



EUROPEAN FOOD POLITICS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

***‘To what extent would CAP post-2020 integrate agroecological
practices to smooth the transition towards a post-growth
economy?’***

by

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Abstract

The European Common Agricultural Policy is the only political project worldwide regulating and financially supporting food production transnationally, however there has been continued criticism regarding its impact on the environment and rural communities. This paper is concerned with evolution of the CAP in the context of the backlash against conventional agriculture and the emergence of more sustainable alternatives. As food production is only a fraction of the contemporary food regime, the question of a systemic change arises and is fed by a new school of thought, Degrowth. The development of an ecological type of agriculture rooted in the idea biophysical limits cannot compete with the fully-established production forms without challenging them. Furthermore, this paper is open to determine the likelihood of agroecology reaching the policy discussions in the context of a non-growth dependent strategy.

Through the detailed examination of the current CAP debate and the wider implications for agroecology and degrowth, the research argues that despite climate emergency and rural socioeconomic realities, the European Commission lacks political will in properly addressing systemic failures. It does so in spite of strong public support in favour of radical reform. Moreover, this research further supports the benefits of agroecology for a transition towards a more sustainable society beyond the growth paradigm. Lastly, it is concluded that the EU generally prioritizes economic interests rather than societal well-being. This calls for wider multi-level societal transition.

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1. Introduction

Food production is recognized as being one of the most costly and resource inefficient activity in the modern society. Over the last 60 years, the essence of European agriculture changed drastically encouraged by the supremacy of technological developments. The life-long skill accumulating process of raising produce was soon replaced by short-term, machine driven product manufacturing. Hathaway (2016) refers to mainstream food production sites as outdoor factories (Hathaway, 2016).

The trend of industrial farming was accelerated and financially supported by the conviction in unlimited economic growth fuelled by inexhaustible resources (Bardi, 2019). As it shows, conventional agriculture is highly dependent on fossil fuels as its main energy source for heavy machinery used in production, processing and transportation (Ameen & Raza, 2017) (GRAIN, 2011), compared with traditional farming which uses only 20% of the total quantity of fossil fuels used in agriculture (ECT Group, 2017). Taking in consideration the predictions of the 'post-peak oil' moment (Bardi, 2019), sustaining such a wasteful production method is incompatible with the natural reality. Equally, technological advancements are focused on manufacturing chemicals and high yielding hybrids (Ameen & Raza, 2017) at the cost of biodiversity and human health (ECT Group, 2017). The consistent application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides depletes soil micronutrient reserves and exterminates beneficial insects, threatening to completely destroy the natural ecosystem agriculture is inherently reliant on. Nevertheless, the industrial paradigm stimulated by the liberalization of trade and comparative advantage (Berend, 2015) prevails on global agricultural markets dominated by Trans-National Corporations regulating the use of seeds, agrochemicals, food consumption and food distribution (EcoNexus , 2013). In obtaining the so-called comparative advantage, industrial producers often overlook the nutritional value, favouring market aspects such as low price and shelf life (Hathaway, 2016). More often than not, the costs of industrial agriculture are externalized becoming a burden on the environment and public resources (Steier, 2011).

Agroecology took form as a counter-reaction to the implications of Green Revolution and the dominant hegemony of industrial agriculture. The Green Revolution is rooted in

North-Western strive to close the yield gap and ensure food security. This productivist approach assumes infinite and stable resources (energy and water) and certainty in climate conditions. Consequently, conventional agriculture became synonymous with resource inefficiency and man-made climate change.

This paper will be a valuable contribution to the discussion on the future of food production in an environmental sensitive era, as it comes at a critical time in the agricultural policy debate. The idea of producing more food through conventional agricultural methods is daunting as the highly industrialized food system is already putting high pressure on resources. An analysis the global food system reveals that the industrial food chain only accounts for 30% of the total food consumed whereas the rest 70% comes from small farms, urban agriculture and traditional finishing, hunting and gathering. Equally striking is the uneven distribution of resources and resource use between the two models (ECT Group, 2017). An expansion of the agricultural land is virtually impossible, simultaneously the existing cultivated area is at risk of infertility. The ecosystem is failing; however, the agribusinesses claim that demand for high input products is increasing. Advocating for an increased food production is paradoxical as global food waste generated by the food chain accounts for four billion tonnes of food annually.

