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Work Package 4: Local agri-food networks and environmental effects in Brittany
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Local Agri-Food Networks and Environmental Effects in Brittany

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0 Background

0.1 CRÊPE workshops in FRCIVAM activities on short food chains

FRCIVAM has been working on short food chains for 20 years. For a long period of time, short food chains (SFCs) initiatives were considered (at least in Brittany) as sparse individual initiatives, aiming at conquering niche markets for happy few farmers. In the early 2000s there was a sudden interest for SFCs. Lots of new initiatives appeared, such as the AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne # Association to support small farms), box schemes, delivery of local products ordered on internet, co-operative shops of farmers. At the same time, the most traditional practices got renewed: for instance new open air markets chose a 16:00 to 20:00 opening period instead of the usual 8:00 to 13:00, farm shops associated neighbours or complementary products to cover a wider range of consumer's needs.

This evolution was particularly explosive in Brittany. This region was, and still is, characterized by highly intensified farms that delegate all commercialisation tasks to co-ops or private firms. The number of initiatives on SFCs was thus very low when compared to other regions, and often presented as remnant of the past. To face the new favourable situation, new strategies were required from FRCIVAM. The choice that was made focused on territorial approaches meant to facilitate new initiatives by linking them to existing or emerging ones. It also means that FRCIVAM first considers everyday food, and how it can be (at least partly) produced locally, rather than selected food for special occasions, such as IGP. The everyday bread or potato rather than the exceptional cheese or brandy. As a federation of extension association, FRCIVAM chose 2 main lines

- To try to improve the practices of existing facilities, by organizing training sessions and exchanges between practitioners (popular education approach) ;
- To support integrated systemic strategies on territories, through a vivid co-operation with research, in order to understand the dynamics of SFCs, and present soundly rooted proposals to local authorities.

A first project of research was successfully presented to the Regional Council of Brittany. It was called SALT "Systèmes Alimentaires Territorialisés" (localized food systems). Though the funding was limited (3 stages of 25.000 € each, only paying 75 % of direct costs, without any permanent staff), it was very important in our strategy. We must stress that this project was funded under the line of co-operative research "Appropriation Sociale des Sciences", in the first call that was launched. It allowed us to have our first formal experience of co-operative research, as the co-ordinator of the project. The benefits were the following

- To have 3.5 years of duration to explore the question, whilst the projects duration for extensions agencies is generally 1 year ;
- To have an official opportunity to launch a co-operative work with research institutions (the official front line stakeholders were Agrocampus Ouest and Rennes 2 University) ;
- To attract and gather a reservoir of knowledge and skills to work permanently on this issue ;
- To have funding for direct costs on common concrete works with researchers, such as field enquiries, co-orientation of trainees, seminars.

The scope of the SALT program was mainly economy, aiming at characterizing and evaluating the economic effects of networked SFCs on a territory. But other issues were raised insistently, although we did not have time or budget for them. Environmental questions were central

- Many actors were seeing the growth of SFCs as a means to improve agriculture, transport and trade practises on food from an environmental point of view ;
- There existed very contradictory arguments on the environmental effects of SFCs.

For further reading, the relations between the SALT project and CRÉPE need to be explained

- . FRCIVAM led a project called SALT that worked on economic characteristics of SFCs in Brittany. This project had been funded by the regional council in the "co-operative research" line, called ASOSC (Appropriation Sociale des Sciences), since the beginning of 2007.
- . during this project we gathered a group of CSOs and academics to work on a systemic and territorial approach about economic issues. The two first line research institutions formally associated were Agrocampus Renens and the Rennes 2 University.
- . This SALT project was the laboratory to imagine CRÉPE, considering the dead ends and the lack of scientific references on SFCs and environment. A systemic economic approach needs environmental information to be relevant and useful for policy making, and the SALT project did not allow for adding such a research line. When CRÉPE started it allowed us to open a new research front on environment, based on the existing group with some newcomers for a better understanding of environmental issues. It means that most of the partners already knew each other.
- . CRÉPE developed 3 research lines (farm, global issues, local authorities, see 1.1). Workshops were regularly organized for specific meetings on CRÉPE issues and research lines, with field work undertaken by specific staff for CRÉPE. But interactions were needed with economy, specifically because the CRÉPE approach considers new economic options to promote sustainable practises amongst farmers: using SFCs means that market-related instruments such as public procurement or fair trade can be implemented together with, or instead of, "classical" economic tools in agriculture such as grants and subsidies. In those meetings there could be a morning session about SALT (economy) and an afternoon session on CRÉPE (environment) to integrate both visions in a sustainable development vision.

0.2 FRCIVAM approach in the scope of the CRÉPE workshops

The launching of CRÉPE was an opportunity to work on environmental issues, taking advantage of the formal co-operative links that existed between CSOs and research. Our intervention in CRÉPE is subsequently different from the other case studies that needed to build a specific, and new, working group to face both the research questions on agriculture and environment, and the co-operative research.

