéroïde" in the city of Rouen using QGIS Software. (Source: the authors)



2- Economical, social and environmental aspects:

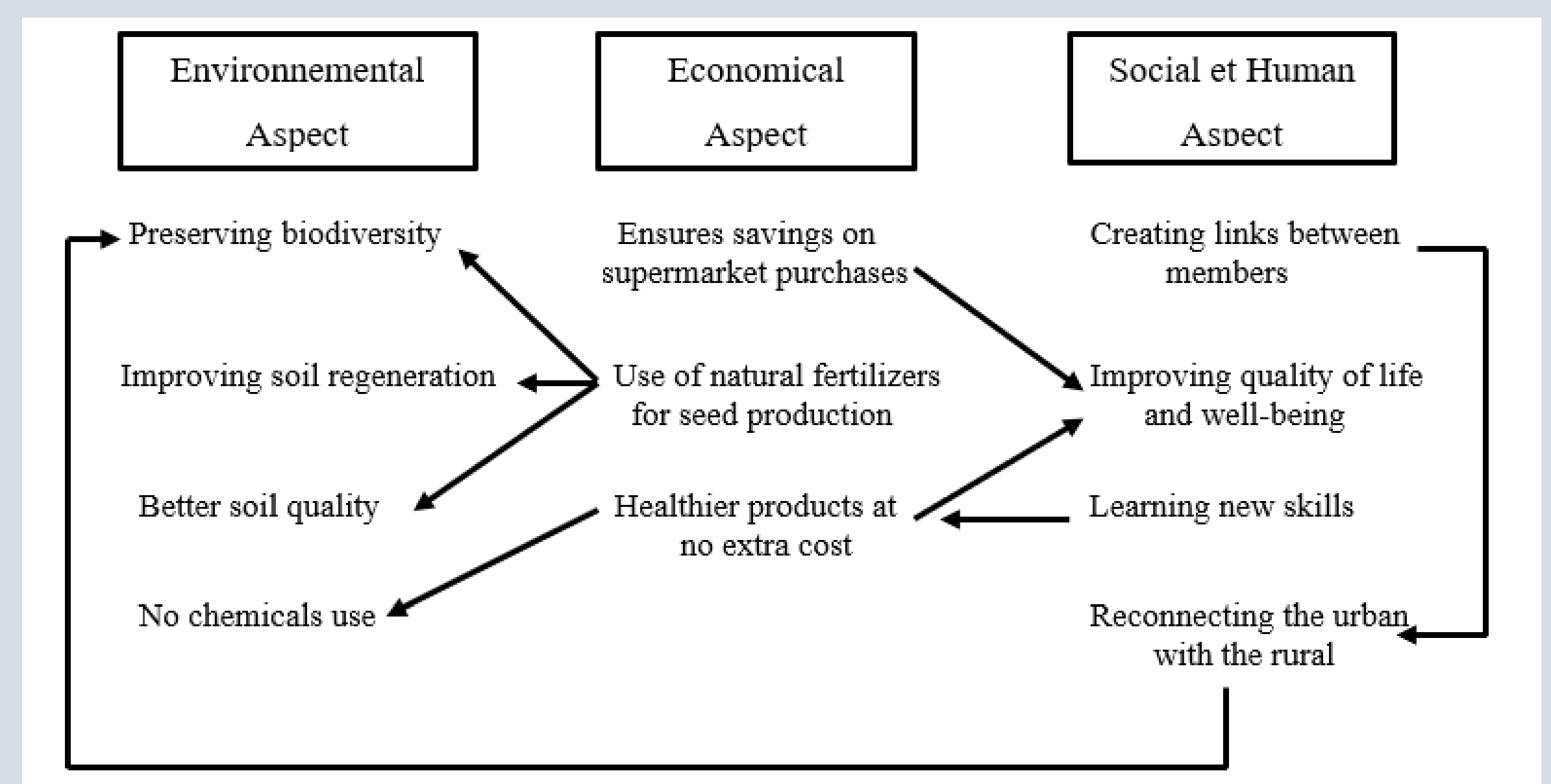


Figure 4: Economic, social and environmental aspects identified from the interviews (Source: Boukharta et al., 2024b)

Results:

1. Presentation of the Cases

Case 1: « Le champ des Possibles »

Non-profit association that aims to help people eat better by educating them about dietary diversity, food consumption and food processing at all stages. It covers two sites that were previously industrial estates, both located in the Rouen. The association focuses on the educational and social aspects, where they organize constructive weekly activities and workshops for residents, and educational sessions for children.

They apply the "farm to fork" concept, where all the produce harvested from the garden is cooked by the members, in a kitchen they have within the community garden. also promoting an economic aspect, where they sell the seedlings at local markets, on-site, at open days or directly to clients, as well as renting and paying for certain equipment that enables them to make a profit.