The central question of this paper ***‘To what extent would CAP post-2020 integrate agroecological practices to smooth the transition towards a post-growth economy?’***, explores the need to re-think our food economies challenging the assumption that conventional agricultural practices are a given. Questioning the belief that food security can exclusively be addressed as a matter of production opens the discussion for an alternative food system. In order to achieve this, the paper will lay out the existing and the currently under discussion European agricultural policies along with the political preferences of the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, alternative agricultural practices will be exhibited, followed by an exploratory section into the possible challenges for a post-growth economy. One objective of this analysis is to identify the most feasible path towards integrating sustainable social practices in food production and consumption.

The question to be answered relates to the scope of the existing European agricultural policy, how did it emerge and how it evolved over time. The research will compare the institutional measures with the agricultural realities of Europe, to eventually asses the feasibility of a reorientation from industrial agriculture. The alternatives

proposed are agroecologically centred, shadowed by deeper social transition actions towards a post-growth society. These stratagems are most relevant as they oppose the industrial paradigm offering wholistic counter-strategies to large-scale, highly specialized, mechanized production measures. It is important to note that both alternatives have been chosen due to their high degree of sustainability in production and their support for integrated food systems. Consequentially, it will be an objective of this paper to evaluate existing actions taken by the Union to integrate sustainability in its political agenda as well as the degree of opportunity within the future European policy programs for such nonconformist agricultural methods.

2. Literature Review

The essence of this research is to outline the potential for an agricultural transition towards a low input, socially equitable and economically viable food production and consumption methods. The literature review described in this section can be divided within two competing strains of ideological discourse: *institutional* and *grassroot*. Firstly, within the institutional context, the discourse promoted by the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) seeks to maintain the status quo of industrial agriculture (Feindt, Termeer, Candel, & Buitenhuis, 2017). Secondly, the emerging *grassroot* paradigm addresses the need of re-localization of production and consumption (Ferguson & Lovell, 2015) and food sovereignty (Patel, 2009). In order to make sense of the current political debate around CAP post-2020, it is critical to first review the history of the European Agricultural Policy programs and evaluate the provisions and outcomes of the previous agricultural policy programs. The second part of the literature review focuses on agroecological movements as important contributors in achieving agricultural sustainability as an integrated approach to food production and consumption. Discussing agroecology is particularly important as its real essence is either contested or selectively included in the mainstream debate for sustainability (Gonzales, Thomas, & Chang, 2018).

This paper acknowledges the importance of the European Union, implicitly the Common Agricultural Policy negotiations, as the designated political arena where local, national, regional and international interests clash (Coen & Richardson, 2009). On one hand, the presence of various actors directly and indirectly involved in the policy-making process calls for an indicative stakeholder analysis in the context of the CAP debate. On the other hand, as the desired outcome of this research is to methodically anticipate social change, there is the need to reflect on transition practices and call out the viable alternatives.

The literature review chapter is structured in four sections. Section 2.1 refers exclusively to the institutionalized decision-making and implementation process of the CAP, whereas section 2.2 looks at agroecological transition. Section 2.3 gathers background knowledge of the experts interviewed, and last but not least, Section 2.4

seeks to establish a set of indispensable concepts that support the topic of agriculture throughout the entire research process.

2.1 The Common Agriculture Policy

The importance in discussing the Common Agriculture Policy in the context of agricultural transition is due to the nature of CAP as a policy framework specifically aimed at stimulating and regulating the agricultural sector as an integrated part of the European Common Market. Agricultural production in the European Union is heavily influenced by the financial resources and market instruments allocated and controlled at the supranational level. Contemporarily, the Common Agriculture Policy measures are distributed across two major regulating mechanisms: Pillar I and Pillar II. While Pillar I sets out rules regarding market and income measures, Pillar II supports public investment related to 'sustainable modernization' of agriculture. The literature reviewed identifies three main institutional structures that continue to exert influence on the reformist practices of the CAP since the major reform process started in 1980s: multilateral trade talks, budget negotiations and shifts in policy paradigm. Equally important are the factors altering political representation and decision-making such as the policy network and decision-making procedures (Erjavec, Lovec, & Erjavec, 2015).