The SALT project had gathered a co-operative group of research, including FRCIVAM (co-ordinator), Agrocampus and the University of Rennes. This existing group, mainly working on territorial dynamics and economics, had developed specific "habits" (that were unformalized and thus can hardly be called "methods") that could provide an enlarged team with concrete references (acceptable timetable and duration of meetings, meeting management, presentation) for co-operative research. Our intention of dealing with CRÉPE as a study on how can co-operative research work as a common method led us to take advantage of the existing relations as a lever to move some steps forward. We thus kept the existing group, with its habits that could facilitate the integration of newcomers, and integrated newcomers to deal more directly with environmental issues. It meant

- . Inserting a new research field in an organized pattern that has been originally built to address economic issues, by enlarging the group. But the background and the skills of the researchers that participated could guarantee their ability to work on environmental questions from a sustainable development point of view ;
- . Taking time to reflect on what had been done spontaneously and naively before the SALT project, that gave its "core group" to CRÉPE, aimed at producing new results but without any focus on how

they were produced. CRÊPE was an opportunity to understand how to analyse and improve the life of the CSOs/researchers group.

Our case study is thus some kind of counter perspective to the other ones. Implicitly, CRÊPE construction supposes that co-operative research is

- (at least potentially) conflictive ;
- difficult to manage ;
- requiring specific methods ;
- exceptional.

We did our tasks as if co-operative research was

- (at least potentially) peaceful ;
- not more difficult to manage than any other collective project ;
- working with widely used “traditional” methods ;
- usual.

In this context, our specific role in CRÊPE was to study and clarify the conditions and requirements that make this day-to-day normal implementation of a project feasible. Co-operative research is considered until now an exceptional way of doing research. It is supported by specific funding schemes, such as “science in society” or ASOSC for Brittany regional council. But its social impact in the long run depends on its “conventionalisation”, or its ability to fit in with classical research funding schemes and classical research methods for implementing projects. Our overall goal is thus based on an “as if” perspective:

- . imagine co-operative research is a widespread route for research projects, thus using conventional tools for workshops and seminars (presentations, discussions,...) ;
- . imagine there is no specific funding for the co-operation quality in the process ;
- . then, would it be feasible or not to implement and manage a co-operative research process, produce and disseminate results ?

1 Aims

This background helps to understand why we designed the so-called “workshop” as a continuous process

- we did not need time to help everybody know each other ;
- there was a former cultural impregnation that gave us marks to know what was possible to do and what was hazardous ;
- we had some clear ideas of the major research questions that were worth treating, and those ideas had already been shared in the group. It was not a top-down trickling from a project that had been written one year sooner, but questions that still remained as background needs that were not addressed by lack of time and funding.

1.1 General aims

The general aims had been identified when CRÊPE was written. But, as it is said above, the group that had imagined CRÊPE, the SALT consortium, went on meeting and working on SALT issues. This continuity helped us avoid negative effects during the long phase of expectation that occurred between the time the project was written and the time we could concretely work. CSOs are not used to such a long time, and expectation generally makes people turn to other urgent or useful tasks and forget what had been written more than one year before. Keeping on working with the core SALT group helped us “keep the pan on the fire” to be able to have a quick start as soon as we knew that concrete work was authorized.

Three main research lines were expected, focused on each one of the three major actors that intervene in SFCs development

- Line 1 - Production approach / farmers: are there some links between environmentally virtuous practises in the farm and commercialisation in SFCs ?
- Line 2 - Consumption and global issues approach / consumers and intermediaries: what are the main environmental effects to consider in the food chain (after production), and where do they come from: processing, transport, delivery, home cooking ? This line finally focused on energy and greenhouse gas emissions, because a broader approach was unlikely to produce effective results, and this topic is much controversial both in research and for practitioners.
- Line 3 - Strategic approach / local authorities: what kind of environmental benefits are expected from SFCs at territorial scale ?

The general aims of the working group, that regularly met during the workshops, were to produce new knowledge and methods on these 3 lines. They were addressed successively, the first two ones first, and the third one afterwards. It means that the CRÊPE workshops included the topics one and two at the same time, and the topic three after the conclusion of those ones.

FRCIVAM, as the one and only integrant of CRÊPE, added the specific issue of understanding how co-operative research works “without knowing”. That’s why the co-operative process was not a central issue in the successive meetings of the “workshop”. We did not want the stakeholders to feel as guinea-pigs for an experiment, and on the contrary wanted to assess what happens spontaneously.

1.2 Specific aims

The workshops were designed as the crossroads in a permanent process of monitoring and exchange. They “obliged” all partners to present and discuss their results and ideas on the 3 research lines, and participate in building a common culture on the basis of external shared information (for instance the results of the regional observatory of short food chains in organic farming). From the experience of SALT, we knew that meeting every 2 or 3 months is a condition to maintain a collective spirit and involvement.

The workshops had 3 aims:

1. to research questions concerning short food chains and environment using the 3 research lines;
2. to monitor the co-operative processes in the project (workshops and continuous tasks);
3. to build and maintain co-operative involvement of all actors.

As it is stated above, the CRÊPE works were integrated in regularly scheduled meetings, that used the methods that had proven satisfactory. The workshops aimed at covering all research tasks as if it were a “normal” project with “normal” methods and in the usual way:

- . Organizing the co-operative tasks involving research and CSOs. The workshops were the time and the place where ideas or needs expressed by CSOs got formalized in research questions, and the questions or concepts posed by researchers came confronted to field work.
- . Deciding and building research methods to answer to the research questions.
- . Sharing and discussing the results, and eventually re-orient the research methods and tasks.
- . Steering the research missions developed by the whole group, especially co-orient the trainees.
- . Disseminating the results to other research programmes and other CSOs, and integrating at the same time relevant results from those programmes.

