Towards deep changes for a more resilient farming system: Examining roles farmers, science and citizens can play in transition

Stéphanie Klaedtke

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Towards deep changes for a more resilient farming system: Examining roles farmers, science and citizens can play in transition

Stephanie Klaedtke
PhD-student co-supervised by
Véronique Chable (INRA SAD Paysage)
and Pierre M. Stassart (ULg SEED)

Science and Citizens Meet Challenges of Sustainability
University of Luxembourg, April 29th 2014
Content

• Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region
• Introduction to different research models
• Example: PhD research on plant health
• Research postures
• Participatory approaches to other societal issues
• Conclusions
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

**Organic agriculture**

- Action plan for organic agriculture established since 2009
- 2013: 5.6 % of Luxembourgish farms organic (ASTA, 2013)
- Luxembourgish production far from sufficient to meet demand
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

Organic agriculture

Study on organic farmers in Wallonia shows diversity among this group:

- Schools of thought and practices at the origins of organic farming
- Networks and types of institutions
- Personal trajectories and entry points

- Holistic research approach
- Basis for common action and social learning processes in research

Audrey Vankeerberghen (2012)
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

Project began in 2003 and established a beef production system and brand by 2007

Project set out to:

- Develop a beef production radically different from the locked-in *Blanc Bleu Belge*
- Build on co-constructed knowledge to form a new type of organization

*Pierre M. Stassart and Didier Stimant (2012)*
Le boeuf belge. A votre santé...

C'est le thème que l'ORPAH (Office Régional de Promotion de l'Agriculture et de l'Horticulture) a choisi pour mener une vaste campagne d'information sur le monde bovin belge.

En effet, dès sa naissance, chaque bovin est identifié par deux marques auriculaires qui correspondent à une carte d'identité qui porte le nom officiel de "document d'identification".

La Belgique se pose en véritable "modèle européen" et son système sanitaire mis en place depuis 1987 lui a permis d'être le meilleur élève de l'Europe.

Les contrôles sanitaires les plus sévères. Demandez la brochure d'info/consommateurs à votre boucher lors de votre prochaine visite.
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

Participatory research approach:

- Establish **think tanks** of farmers, consumers and environmentalists
- Discuss and reflect on problem, **define issues** to be treated
- Define **territory** for project: *Gaume*
- Define **production system** (oxen)
- Construct **specification sheet**
- Establish **brand** and marketing

*Pierre M. Stassart and Didier Stimant (2012)*
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

The protein issue: Feed

66 M t of animal feed needed worldwide per annum

Animal feed in average: 60% cereals, 40% protein
78% of protein fodder imported into EU, mostly GM soybean from Brazil, Argentinia and Paraguay (20 M ha)

Legume crops for Europe:
New varieties
Revive know-how

Steffi Zimmer (ibla.lu)
www.agrarkoordination.de
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

The protein issue: Food

Meat consumption:
- Industrialised countries 79 kg per capita
- Developing countries 33 kg pc

Energy conversion:

- Meat consumption entails industrial production methods which are uncoupled from locally available land surface

www.agrarkoordination.de
“Fleischatlas 2014”
What do these issues have in common?

Locked-in situations call for…

- Change in ways of thinking and in practice

  **Innovation**: An idea (knowledge), product or process, after undergoing research and development (formal or informal), is incorporated into production or practice (Uddin 2006).

- Action and social learning with stakeholders

- Participatory and engaged approaches to research - Mere facts do not change practices
Bawden’s quadrant

**Action-research model**
Knowledge is produced within (inter-)action
Knowledge situated and embedded in a context

**Field-type research model**
Abstract explanation of how the world functions (modelling)
Results considered universal

**Laboratory-type research model**
Analysis of a simplified part of the world under controlled conditions
Results considered universal

**Ego-centricity**

*Richard Bawden (1997)*
PhD research:
Plant adaptation and plant health in a context of on-farm breeding of common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) in European organic farms

**Context:** Initial question, emerged from a *hot debate* *Michel Callon (1999)*

Artisan seed producers:
How can we show that the phytosanitary regulation classifying *Xanthomonas axonopodis pv. phaseoli* as quarantine pest on bean seed is not coherent with production practices and experiences?
Hypothesis: Two points of view on plant health

View on crops and pathogens, often studied under controlled conditions

„We must eliminate plant pathogens and pests to limit crop losses and maximize yields.“

