Facilitating agroecosystem resilience: study of local agricultural knowledge Resilience 2014 -Montpellier

Aurelie Javelle

To cite this version:
Aurelie Javelle. Facilitating agroecosystem resilience: study of local agricultural knowledge Resilience 2014 -Montpellier. Resilience, May 2014, Montpellier, France. <10.4000/developpementdurable.678>. <hal-01201829>

HAL Id: hal-01201829
https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01201829
Submitted on 22 Sep 2015

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire HAL, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial 4.0 International License
Facilitating agroecosystem resilience: study of local agricultural knowledge
Resilience 2014 - Montpellier

A. Javelle, SupAgro Florac, UMR INNOVATION aurelie.javelle@supagro.inra.fr

An ethnographic study was conducted to identify the farmers’ representations of soil quality indicators, allegedly used as decision-making tools in a fragile mountain environment.
- Representations are here assumed as at the origin of social practices of nature (Desclosa, 1986).
- Indicators are here chosen as interdisciplinary boundary-object (Trompette et Vinck, 2009) to link agronomy and anthropology, among others.

Ten farmers in a French rural department (Cévennes lozériennes) were interviewed between 2012 and 2013. It is an homogeneous field according to geomorphological characteristics. The farmers comply with the specifications of the ‘Nature et Progrès’ label, which is more binding than the organic label, especially as far as environmental standards are concerned. They practice gGardening on ‘terrasses’. They participate in traditional landscape maintaining through agricultural practices in stressful mountainous environment.

Semi-structured enquiries and participant observation on farmers’ soil fertility practices. Farmers are set up between 2 years to 40 years and are 25 to nearly 60 years old.

Results and discussion

The study shows a low interest of farmers for indicators of scientific origin. They argue in highlighting the contradictions of non-stabilized agro-ecological knowledge. Maintaining optimal agro-ecological conditions is concretely done by empirical indicators developed over their own experience on the spot.

- Farmers’ indicators are built up in a complex way

The indicators do not focus on soil fertility but on land quality (Jankowski, 2013). Farmers contextualize their soils perceptions in a complex mix of technical, social, ecological, cultural, economical ... criteria.

- Land quality indicators mix different scales’ criteria

Farmers worry about both geographical and spatial criteria. This approach shows an unusual consideration of time and space scales in rural areas, which raises to take into account “the spatial and temporal interdependencies of practices” (Allaire and Dupeuble, 2004).

- The construction of these complex indicators questions the relationships with nature.

The indicators are built on the basis of a communicational relationship with the land, and not only as a pure instrumental activity, in the same direction as that observed by Delbos among the salt producers of Guerande (1983), who assume nature as a full entity. The indicators used by farmers participate in the emergence of new local knowledge, hybridation of institutional and experiential knowledge developed in a dialogic context with the environment. Farmers build their decision-making tools in a participatory way with natural elements.

Farmers’ agronomy notion oversteps the strictly technical data to go beyond the scope of global ecosystems sustainability. This work, by questioning the epistemological bases of the investigated production system, opens the way to think twice about the resilience given by an agriculture which is required to 'produce differently.'