The first four aims are focused on the internal life of the project, with regional stakeholders participating with regularity. The third aim has a broader approach, and gathers external partners, from other regions (Paris, Montpellier, Angers), intervening for specific occasions.

It has been decided now to organize “more than a workshop” in April 2010. The second conference on territorial food systems in Brittany will have half of the time dedicated to CRÊPE results. The first one in 2008 gathered 220 participants from Brittany and other regions. We waited to be sure to have relevant results gained through CRÊPE before we decided to focus the event on them. This will probably be a strong dissemination tool, in tune with co-operative research as it will be co-led by FRCIVAM and a research institution, and make scientific knowledge available and accessible on a very polemical issue.

2 Preparation process

Each workshop was prepared, under the responsibility of FRCIVAM, by a committee involving CSOs and research. On each topic, the field data collection was made by a MSc student, co-oriented by a professor (from Agrocampus for 2 of them, from Rennes 2 University for 1 of them) on research methods and questions, and an officer from FRCIVAM for field work and practical measures. In fact, such a formal division did not happen and the co-orientation process involved each co-orientator both for scientific and practical needs.

For each session of the workshop, there was a previous programming committee to insert the CRÊPE session in schedule of the day.

As pointed before, we avoided to adopt specific methods. The CRÊPE discussions had to fit in what could be in the future a “normal” workshop scheme in a “normal” project, considering that co-operative research has to become a mainstreamed method. The means that the methods we used were thus the classical ones

- Previous sending, before the workshop, of the main documents ;
- Presentation of the issues to address (orally when it needed a collective decision on practical issues, with ppt presentation for the scientific methods or results) ;
- Oral discussion of the issue ;
- Decision (if needed) or shared conclusions ;

- Follow-up actions ;
- Workshop report revised first by 3 persons from FRCIVAM then by all.

3 Participants

Table 1 shows the number of participants in each workshop, according to the 4 profiles we identified

- Extension partners are CSOs representatives, either employees or elected members of the board (mainly farmers) ;
- Research partners are the “permanent partners” of the project or researchers from other projects in France that are relevant to feed CRÉPE with results and integrate our own ones ;
- Authorities are one of the main targets for dissemination. Their presence was more important at the beginning to have them involved in the whole project. Now dissemination is made in each of the leading territories (Rennes Métropole, Pays de Dinan, Pays du Centre Ouest Bretagne) and other regions (Pays du Centre Bretagne, Pays de Rennes, Pays du Haut Maine Mayennais, Pays de Pontivy) directly through local committees, steered by a contact person.
- Students can be seen both as CSOs (most of them are trainees under the responsibility of a CSO) and as research members (master students co-oriented by research institutions, or “apprentice researchers”).

It must be stressed that this distinction would not have been so clear for an external observer. We happened to have attendees that were not accustomed to the group (farmers joining the group for one workshop, caterer who participated for some time before lunch because the discussion interested her). The status of some of the participants was not clear, , and the external participants asked us who was such person. Was he or she an extensionist or a researcher ? It seems that some persons in the group (and some of them had an experience in both functions) developed an in-between culture and expression that helped bridging the actors.

<i>date</i>	<i>extension</i>	<i>research</i>	<i>authorities</i>	<i>students</i>	<i>Total</i>
04-04-08	8	5	3	2	18
12-06-08	7	8	4	2	21
05-12-08	6	3	1		10
06-03-09	6	5	2	3	16
18-06-09	5	3		5	13
29-09-09	5	3	1	2	11

Table 1: number of participants in each workshop

We can observe a decline in the trend of number of participants. It is probably linked to the fact that during this time territorial committees were launched and started working. People thus had the opportunity to take part in the project with less transport.

4 Workshop process

4.1 Description of the workshop process

CRÊPE issues were not addressed in the beginning of the workshops. They always started with some concrete information to share or practical decision to make, in order to create a collaborative climate.

As can be seen on table 2, the 3 main research fields were discussed at least 3 times, according to the same pattern

1. a first discussion to agree on the definition of the research questions and the overall methodology of the research (this step had been done for the research at farm and level and energy issues when the project started), named “launching” in table 2
2. 1 or 2 discussions as a steering committee to understand the first steps of the research, the potential results and the problems, and to improve methodological and scientific questions. In fact, for all of the 3 main Crepe research questions (farm level, energy and expectations of authorities), we had 2 workshops: the first one some time after the beginning of the study, focused on methodology ; the second one just before the formalization process in order to focus on the most relevant issues. These steps are named “orientation” and “review” in table 3.
3. a last discussion was organized, with external partners every time, for disseminating the results. It is named “presentation” in table 3.

Each workshop was a specific moment in the life of each research line that followed a determined schema (see table 2, and the final agenda of each event was detailed one month before the date. All the workshops were participatory and we think that a regular attendance was reached

- . for the “internal” partners (attendees participating in all or almost all workshops), because they became accustomed to the pattern that we used for the 3 research themes, which remained similar. It became a mainstreamed and shared process of performing co-operative research together (see Table 2 and 5.1).

