

Food4Sustainability

Summary report of the workshop with social actors of the 15th of May 2014

1.1 Proceedings of the workshop

18:00 - Introduction from Olivier De Schutter

18:30 – Exchange of question/answer

18:45 – Presentation of the transdisciplinary methodology and the worldcafé (Tom Dedeurwaerdere)

19:00 – Sandwiches break

19:15 - World café

20:15 – Plenary discussion and little reports of each table

Approximately 40 social actors were present at the worldcafé.

1.2 World-café report

The worldcafé has been organized around two main research topics : Policy issues and organizational features of transition initiatives. For each topic, we have selected 4 key concepts to guide the discussion. There were 6 discussion tables (2 pure French speaking, 2 pure Dutch speaking, 2 mixed).

1. First topic : Policy issues

a. Needs

- ✓ Appropriate legal framework
- ✓ Policy that provide links between alternative currencies/social financing and agri-food transition
- ✓ Need for a public fund mandated to support SME's with very risky-innovative projects
- ✓ Education specifically targeted to small producers
- ✓ Norms for direct selling rather than industrial norms (AFSCA)

b. Barriers

- ✓ Lack of autonomy given to social actors in subsidy schemes, all is pre-defined in advance
- ✓ (*"call for projects" would have some more possibility for autonomy, compared to pre-defined subsidy schemes*)
- ✓ Difficult to obtain other forms of financing: bank loans and even crowd funding (have to follow FSMA procedures)
- ✓ Inappropriate legal frameworks oriented to large scale, high input ("competitive") agri-food production (*AFSCA/FAVV, etc...*)
- ✓ Existence of a "grey zone" for innovative initiatives (e.g. complementary currencies, foodbaskets, etc.) that are "in advance" compared to existing laws.
- ✓ Complementary currencies : top-down vs bottom-up (seen as hobbies); problem to use CC in his profession
- ✓ Some Legislation does not fit well with small farms i.e Tax on added value
- ✓ Land access: price has been raised - key problem around cities - Back to feudalism?
- ✓ Few cooperatives in our agricultural landscape. why? Is It cultural, institutional, etc?

c. *Role of policy*

The state should play the role of a “chef d’orchestre” rather than command-and-control: framing the issue, allowing discussion to take place, building vision and cohesion among the actors, creating synergies, allowing things to emerge. Ex: Complementary currency for Flemish ecological goods, policy support through fiscal incentives, etc.

d. *Best practices*

- ✓ Participatory definition of code of producers’ control of food safety of bee hives (bee hive producers with food security agency AFSCA/FAVV) + participatory guarantee systems PGS (IFOAM)
- ✓ Dutch government regulation on tax exemption for alternative currency
- ✓ When the initiatives fall within a “grey zone” regarding legal framework, it was suggested to look for “temporary agreements” (before adequate legislation is put in place). The actors would then at least know what they are allowed or not allowed to do. Participants also suggested to use a more democratic and participatory process in defining new legislation adapted to their initiatives
- ✓ Intermarché: campaign on “ugly vegetables” (les légumes moches).
- ✓ Vlaams Brabant: distribution platform for short chain products (to lower costs in logistics, which is an important additional cost for small volume chains).
- ✓ “Alliances emploi-environnement”: people are on board from the beginning, they co-design policy; multi-stakeholders: avoids clichés like “good consumer” and “bad entrepreneur”
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2. Second topic: Features of successful social innovation

a. *Internal Organization*

Réseau GASAP: centralization and decentralization.

- Centralization of some tasks: same farmers for all, communication, practical tools
- Decentralization : autonomy of each groups, stimulation of a neighbourhood, horizontal decision-making

Agricovert : sociocracy (to allow to the minority to express themselves); collective decision-making (they have work-group for farmer, consumer and workers of the coop) but strict hierarchal implementation of the decision.

RCR : CA has decided to be as diversified as possible but they don't really take long-term decisions. They have many volunteers who have power both for the decision-making and for their implementation. They work "in duo" with the employee. All the decisions are taken in a horizontal manner and in sociocracy.

Terre-en-vue: different legal structures according to the they missions (coop, foundation, ASBL). Contrary to the legal framework in France (as for Terre de liens), the "SCRL à finalité sociale" allows to create democratic and common goods tools.

b. *Outside networking*

Link between RCR, GASAP, VOEDSELTEAM : exchange of knowledge, tools and good practices + Advocacy.

RCR : facilitator for the creation of groups of citizens gathered around the theme of responsible consumption. They don't want to interfere in their organization (self-management). They try to have an ambassador in each Walloon region.

GASAP : they try to foster their local groups. Their local groups have to respect their charter to be included in the movement. It is difficult to be collaborative with all the actors of the transition : they feel in competition with economic actors (actors in transition that want to make profit). They are afraid to be squeezed by them or to lose their public. They only collaborate with radical niches.

Terre-en-vue : their objective is to teach their values and means to spread out by life-long learning.

Synergies amongst various initiatives are important to tackle interlinked issues that cannot be solved by one social innovation alone (financing, direct consumer/producer food distribution, catering in collectivities, etc.). However, these actors have to know and to trust each others. Therefore it is possible to build upon social capital or to start from other non agri-food networks where such social capital is already present.

c. *Membership rules*

Terre en vue : They first created a vision shared amongst all the members. ‘*What kind of agriculture do we want for the future ?*’ In a second step, they built their structure (ASBL) that is coherent with their vision. They are really open to new membership (multi-stakeholders) if they share their common values.

RCR : They don’t have any charter (only their status of the ASBL). Their goal is to promote the diversity of the initiatives. However, they have an internal document that guide them for the initiatives they want to deeply support (self-management, citizen-led, non-profit objectives, etc..). Each initiative develops their own project and take part in the activities of the RCR if they want. RCR doesn’t impose anything.

GASAP: They have a strong charter and all the groups need to adhere to this charter to become member of the network. The charter is really radical and they are proud of it. As they say, its leads to a homogenization of the initiatives which has pros and cons. They say that it leads to less diversity and maybe a loose of creativity...

According to all the table, the mode of organization is the central point for a robust and sustainable organization/initiative.

b. *Best practices*

For CSA, the role of *transparency* is crucial, not only for financial but also on content issues (what are we going to grow, how much, ...)

Slow growth. You need time to consult people, to get people involved. This helps a lot when you are confronted with problems / times of crises in your project.

To *adapt the boundaries to the system*. It is not possible to make all decisions with all the stakeholders. They start from a frame where core principles are defined. That is the identity of the group. Within this frame, it is a selected focus group (of most motivated people) that develops ideas. This focus group communicates and checks its ideas with a forum, a broader group of people. The forum may give input to the ideas. Once this process is fulfilled, the we communication with the public can be done.

Networking between similar initiatives: sharing expertise, experience, information (reciprocity)