Initially, the CAP was deliberately protecting its domestic markets against external food products by heavily subsidising production (Gay, Osterburg, Baldock, & Zdanowicz, 2005). The price support practices had severe implications for the common budget leading to product accumulation and inefficient spending, thus production quotas were put in place (Swinen, *The political economy of the 2014-2020 Common Agricultural Policy: an imperfect storm*, 2015). Simultaneously, the CAP was under extrinsic pressures to be reformed towards market liberalisation and global trade efficiency of agricultural production (Swinbank, 2005). Hence, when the WTO Uruguay Round Negotiations commenced in 1986, the international community decided to subscribe agriculture to the same trading practices as the other industries, leaving no option for the European Community than to conform by reducing trade distorting practices, such as price supports (Paarlberg, 1997).

The first structural reform happened in 1992 under the supervision of the McSharry administration. The reform meant a reorientation in the CAP spending, reducing price

support for industrialized products (arable crops and meat) and redirecting financial support towards land surface rather than production quantity. The next in line was Agenda 2000 which continued the reduction of financial support for sector specific products. An important precursor of Agenda 2000 was the 1996 Cork European Conference on Rural Development which proposed a European Model of Agriculture as a multi-sectorial approach designated to increase the competitiveness of agriculture by supporting non-production related initiatives aimed at rural revitalization in terms of environmental preservation and public services.

The outcomes of the Cork Conference were translated in Agenda 2000 with the creation of a separate policy instrument, the second Pillar of CAP. Pillar II officially recognized rural development as an integral part of the CAP, however no significant financial allocations were made up until 2003. In the context of agricultural reform, Pillar II is particularly interesting as it is a direct consequence of a paradigm shift in European public policy making, which positioned European Union as a strong supporter of agriculture multifunctionality in international trade negotiation (Miceli, 2005).

In the form of a Mid-Term Review, the 2003 reform adjustment initiative turned into one of the most radical agricultural reform in the history of CAP (Gay, Osterburg, Baldock, & Zdanowicz, 2005). The Fishler reform changed the face of Pillar I by switching the focus of the CAP from product to producer, further introducing a Single Payment Scheme to in the form of a yearly decoupled payment, accounting for 70% of the CAP budget. Pillar II was extensively developed as a strategy to promote added-value agriculture by emphasizing the importance of food quality, environmental related implications and preservation of rural communities as a source of social services supported by increase of funding opportunities (Swinnen, 2009) .

Cross-compliance came across as an important mechanism to safeguard the ethics of agricultural practices conditioning producers to adhere to certain production standards. Even though the European agricultural strategy remained far from perfect, there was significant progress done with regard to increasing competitiveness and environmental protection measures. Most often than not, public policy experts comment on the ineffective distribution of funds to support the farm households in need. It is widely acknowledged that the direct payments are not related neither to the production quality

nor to the public goods (environmental/landscape management) a farm produces, simultaneously ignoring income realities of farmers (Fritz, 2011).

While the above-mentioned reforms seemed to somehow rearrange the priorities of the CAP to respond to and influence international and domestic trends, the latest reform program (2013-2020) failed to scale up the previously made efforts towards an equitable distribution of resources. The policy in place breaks the reforming tradition, especially with regard to international trade discussions since the Doha Round negotiations remained frozen (Bellman, Hepburn, & Wilke, 2012). Equally important are the public concerns regarding the environment, which have been undermined by policy actors preferring the status-quo (Erjavec, Lovec, & Erjavec, 2015).

2.1.1 Critical Literature on CAP

Over the years, the Common Agricultural Policy has been widely criticized both by Member States and the international community. Regarding the long contested direct payments scheme, Agrosynergie (2013) released a comprehensive report measuring the structural effects the direct financial support has had so far. The report chooses to focus on four major themes: i) farm structure ii) farming in marginal areas iii) labour force iv) farm specialization and competitiveness. The report reveals territorial inequalities powered mostly by the inefficient distribution mechanism, which in turn led to a massive exodus of small enterprises and a consolidation of large-scale industrial agriculture (EEIG Agrosynergie, 2013).