- . for the “external” partners (researchers, farmers or CSOs invited exceptionally to present their results when relevant to the workshop agenda), those workshops proved that they work in 2 directions: disseminating their own research to selected participants, and accessing the results from CRÊPE.

We must also add that we paid a high attention to the conditions of the workshops: timetable to fit the needs of the participants (some external partners had to travel 400 or 800 km), friendly and relaxed atmosphere to facilitate discussions, good food from local origin with interventions of producers or caterer.

Each workshop discussed

- . One of the 3 main Crepe research issues (environmental effects at farm level, at global scale, and authorities motives), according the stage that the research had reached (launching/steering/discussing)
- . One broader issue, in presence of researchers from other convergent projects.

The following table summarizes the proceedings of the workshops that were dedicated to CRÊPE, and CRÊPE only. As said before, CRÊPE workshops integrated participants in the SALT project. In order to reduce time and transports costs, we managed to concentrate SALT sessions and CRÊPE sessions (with external participants) on the same day. To give examples, the workshop on 5th December 2008 was entirely dedicated to CRÊPE issues, because there were many results to present and discuss. On the contrary, on 6th March 2009, the discussion on CRÊPE only lasted a half day, because it was an intermediary discussion

on methodological options and there was a quick agreement on the research methods that have been presented.

The codes for the research tasks are the following (the whole process, as seen in table 2, takes about 9 months)

launching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Discussion between academics and CSOs to refine a practical question and express it as a research question(s) . Discussion and decision to adopt a scientific route (including reference methods) to deal with this question and practical measures (duration, schedule, who does what, budget, external partners...) . Decision on the restricted operational committee (at least 1 academic + 1 CSO) that will be in charge of orienting the field work, and the reference persons on methodological aspects (who can be external partners)
orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Quick report by the field researcher(s) and the restricted operational committee on the literature, the first perspectives, the feasibility of the research and the progress of field work . Amendments to the research question and the objectives (merging ideal options with reality): collective deliberation obtained only through consensus (no voting, discussion are continued till a consensus arises) . Explicit discussion on methodological decisions to make considering social and practical constraints . Distribution of tasks for scientific information (literature, methods) and field work
review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Comprehensive review of scientific references (literature, resources) and first results of the field work, by the field researcher(s) and the restricted operational committee . Discussion on this production, from a comparative point of view with previous results or other works, and from a methodological point of view (scientific and practical relevancy, validity and feasibility) . Restriction of the research question and methods (most of the time we observed that practical and scientific reasons led us to narrow the range of the question or the number of interviewees) . First round on what kind of new questions emerge considering these first statements
presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Final presentation of the methods and main findings of the work . General discussion on the results, compared to available knowledge and experiences . Discussion on dissemination . Identification of missing information and research needs that appear

Table 2: research tasks during the workshops at each stage

Each line of Table 3 shows the issues that were addressed during the meeting (e.g. on 4th April 2008, the committee discussed of the orientations and methods of field research for the farm scale and the global issues studies, and the 2007 results of the observatory of organic products in SFC was presented). In each column, it can be observed the occasions when a single issue was addressed (e. g. the local authorities study was launched and roughly defined on 5th December 2008, then refined on 6th March 2009, there was an intermediate review on 18th June 2009, and finally the results were presented and discussed on 29th September 2009).

	Research lines			Contributing issues			
	Environment and short chains: farm scale	Environment and short chains: global issues	Environment and short chains: local authorities	Observatory of organic production in short chains	Ecological footprint in public catering	Other linked projects	Final conference
04-04-08	orientation	orientation		2007 results			
12-06-08	review	review			Presentation	Liproco CROC	
05-12-08	presentation	presentation	launching				
06-03-09			orientation			Terres en Villes Coxinel	
18-06-09			review	2008 results	Presentation	Liproco	
29-09-09			presentation		Results	Liproco Ecuador	Launching

Table 3: issues discussed in each workshop

For each workshop (except for the first one, when no production was achieved yet), we had:

- . Formal presentations of results achieved in one or two research lines (generally a ppt), according to the works done after the previous workshop
- . Discussions of those results by the project group, and by external contributors, who were attending to present and discuss their own projects
- . A case study, presented by a producer, a caterer or a consumer (many times at lunch time, to be discussed informally)
- . A “steering session” focused on the research progressing at that time on the CRÊPE research lines. Depending on the stage reached, those discussions were either methodological, either results-focused.

As can be seen on table 1, the group was sometimes quite big for collective construction (it is widely considered that above 10-12 attendees there are leaders/followers phenomenon). But many factors contribute to make co-operative tasks work in such a context

- . Most of the attendees knew each other not only through reunions but also through field work and co-responsibility on trainees ;

- . A common culture on the 2 main axis, short food chains and environment, already existed ;
- . A core group of 5-6 persons was always present in each meeting to keep in mind and transmit what has already been done;
- . There was a high commitment of every participant, because the co-operative work produces concrete effects (political interest, decisions, new alliances,...) ;
- . The CSOs are experienced in organizing such events for attendees with different profiles and expectations, and especially CIVAM and Accueil Paysan name their technical staff “animators” ;
- . It is fun and the food is good.

