

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

The agroecological transition involves a paradigm shift both in terms of the production and transmission of knowledge and the support professions: it is no longer a question of advising, but of supporting farmers who design and manage their own systems. Thus, new forms of cooperation between farmers and other actors are emerging, in order to exchange and co-produce knowledge in agroecology. They are characterized by: the diversity of partners (farmers, researchers, etc.); labile forms of commitment; new visions of knowledge (systemic approaches, non-linear thinking, knowledge produced in and through practice); the importance of reflection and learning processes; and their place-based dimension. They develop multiple activities: meetings between peers, practical exercises, farm experiments, etc.

How do these new forms of knowledge co-production contribute to the agroecological transition? What transformations do they allow at the level of individuals, groups and local agri-food systems? How can these forms of co-production be accompanied and supported?

To answer these questions, we mobilize the conceptual frameworks of social learning to better understand what is learned, by whom and how and of the transformative potential of social innovations to explore the effects of knowledge co-production processes.

We compare 3 cases of co-production of agroecological knowledge in the Drôme (France) : (1) on goat and sheep phyto-aromatherapy, (2) on animal health in outdoor pig farming, (3) on simplified working techniques soil and plant cover. They bring together breeders and farmers, rural development agents, researchers in biotechnology and social sciences, veterinarians and pharmacists.

After having characterized these new forms of cooperation and their activities, we highlight four learning mechanisms: by vertical or horizontal transmission of knowledge; through pragmatic inquiries (experiments and experiences); through deliberative processes (on normative orientations); through reflexive and critical processes (conditions of production and application of knowledge).

We then highlight four support tools used, which can be symbolized by: a toolbox (provision of knowledge and means); a compass (creating and guaranteeing "meaning" between individual and collective projects); a mirror (stimulating reflexivity); a hub (putting people in touch with each other).

Finally, we discuss some processual and contextual conditions that favour the transformative capacities of these initiatives: the quality of the dialogue between a diversity of actors; the explanation and sharing of values and normative objectives, the ability to address internal and external political issues; and the capacity for territorial anchoring and networking over time.