The book *'The Political Economy of the 2014-2020'* compiles the work of a total of thirty experts in different fields, managing to outline the ongoing struggles of the present CAP by referring back to the historical developments of the reform process. Most relevant for this paper is the analysis on the 'green' architecture as it makes clear reference to how sustainability is interpreted and negotiated in the decision-making process, in the detriment of the natural environment (Erjavec, Lovec, & Erjavec, 2015).

In the early stages, the need to address the uneven development between regions was translated in a few structural policy programs for the 'less-favoured' (Manzella & Mendez, 2009). Concurrently, the excessive modernization of farming methods resulted in a series of unfavourable environmental effects directly threatening the well-being of rural

communities (EEIG Agrosynergie , 2013). Eventually with the implementation of Agenda 2000, the European agriculture diversified its approach by adding 'bottom-up' territorial development on its political agenda (van Depole, 2007).

The newly established Rural Development (RD) policy was functioning as a co-funding mechanism firstly through European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, then through European Agricultural Guarantee Fund and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and fully administrated at the Member State level, therefore a certain degree of decentralisation was acquired. In order to ensure that a coherent European rural development vision is followed, the EU formulated a set of 'a la carte' measures to be selected and further developed as part of the RD operational strategies. The measures were mostly guiding principles for public investment to ensure the alignment with economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, increased quality of rural livelihoods while exploring the potential for local governance. Working along the lines of the regional development policy, RD undertakings differed in approach and result across the Union (ECORYS, IEEP, WUR, 2016). Bryden and Mantino (2018), observe three distinct implementing techniques all depicted as successful: local breed participatory approach, inter-sectorial cooperation and macro socio-economic partnerships.

The literature selected is just a fraction of the information available on CAP, however due to the high profile of the sources, it is considered that it is the most pertinent set of data to reflect the balance between political economic and social dimensions of the European agricultural sector. Nevertheless, food politics implicitly CAP politics revolve around the information the food chain actors provide or are willing to provide (ECT Group, 2017).

2.1.2 Agricultural Stakeholder Analysis

Lobbying has become the norm since the political spillover (Hatton & Sonny, 2015), generated by the Maastricht Treaty (Coen & Richardson, 2009). For the European Union institutions multi-stakeholder approach in policy making comes in handy as the EU available resources are not sufficient for the issues at stake (Coen, 2009). Even so interest groups have a political agenda themselves which gets enforced mostly through

European Commission and the European Parliament (Coen & Richardson, 2009). So far, the lobby groups have been divided in two competing categories: businesses and NGOs.

As a competing framework in addressing CAP decision making, Kay (2000) proposes a theoretical approach which differentiates EU institutions and interest groups as competitors. Kay goes further to conclude that a collaborative pattern can be recognized only between the EU institutions and Member States. Anyhow, Kay's work is established exclusively in the context of the Agenda 2000 reform. Coen would explain this by addressing this looking at the number of staff and the technical input needed by the decision-making actors. Nevertheless, Kay (2000) overlooks the adaptive power of businesses and their capacities to build new lobbying strategies which sophisticated over time (Coen, 2009). In this sense, a stakeholder analysis is crucial in determining the interests pursued by the Common Agricultural Policy whether it would voice either the concerns of the industry or the civil society.

In order to fully understand the implication of CAP on the socio-economic and political level, the easiest assessment strategy is to analyse the spoken interests involved in the debate. Overseas Development Institute has published a document reviewing the political position of the most influential stakeholders involved in the 2013 CAP Reform. Klavert and Keijzer (2012), have first delimited the stakeholder groups into Decision-makers, primary and secondary stakeholders and then examined their position on three areas of major relevance: budget, food security & environmental public goods (Klavert & Keijzer, 2012).