4.2 Discussion

There has been no major difficulty, because of the previous involvement of stakeholders in co-operative research. One major reason could be that all stakeholders were not urged to present quickly their resources or ideas inside the very constringing frame of a one-day workshop. Everybody knew that between successive workshops they could go on contributing, and offering their specific skills to the project. This was effective even for the more external stakeholders from research institutions. For example, Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, a well-known researcher from CNRS specialized on committed consumption, participated in the 12 June 2008 workshop. During this workshop, we noted that our previous choice led to very broad questions and had to be changed quickly, in order to implement field work in a reasonable delay. We had a group discussion in the workshop considering both the scientific aspects (arguments mainly presented by researchers) and the feasibility of interviews (arguments mainly conducted by CSOs). But there was no time for an overall discussion considering every detail. We thus decided a general direction and the main lines of the methods, and then who were the best resource-persons for it. It appeared that from a strictly scientific point of view, Sophie was the best person to maintain sound sociologic approaches. She was thus “elected” as the main research leader for this study, together with the already involved persons (an agronomist and a CSO officer). Although she worked in Paris, she very efficiently contributed by e-mail and telephone. Such an option would not have been possible if the workshop had been an exceptional event, with much stress to produce results in a short time. It although created links of trust between the stakeholders, because they not only had to present ideas or results but to make decisions with concrete effects together.

But there is still a potential difficulty. The workshops gather persons who progressively get used to it. Most partners happen to know each other maybe too well and the whole could thus lack creativity or critical assessment on common works. This did not happen for now, but maybe on the longer run some wear could appear, both for commitment and presence to the meetings. Another difficulty is that those meetings become integrated in participants’ mind as something usual or normal. It is not an event anymore, and this perception can be harmful for dissemination activities and the visibility of the project.

But the overall benefits of a continued workshop process instead of a one and only day meeting are clear. In some situations, the work had started and the situation seemed very difficult; because the research question was quickly identified as poorly relevant, or too ambitious. In those crisis situations, the co-operative spirit allowed us to find a solution in a rather short time (generally 1 to 2 hours dedicated on the problem). We’ve been almost surprised to see how methodological options that were apparently opposed at first glance could converge to built a satisfactory solution. The CSOs members look to research work and researchers habits, that were previously considered as intransigent and poorly opened to multi-disciplinary approaches, largely changed. As also changed the consideration of the researchers on the “naïve knowledge” of CSOs.

5 Outcomes

5.1 Research results

When the project was launched, we had in mind to try to reach results that could help describe a whole territorial situation on the environmental effects of SFCs. This goal had been at least partially reached on economic issues in the SALT project. We aimed at trying to aggregate the results from the 3 research lines (farmers, consumers / global issues, local authorities) in a systemic vision. But it now appears that this ambition was too high. The project obviously will not be able to link systemically the 3 research lines that have been defined. First because our work has confirmed what we expected, the few references on these issues. Secondly, because the scope is very broad and all approaches stay very compartmented. They require very specific methods that hardly can overlap from one topic to the other: e. g. energy can be approached through life cycle analysis methods while farmers choices only can be explained by social sciences. And thirdly because environmental issues are both local and global: the effects of clean practises in production are local (e. g. water quality) and global at the same time (e. g. low greenhouse gas emissions). Focusing on territorial visions would thus lead to undermine the effects on global threats.

We are consequently obliged to present the research results under 3 separated items, each one for each main line. The main findings are remembered in the following sections

Line 1 - Production approach / farmers

The challenges on linking production system and commercialisation system are mostly local. Analytical or statistical approaches proved unable to study the environmental benefits of SFC by lack of methods and data. But our sociological approach showed that farmers can be divided in 3 groups

- A first group, for which local sales are up to 20 % of their total turnover, use short chains as an economic means to raise the profitability of their farm. Those farmers are generally conventional farmers. They are not driven by environmental concerns and are not willing to change their production scheme for commercial reasons. They often want to prove their loyalty to their reference group of intensive farmers strongly related to industrial processing and hypermarkets chains.
- A second group of conventional farmers is driven by a different economic reason. The use of direct sales led them to a sound reflection on the value added to the product. Considering that (profit = sales – expenses), they discover that they can have lower costs, just as they can get higher prices. For economic reasons, they try to spare energy, fertilizers, inputs. This rationale leads them to an evolution of their production system, driven by economics, but environmentally efficient.
- The third group is composed by committed farmers, often activists in trade unions or associations (environment, Third World, social and cultural activities). For them, environmental care, local sales and relations with consumers belong in the same global objective of “sustainability”. There is no “one best way”: converting to organic agriculture makes it easier to sell locally, or local clients make it easier to convert to organic. But the overall path includes and joins both environment and local sales from the beginning of the project.

These research results have direct consequences for CSOs. FRCIVAM considers the development of SFCs as a means to help farmers adopt environment-friendly practises. But the above analysis show that the first group will hardly move, and that the third one does not need to be convinced. A priority should be given to the second group for extension work, as it is the one that probably possesses the higher margin for improvement considering the time dedicated.

Line 2 - Consumption and global issues approach / consumers and intermediaries

Line 2 focused on energy and greenhouse gas emissions. It thus deals with global issues, and the local contribution or responsibility on overall threats. It is a quite controversial question. We identified strong and

closed arguments presenting opposite conclusions, both from researchers and from CSOs: SFCs are sometimes considered as obviously less energy consuming and greenhouse gas emitting, while other authors tend to prove that long chains provoke a gain in efficiency linked to economies of scale.

