

# Workshop 6: Participatory Action Research for Agroecology Territories

Convenors: Claire Heinisch, Jean-François Vian, Perrine Vandembroucke, Joséphine Peigné (ISARA-Lyon, France)

## Impulse talks:

- Perrine Vandembroucke, Hélène Brives, Marion Casagrande, Camille Clément, Claire Heinisch, Joséphine Peigné, Jean-François Vian (ISARA-Lyon) – “Towards agroecology territory: the challenge of enrolling multiple stakeholders in participatory action research (TERRAE project)”
- Mary Guillaume (Gembloux, Belgium) – “Co-designing a decision-support tool with farmers as the basis for collective action and participatory approach”
- Marzia Ranaldo, Paolo Bàrberi & Stefano Carlesi (Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Italy) – “Agroecological Innovations for Resilience and Sustainability of Alpine Livestock Farming Systems (INVERSION)”

In this workshop, three examples of Participatory Action Research (PAR) were exposed, from France, Belgium and Italy. The example from France is a PAR that aims at studying and supporting transitions to agroecology territories and answering the needs of soil fertility, food system organization and governance, and inhabitants’ involvement. This is a long-term research project based in three regions around Lyon. The second impulse dealt with an economic assessment of organic farms research in the Walloon region that ends by the co-development of a user-friendly farm management tool named “TresoGest”. This tool benefits to farmers, and also to the researcher than can collect data easily. Finally, the Italian PAR is just starting and answered the need of dairy farmers of the Adige valley facing identity loss and economic issues in their job. The research aims for more agroecological practices in animal farming and for improved market opportunities.

The collective discussion pointed out that an important challenge of PAR is to break down the barriers between “experts” and “non-experts”, thus, it is crucial to have a posture of shared knowledge. There is a need to be experienced and trained to conduct good PAR and to master the different levels of participation. It was also highlighted that using user-friendly tools and teaching farmers to be “scientists” can be very useful in PAR.

The workshop raised the questions of funding and evaluation processes of research: PAR projects require flexibility from the donors (to adjust methods and objectives) and the valorization of all different outcomes (not only scientific papers but also shared knowledge with farmers, tools designed, etc.). In that respect, the evaluation criteria of researchers should be adapted in order to better take into account involvement in PAR, in producing tools, in building shared knowledge, in popularizing science and results etc. Finally, the involvement of multiple stakeholders in PAR projects raised the question of the ownership of data, results, tools, etc. that are built collectively.