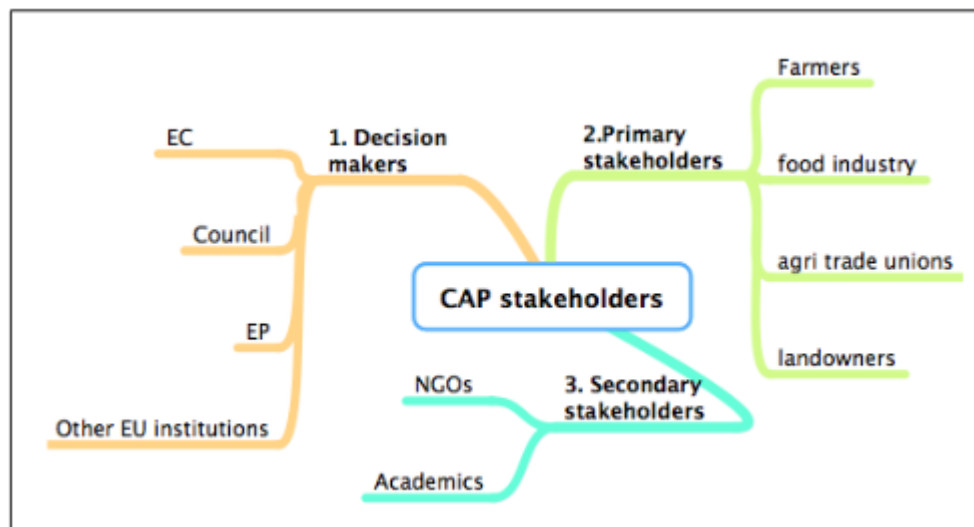


Figure 1 CAP Stakeholders (Klavert & Keijzer, 2012)

2.1.3 The current CAP debate

There are many speculations made on the future Agricultural Common Policy, the general theme of this reform phase is 'simplification' and 'modernisation' (European Commission-DG AGRI , 2017). Previously to the initiation of the official debates, European Economic and Social Committee has issued an independent opinion concerning the influential factors in the CAP post-2020 policy-making (Tiainen, 2016), however it was rejected by the Parliament later that year. The official debate started in early 2017 through a public consultation . The summary of the results is published on the official website of the EC. The proceedings of the public call have been compiled in an official communication of European Commission on the CAP post-2020, 'The future of Food and Farming (European Commission, 2017)'.

The communication on 'The Future of Food and Farming' has been contested by the European Parliament in a set of briefings. As a reaction, the EP has requested an independent assesment of the Communication(2017): Research for Agri-Committee-Towards the CAP post-2020 reform 'Appraisal of the EC Communication on 'The Future of Food and Farming' of 29th November 2017' (IEEP, 2018).As late as June 2018 a set of legislative proposals has been submitted in order to be discussed by the other European institutional bodies. The Council's conclusions to the Communication paper were released in March 2018 (Council of the European Union , 2018) followed by two reports

on the CAP regulations in October (Council of the European Union , 2018) and December (Council of the European Union , 2018). The last update was done in March 2019 (Council of the European Union, 2019). The Council's work reflects the preferences of the Member States on the EC regulatory work. As a general observation, all three institutions strongly connect the CAP negotiations with the debates on the Multiannual Financial Framework (Matthews, 2018).

Media and civil groups are equally interested in the debate, revealing competing interests, therefore contrasting views on the same issue. The main sources to document this debate come from Euractiv and Politico on one side and ARC2020 on the other side. The non-governmental actors cited are COPA-COGECA, on the behalf of farmers and european agri-cooperatives and Birdlife and Via Campesina, strong supporters of socio-environmental progress. Extensive feedback has been received from the environmental groups (Birdlife and EEB) and the European Public Health Alliance. Additionally, scholars have also contributed to the debate and emphasized the assertive role of CAP in building a sustainable and healthier food system. In a recent literature review, scholars have criticized CAP for its limited initiative to solve the European environmental and nutritional crises (Recanti, Maughan, Pedrotti, Dembska, & Antonelli, 2019).

2.2 Agroecology

This section is destined to shed light on the multidisciplinary applications of agroecology and the wider implication of agroecological practices on the concept of agricultural sustainability. Additionally, the political agroecology will be described as a current trend in agroecological thinking.

2.2.1 An alternative paradigm to achieve sustainable development

The definition of agroecology differs according to the context in which is applied. For the purpose of this paper, the emphasis will be put on the co-evolutionary nature of agroecology. Agroecology is regarded as an applied science build on ecological and agronomical elements combined with traditional farming knowledge (Altieri, 2015). Over time, agroecology stretched itself in three directions: scientific, practical and social (Wezel, et al., 2009).