For greenhouse gas emissions in transport, there is no evidence that “short chains are better than long chains”. Due to the refusal of supermarkets to give us transparent figures, we only have one comparison point for long chains, and it is a biocoop that we consider more aware of the question than the average supermarket. Through the study of carrots, potatoes or tomatoes, we can stress that seasonality has a major influence: the difference (within long chains) between Breton products and foreign products (from Italy, Spain or Egypt in that case) reaches a factor 2 to 3. But the best results in long chains are comparable to the worst ones for short chains. Within the short chains there is a factor 10 between the most efficient practice and the worst ones. This high diversity leads to the following conclusions

- Short chains are generally, but not always, more efficient environmentally than long chains
- But there is a high diversity in the results of short chain, that can also prove inefficient
- There is thus many possibilities for food chains to better the environmental impact of food: by raising awareness on the diet (seasonality), and by rationalizing the logistics.

These results also lead to concrete conclusions for extension work. There are significant improvements to do along the food chain, even in SFCs. FRCIVAM should thus organize exchange groups for best practice and training sessions in order to make practitioners aware of this possibility and develop skills on it.

Line 3 - Strategic approach / local authorities

The main research question was: “what kind of environmental benefits are expected when local authorities implement policies to support SFCs ? ”. The study was made through a partnership with Terres en Villes (<http://www.terresenvilles.org/>), an association of 20 metropolitan areas in France that develop special care for agriculture and the rural part of their territory. It focused on 3 cities, Lille, Rennes and Saint Etienne, selected to present a wide range of situations: amount of inhabitants, place and role of agriculture, number and characteristics of SFCs, age and expression of local policies on SFCs.

The following table shows the main lines of argumentation, and thus the implicit strategy, of each territory:

<i>Argument register</i>	<i>Lille Métropole</i>	<i>Rennes</i>	<i>Saint Etienne</i>
<i>SFCs as a diversification strategy for local economy and new jobs</i>			
<i>SFCs as a means to implement and reinforce the urbanization schemes</i>			
<i>SFCs as vectors of change for agricultural practices</i>			
<i>SFCs as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions</i>			

Table 3: main motivations for promoting SFCs on the selected territories

	Arguments that have been only incidentally quoted		Arguments that have been explicitly quoted		Most important arguments for the interviewees
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The first conclusion of the workshops for this research line is that the range of main expectations is surprisingly quite narrow. Four main concerns appeared clearly, whilst many other ones appear in official discourse or in newspapers. Priorities are thus more selective than they appear to be.

The interviews and their comparison also showed common expectations and concerns:

1. in all expectations and concerns about SFCs, local stakes come first. First in importance: quality of water and air, scenery, walking paths are the most spontaneously quoted objectives. First in time, because those are the ones that motivate concretely the initial steps in local SFCs policies, even though other ones are quoted. It is the core of the approach.
2. inside the local concerns, reducing the impacts of agriculture on environment is a major perspective in local SFCs policies. It very deeply affects the way local authorities deal with the question of pollution. In France, it has mainly been seen as a technical problem or a lack of skills for some farmers. Using SFCs as a means for change opens a completely new approach, based on a systemic view of the production/processing/commercialisation interactions. This study confirms that SFCs are seen locally as tools both for food policies and for agricultural policies.
3. the second major trend is that SFCs expansion is expected to maintain or improve the urban frame, or precisely the way natural and agricultural areas structure the urban and peri-urban configuration. Expectations on an influence of SFCs practises on urbanism, directly linked to quality of life for authorities, are very high. Probably because it deals with their main legal competence in France. But many of them are going much further than they are legally expected to do: in Rennes, an additional document on agriculture in the metropolitan development, including SFCs, has been added to the compulsory documents.
4. but, although priority expectations and concerns are few, they still seem difficult to integrate in the overall policies of Metropolitan areas. SFCs, contrary to agriculture, are not a delimited topic, with its own representation and staff. This issue has to deal with various influences: delegate and staff responsible for agriculture, but also environment, urbanism, energy, economy. The comparative analysis shows that only on the long run interactions between all the persons in charge can build and integrated and unified vision to run a policy on SFCs instead on thematic policies on them. The comparison showed that the longer the topic is dealt with, the most shared and unified the policy is. Key actors are necessary, and they settle the take off of those policies from local concerns to policies integrating global environmental impact, such as energy of greenhouse gas emissions.

The interactions between the 3 different lines of study still need an analysis. But they can surely be used in a comparative way. Just to give an example: line 3 (authorities) show that metropolitan areas expect SFCs to be a vector for change in agricultural practises, on local issues for the newest ones and then global issues ; line 1 (farmers) shows that there is a priority target group for local policies, and suggest that the discourse on environmental practise should integrate the economic conditions and consequences ; line 2 (consumption and global environmental factors) tells that the main source of pollution is the production system, but that there are still much improvement to expect in logistics.