View on the entire system in the aim of resilience and adaptive processes, based on practical experience

„How can I manage my crops to allow for a stable production via natural methods?“

⇒ Develop an approach to bean health in partnership with concerned farmers from their point of view

⇒ Develop notions of adaptation, resilience and a procedural approach to plant health

Döring et al. (2012)
The project from a farmer’s point of view: Frank Adams
Approach and methods

- **Man**
  - On-farm innovation → Joint action
  - Practices, organisation, perceptions → Semi-directive interviews

- **Plants**

- **Micro-organisms**

- **Biological adaptation processes** → field trials
Approach and methods (II)
Field trials:
Local adaptation and interactions with microorganisms

2012:
Adaptation: Germination rates, yields,...
Plant Health: Symptoms and seed contamination
Interactions with symbiotic microorganisms: Mycorrhiza, Rhizobia
Qualitative study: Semi-directive interviews

How do producers, researchers and other stakeholders deal with plant health?

- Artisan and industrial producers, researchers, institutions
- Values, practices, organisation
Common action

**Objective:**
To interact with producers who have an interest in traditional varieties and artisan seed production learn about their practices in crop diversity and plant health management

To approach the management system as a whole

**Examples:**

**Beggen (LU):** First takes on seed production, sensory tests by clients

**Ansembourg (LU), Aquitaine and Brittany (FR):** Selection of bean plants
Challenges to action research: On research postures

**Action-research model**
Researcher is also an actor in the world studied

**Field-type research model**
Researcher as objective, neutral observer

**Laboratory-type research model**
Researcher as objective, neutral observer

*Richard Bawden (1997)*
Challenges to action research: On research postures

Three approaches possible in participatory research (Hubert 2013):

• Build alliances between research and civil society to **transform inventions into innovation**

• Involve local non-scientists in research to entrust them with **certain tasks** according to their expertise, competence and practice

• Create conditions for **social learning** between researchers and research partners (action-research)
This rings a bell...
Diverse forms citizen science has taken

Depth of citizen engagement (towards science on tap)

Contributionary  Collaborative  Co-creative

Reach and significance of scientific contribution

Adapted from Ballard 2014
Challenges to action research: On research postures

Involved research - *Recherche impliquée* (Mougenot 2011):

- The researcher gets fully involved with a project, an action, a social movement and accepts risks and uncertainties related to an evolving context.

- Through its contextualization in a hot debate, the research has the potential to involve a multitude of actors who may relate to each other as allies or opponents.

- This also means involving their modes of action. Beyond scientific results, such research has the potential of producing tensions, debates on acquired knowledge and social learning processes.
Participatory approaches:
Community-based auditing

Community Based Auditing (CBA) is a tool for empowering citizens to undertake disciplined inquiry into issues relating to natural resource planning and management (Tattersall, 2003).

Example: Tasmanian Community Resource Auditors Inc. (Australia)

Two steps:
i. Auditing process: Data collection, ‘hard science’
ii. ‘Soft science’: Views, perceptions and emotion enter the process

- Answer to the concerns of increasing numbers of citizens seeking direct input into resource planning and management
- Citizens are ‘experts in their own locale’ (extended peer review)
- Acknowledge and deal with uncertainty
Action research cycle

Plan
Audit team meets to discuss issues and context

Review
Meet to discuss findings and what they mean
Reflect on experiences

Act
Gather data and information

Adapted from P. Reason (1994) and Tattersall (2003)
Participatory approaches:  
Participatory guarantee systems

Locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange (IFOAM 2014).

**Example**: Nature & Progrès (France)

- Groups of consumers and producers visit farms for quality assurance
- Alternative and complementary tool to third-party certification (EU regulation)
- Form of social coordination: Based on social learning as opposed to market
What do these approaches have in common?

- Citizens are brought into decision-making processes and are no longer regarded as clients
- Ongoing process: cycle, constant challenge to accepted norms
- Aiming at societal change
- Social learning and personal development as important results
Conclusions

- A number of agricultural issues call for changes in how we learn, what we know and how we act
- Participatory and action-based forms of research and organization need to be acknowledged
- Appropriate concepts, methods and research postures need to be adopted
Thank you
Some agricultural issues in the Greater Region

The protein issue: Food

- Deforestation
- Chemical inputs
- Prone to epidemics
- Loss of biological diversity
- Global market concentration
- Animal rights?

"Fleischatlas 2014"