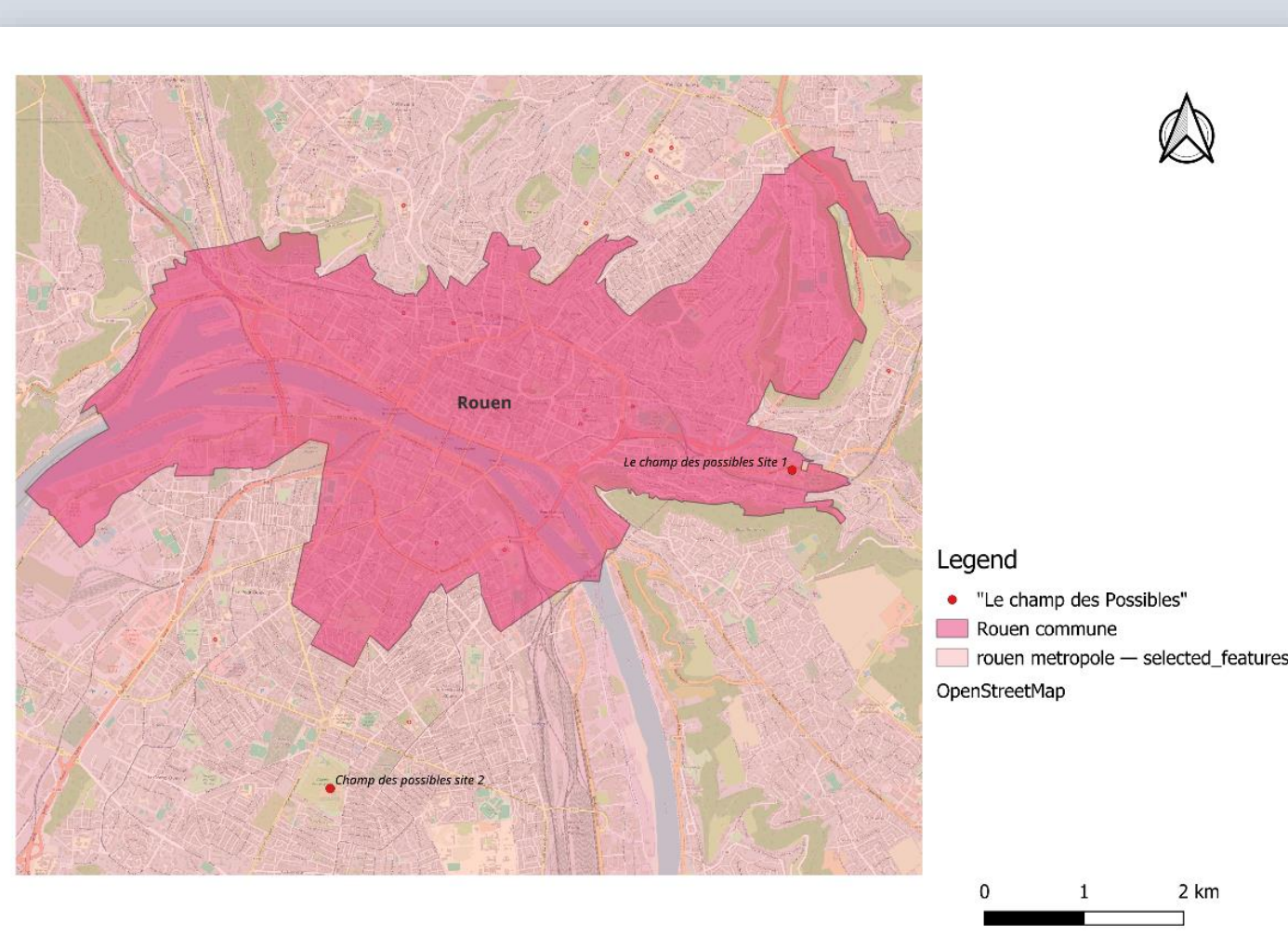


Figure 2: Location of both sites of "Le Jardin de l'Astéroïde" in the city of Rouen using QGIS Software. (Source: the authors)

3- Governance structure and coordination mechanisms:

The governance of "Le Champ des Possibles" can be considered a non-profit association, since it carries out its educational and learning activities, while also having a developed economic component. The association is financed by the Metropole and the city of Rouen, as well as by donations from volunteers and participants. As far as "le Jardin de l'Astéroïde" is concerned, it is a non-profit association, as none of the participants has the right to sell the produce. This urban garden currently receives no support from any entity, as they believe that the annual fees participants pay to rent the plot each year are sufficient. Concerning the organization of the value chain, both entities have a well-structured office consisting of a president, director, employees and interns, and where each employee has his or her own task, but always strives to help the other achieve its goals.

Discussion and conclusion:

Urban agriculture in cities has attracted growing interest due to its potential benefits in terms of socio-cultural development, public health, the environment and the economy (Santo et al., 2016). Urban agriculture offers various benefits and contributes to our quality of life, health and physical and moral well-being, demonstrating the importance of involving and integrating urban spaces into our daily lives. To this end, local authorities are encouraging these projects and increasingly setting up subsidies to facilitate their involvement within cities, with urban agriculture now becoming a key research area due to its relevance to current challenges (Türker and Akten, 2022). The structure of governance mechanisms is well defined in both cases, enabling initiatives to identify their needs with the state, the metropolis, the towns of Rouen, etc.

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