5.2 Co-operative process results

As presented in section 0, CRÊPE “was invited” to an already existing group. Thus, the results cannot be attributed to CRÊPE only, as it could be in the other case studies in which CRÊPE provoked the project. In our case, CRÊPE was much more a witness, or the way to focus and understand an existing process that was working spontaneously, without knowing why, nor asking why.

Considering this specific situation, the outcomes of the Crepe project are

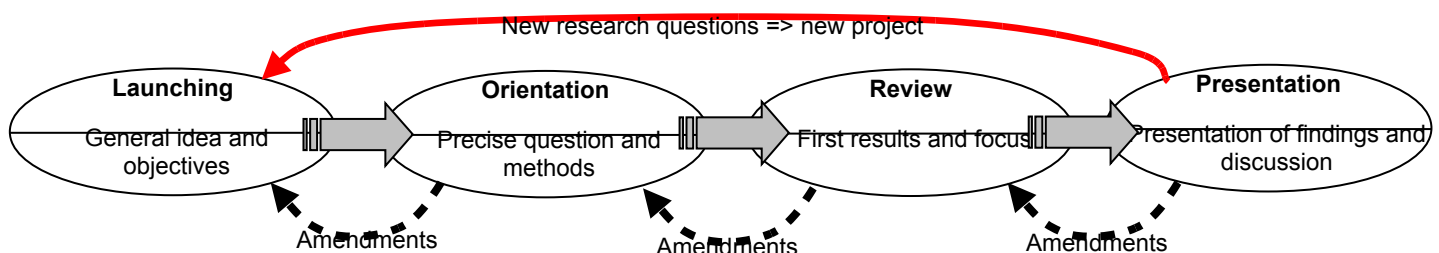
- . To strengthen a co-operative group of CSOs / research / authorities, by making it more aware of its own way of working, and more attentive to the fact that co-operation is not a “natural” process that does not need to be cared of ; untill CRÊPE, most of the partners had experience of co-operative processes together, especially in the SALT project. For many reasons, those processes knew few problems or conflicts. The general feeling amongst the partners was that such co-operative research does not need any specific attention to make it work, or that it keeps going on naturally. But CRÊPE, through the contacts with the other WPs, showed us that this experience can be considered exceptional, and that a better understanding of the processes involved in co-operative research is needed. Our hypothesis was that co-operative research can be mainstreamed as a “normal” method, but on the very narrow basis of some successful small scale experiments. For further projects, that are likely to emerge in less favourable context (unknown partners, conflictive subject, power or financial interests,...), we need guidelines both for the design of the process and its monitoring
- . To dare work on issues that seemed too “hazardous” or “dangerous” for CSOs that kept unsure of the results and for researchers that are not used to work without a previous and already well-established theoretical frame. This question is highly sensitive in Brittany because environmental questions linked to agriculture are very conflictive, in society and between research institutions. Each and every assumption or scientific result is quickly recycled as an argument in the controversy that opposes the dominant agricultural organisations and environmental CSOs or other farmers organizations. It is frequently a case of political controversy, so that many politicians, and after them academics or CSOs, avoid talking openly about agriculture / environment issues. The risk was high for academics to be aggressively criticized and for CSOs to produce results that would be contradictory to their strategic line;
- . To produce the first scientifically validated data and approaches in France on a highly polemical issue, both in society and in research. For instance, on greenhouse gas emissions, most of the players only used the few results that supported their visions and simply ignored contradictory data. We showed for the first time that in fact they are not contradictory but that local context can very deeply change the results. The second research line shows that there is a space for mixed policies to improve environmental practises through SFCs. Both economic and cultural approaches can be useful, but probably not for the same farmers. Untill now, environmental policies for agriculture either adopt a purely economic approach (grants) or a purely normative approach (law). The third line proves that SFCs are clearly perceived by metropolitan areas to be one tool, amongst others, to improve their environmental welfare and impacts. However, their strategy is progressive and starts with local concerns, before considering the global environmental issues (global warming, energy) ;
- . To provide policy makers with results, the links between the support they can give to SFCs and their environmental policies. Those results are better heard by decision makers because they gained a double validation: one by CSOs in terms of social utility, the other one by scientist in terms of relevancy and feasibility
- . To become a “peaceful intersection” where many projects meet and organize exchanges through critical but always benevolent discussions. The workshops and meetings that were organized under CRÊPE attracted external projects holders on parallel research (for instance projects on SFCs in other regions such as Rhône Alpes or Languedoc Roussillon) or converging projects (e.g. a project

on sustainable consumption). Their main motivation was that the links between SFCs and environment are a largely spread concern but there was, before CRÊPE, no institutional project dealing with this issue.. Research projects frequently develop in a competitive space (for money, fame,...) and we felt when we participated that the coupled SALT / CRÊPE workshops made it possible to create and keep something special.

