Towards bridging the scientists-practitioners divide

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SESSION 10: connecting local agroecological initiatives with scientific research in European context

#AEEUFORum2023
Outline: Presentation about innovation-oriented research

1. Agroecology-TRANSECT in a nutshell
2. Introducing the guiding ideas of AE-TRANSECT
3. The Learning approach and learning cycle in the project
4. Presentation of the Causal Analysis as a tool to move forward
Agroecology-TRANSECT objectives

Our manifesto

“Sustainable farming is no longer an option; it’s an absolute necessity.

We know we need to shift understanding of agriculture from one of “working the land” to one of “working with nature”.

The solution exists and it can mitigate climate change and improve biodiversity.

And we know that it is not just sustainable for the planet, but sustainable for the economy and livelihoods. We call it Agroecology”.

TRANSECT is the acronyme for Trans-disciplinary approaches for Systemic economic, Ecological and Climate change Transitions.
Agroecology-TRANSECT objectives

Unfolding potential of AE for European agriculture by:

• Developing robust evidence of positive effects of Agroecology on climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and farm socio-economic resilience

• Mobilizing and contributing to knowledge in 11 Innovation Hubs engaged in agroecological transformation for > 4 yrs

• Demonstrating opportunities and constraints of local unfolding of Agroecology from individual to EU policy levels
Agroecology-TRANSECT and Change

Guiding ideas on our Role in Change Processes

We consider AE-TRANSECT as a temporary travel companion to innovators:

• Create locally relevant knowledge
• Use ‘generic’ scientific knowledge to enhance local capacities
• Empower initiatives to unfold agroecology locally, “to anchor”
Actionable Knowledge in Agroecology-TRANSECT

Guiding idea in Science-Society interfaces

What is thus actionable knowledge? Context-specific knowledge that assists actors in their decision-making to be better positioned to achieve their goals.

Adopted from: Tittonell 2014; Gliessman, 15, Ch. 22
Learning our way to Agroecology

Guiding idea on the co-innovation approach

How do we see the world: *Framing*

Are we doing the right things? *Reflexivity*

Intervention and Responses: *Anticipating the unexpected*

(Rossing et al., 2010, 2021)
Structuring the Multi-actor approach through Co-innovation Workshops

Workshop 1 activities:
- Formulation of vision and mission
- Causal analysis
- Network analysis

*Output: Action Plan for validation in IH*

Workshop 2 and next:

*Input: IH Learning Histories + cross-analysis*
- Insights from science (in the IHs and elsewhere)
- Rethinking the strategy: peer-to-peer; ...

*Output: Action Plan for validation in IH*
Learning cycles at Innovation Hub and Project level

- CIW: March - May
- Action Plan: June - July
- Reflection Call: November - December
- Check-In Call: February

LEARNING HISTORY
Causal Analysis – the Causal Tree

- Discover causes and effects of key problems
- To create a shared view on root causes and ultimate consequences of key problems obstructing the IH vision
- To identify the entry points: root causes that can be influenced

What are problems we wish to mitigate?

What causes the key problem?

What does it result in?

Entry Points

Root cause  Root cause  Root cause

Ultimate consequence  Ultimate consequence  Ultimate consequence

Key problem

Consequence  Consequence

Following presentations

1. Agroecology-TRANSECT in a nutshell
2. Guiding ideas of AE-TRANSECT
3. The Learning approach and learning cycle in the project
4. IH Slovenia – Čarna d.o.o.
5. What the project brought the IH
6. Mapping Methodology – Social Network Analysis
7. Barriers and levers to AE transition
IH Slovenia – Čarna d.o.o.

Pioneering organic veggie box scheme in Slovenia, since 2009

- Certified organic only
- Focus on working with small family farms (70+ farms)
- Keen eye on our own impact, looking for possibilities to improve

The majority of people enjoy and value healthy, tasty, local food, while farmers have fair pay and see the worth of continuing the extra effort in sustainable agriculture
Steps towards becoming an IH & Transitioning towards higher levels of AE

• Reducing impact now >50% of boxes delivered by bike

• Increasing availability of local products throughout the year

• Pioneering simple tools for small farm application

• Experimental farm set up
What the project brought so far

Advantages of being part of a multi-stakeholder project

- **Self-reflection** and evaluation on past achievements and lessons, as well as future goals
- **Access to diverse experiences, knowledge** and **tools** supportive on our path towards reaching our goals
- **New opportunities** arise to focus, redirect, improve activities, shortcut some potential mistakes

Expectations

- **Evidence** of positive AE impacts on biodiversity, resilience both climate and economic
- **Documented impact reduction** of our business
- **Established** knowledge hub for high level AE farming **among farmers**
Established small companies & large EU projects

Needs & potential pitfalls

• **Take the time** to build a common language: coming from different spheres (large research institutions versus small private companies or NGOs)

• Streamline **communication**: as much as is necessary, as concise as possible

• One-stop-shop access points i.e. One main contact person to channel requests (both directions)

• **Support cross-fertilization early on** to avoid danger of silos

• Take time to celebrate
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Mapping in Agroecology-TRANSECT

- Support provided by the travel companion

Co-innovation

Initiative development

Mapping methodology

History

Future

To build a common understanding and learn from each other
To reinforce critical thinking on their own dynamic
Mapping methodology

Focus on 4 elements

1. Context
2. Degree of agroecological transition
3. Social network
4. Barriers and levers to AE transition

11 Innovation Hubs

Semi-directe interviews
Social network analysis

- **Nodes**: Identify actors and their field of action
- **Edges**: Relations between actors, weighted according to number of different interactions
- **Network metrics** to identify key actors
Social network analysis

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Barriers and levers to AE transition

- **Nodes**: Identify barriers and levers
- **Edges**: Impact between barriers and levers
- **Network metrics** to identify key barriers and levers
Barriers and levers to AE transition

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![Diagram showing Slovenian IH with nodes and edges representing barriers and levers.](Image)
Mapping in Agroecology-TRANSECT

Support provided by the travel companion

Initiative development

Co-innovation

History

Future

Mapping methodology

To build a common understanding and learn from each other

To reinforce critical thinking on their own dynamic
Thank you for listening 😊

Follow us on X!

Hvala za vaše pozornost.

Köszönjük, hogy meghallgattak minket

agroecology-transect.net
Diversity of agroecology in Europe

Conditions for its development

Share your experience and connect with other initiatives in Europe!

Your initiative?
Your context?
What influences your development?
World Café

1. Why engage in a multiactor project?
2. What is needed to produce actionable knowledge
3. How to feed the agroecology movement

According to first letters of your Last name, without infix or prefix

From A to Gi
From Gr to Ram
From Ras to Z

• Please follow Adrien, Walter and Darleen to the 3 rooms
• In each room, 3 discussion tables
• Each table with +/- 10 people
• Round 1: 18 min
  Round 2: 14 min
  Round 3: 8 min