Another way of approaching the questions could be “what would have happened without CRÊPE ? ”. Although we cannot reinvent history, it is possible to raise some hypothesis

- Some breathlessness would probably have appeared. CRÊPE provided us with the necessity, considering the social demand for it, to work on the environmental aspects of SFCs, that interested many of the partners who at the same time kept somehow reluctant by lack of references, methods and budget. It allowed the whole group to be hazardous and risk-open, just as the composition of the group, mixing CSOs and researchers, also is ;
- The internal life of the group would have been poorer, because less care would have been affected to the conditions of co-operation. There has been no formal decision made on co-operative issues, but the integration of CRÊPE introduced a “background curtain on the stage” that made everyone more aware and careful about interactions. We chose not to insist on the co-operative processes during the meetings, as we knew that the main interests of participants was the main topic itself: SFCs and environment. But the informal discussions, during lunch time or coffee breaks, frequently tackled the co-operation inside the group; sometimes comparing it to other projects.
- It can be suggested that we avoided some unproductive micro-conflicts on scientific approaches of methods because everyone was unconsciously aware that some specific efforts or dialog were needed ;
- The circle of attendees would have remained more closed. The issues we dealt with, but also the co-operative ambiance and the efforts made to make it pleasant allowed us to attract researchers or CSO from other regions ;
- FRCIVAM, as the CRÊPE integrant, would not have integrated knowledge and know-how on co-operative research. We would have kept thinking it's a natural and easy-going option. And probably next time that FRCIVAM would have had to participate in such a project, but with completely different and new partners, we would have neglected or under-evaluated likely difficulties. CRÊPE can be seen also as an awareness raising tool, in addition to the formalization of methods and questions on co-operative research.

Although it appears very simple, the pattern we used 3 times (one for each research line) proved that it can be valid to make co-operative research in a conventionalised way. It surely can be considered time consuming, but maybe not more time consuming than existing non co-operative projects, or repetitive conflicts and misunderstandings.



This schema seems linear but in fact the feedback arrows (dotted lines) show that each step can deeply change what had been decided or considered in a previous step. This way of working (no pre-determined inflexible decisions and methods) is a common route for CSOs, that are frequently faced with quick context changes. On the contrary, it is unusual for academics, who frequently spend much time, led by reason, to choose the best methodological options, that become poorly flexible. During our common work they agreed to adopt methods that could be criticized from a scientific-only point of view, but that were more efficient or feasible from a society point of view. E.g. on line 2, the consensual best method lay with long interviews and observations on the farm of a limited number of farms (5 or 6). But local authorities told us that such a restricted number would affect the credibility in the eyes of elected representatives. We thus chose a medium-term option, that still kept scientific methods, but that would not have been recognized as “the best” if evaluated on scientific criteria only, but that fitted the authorities needs to base their assumptions on more than 15 case-studies. On the other hand CSOs had to admit that field work must be clearly defined through explicit methods, and that those methods cannot be changed, even slightly, once they are launched. We must consider that the final findings are maybe not as sound as they could have been in a clearly science-led project. But we were in an exploratory process, on a knowledge field poorly documented, and the results can be considered

- . More scientifically valuable and assured than the ones that would have been produced by CSOs only ;
- . Quicker and more suitable for decision-makers than the ones that would have been produced by academics only.

6 Conclusion

When we got involved in CRÊPE, we had some experience of co-operative research. The first exchanges inside led us to consider that the peaceful co-ordination we had experienced was probably an exception and that we'll soon see many difficulties or conflicts arising. One year and a half later, we walked our way quietly without any major difficulty. Our approach of “permanent workshop” was not a conscious decision, based on the comparison of several possibilities. We decided to go on using something that appeared to be functional till then. In comparison with the other case studies, our conclusions may appear poor, because we only had to deal with the working (without conception) of a group. But it leads to a quite optimistic conclusion: under certain circumstances, or conditions, that CRÊPE will formalize, co-operative research can be made in a routine way, without any additional resources needed.

Without a conscious construction, we used 3 times a schema of co-operative work, which core is peaceful decision making. Consensual decisions were not uneasy in our case, probably because most of the stakeholders were used to co-operative research, at least superficially. We can propose an important conclusion from it, though very simple: the difficulties of co-operative research are decreasing when academics and CSOs get used one to the other, not theoretically but through common tasks.

Appendix: Participants list

4 April 2008

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Collectivités: Pascal Verdier (Rennes Métropole), Cécile Pansard et Romain Duine (Conseil de développement du Pays de Dinan)

Etudiants: Alexiane Spanu et Benjamin Perez Zapico (FRCIVAM Bretagne)

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Etudiants: Paula Nahmias (Agrocampus Ouest, stagiaire), Guillaume Gallais (Université Haute Bretagne, stagiaire), Eva Sichez (Université Haute Bretagne, stagiaire)

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Recherche: Guy Durand (Agrocampus), Céline Warnery (Agrocampus), Fantine Ollivier (Liproco),

Etudiants: Guillaume Gallais et Eva Sichez (étudiants université Rennes 2), Paula Nahmias (étudiante Agrocampus), Tiphaine PARTHENAY (Accueil Paysan 35), Thomas Bartassot (étudiant ISARA)

29 September 2009

Organismes de développement: Gilles Maréchal, Blaise Berger (FR CIVAM) Aurore Sauvaget (Accueil Paysan 35), Emmanuelle Fournil (Boutique Solidaire), Bernadette Ferré

Recherche: Guy Durand, Celine Warnery (Agrocampus), Fantine Olivier (Liproco)

Collectivités: Régis Hebert (Pays Centre Ouest Bretagne)

Etudiants: Guillaume Gallais (Université Haute Bretagne, stagiaire), Tiphaine Parthenay (Accueil Paysan 35),

Separate files

Two PPT presentations by the organisers

Summary of the last research report