Agroecology emerged as a science between the 1930s and 1950s combining between agronomical research with ecological methods. The idea behind agroecology relies on the existence of agroecosystems dynamics which enforce each other, therefore dismantling the need for compartmentalized research, instead focusing on integrated agriculture management. The practical application of ecology to agriculture came as a counter reaction to the measures of Green Revolution.

As a response to the bleak ecological issues caused by industrial food systems, agroecology proposes a set of practices and design thinking elements that support the creation of diverse agricultural systems that mimic natural structures. Restoring and further creating biodiversity is at the core of agroecological integrative strategy. In practice, agroecology seeks to integrate diversity through nutrients' recycling, polycultures, crop-rotations and crop-livestock mixtures, strategically employed to increase soil quality and plant health (Altieri, 2015).

Agroecological movement is characterized by a rejection of mainstream capitalist forms of large-scale centralized production in favour of small-scale locally delimited production and consumption sites. Bellamy and Ioris (2017) make a conceptual distinction between stream of agroecological movement: technical agroecology and political agroecology. While the former focuses on scientific methods and methodologies, the latter stresses the political implications of food production unveiling existing power relations in food production and consumption (de Molina M. G., 2015).

Scientific agroecology proponents primarily focus on the production and distribution of scientifically sound knowledge, often overlooking the socio-cultural implications of food production and consumption. Following the scientific dimension, there is also a practical side to agroecology that tends lean towards a more radical approach to agriculture, especially at the farm level. The agroecological practices are to be applied directly at plot or farm level in order to enhance biodiversity.

The practices target energy use habits by optimizing ecosystem services to support holistic production techniques. Despite of the practices being knowledge and labour intensive, the emphasis is put on the farmers and their collective decision-making power (Altieri, 2015). The practical agroecology is supposedly a bottom-up approach to food

production and consumption, challenging the power structures by promoting small-scale community orientated local food system (de Molina M. G., 2012).

Last but not least, probably the most radical branch of agroecology, political agroecology considers food to be essentially political. Build on political ecology, political agroecology heavily criticizes neoliberal food production relations and their simplification of social and natural worlds into labour and commodities. The ambition of political agroecologists is to reform the current food system by empowering farmers and local communities to demand climate justice and achieve food sovereignty and resilience (Bellamy & Ioris, 2017).

Scholars have recognized the need of a holistic system approach when addressing the issue of food production, distribution and consumption. Gliessman (2016) strongly believes agroecology plays a pivotal role in the transitions of food systems towards sustainability supported by a five Level Framework.

2.2.2 Agroecology and Food Politics

The socio-political dimension of agroecology lies in its struggle for food sovereignty, demanding increased decision-making power for medium and small food producers. The term was introduced by La Via Campesina, an international social network advocating for peasants' right to be autonomous and self-sufficient, promoting agroecology as the medium for it. The movement's objective is to challenge the status quo of the industrial agriculture and dismantle prevailing power structures in the food production system. The overall goal of the movement is to move towards a sustainable socio-environmental agricultural system satisfying the needs of the local and international community rather than the needs of the market (Claeys, 2013). Their political activity reached an unprecedented with the first Nyeleni Declaration (2007) followed by a second more extensive one in 2015, when eight international organizations met on the behalf of small-scale food producers and consumers at the International Forum for Agroecology in Mali. The Nyeleni Declaration (2015) presents a more focused approach spelling out eight comprehensive strategies to be pursued in the quest of achieving food sovereignty.

In appropriating a theory of change, Bellamy & Ioris (2017), have identified three political discourses that use agroecology as the driver for change. In spite of a general

acknowledgement of the shortcoming of the current doings, transition trends differ in the intensity of their political-economic demands. At the core of this debate there is a thin line between concepts such as sustainable intensification versus intensified sustainability. The fear of many agroecology proponents is the possibility of a selective appropriation or co-optation of the concept to fit the prevailing paradigm, taking a moderate stance of the need for systemic change (IPC, 2015).

Progressive agroecology puts greater emphasis on the locality of food production in relation to an agroecologically empowered community, but does not necessarily orientates its actions against reforming the system. Despite a slight difference between the moderate and progressive forms of agroecology, cases of co-optation have already been reported in public policy-making (Gonzales, Thomas, & Chang, 2018). On the other hand, the radical transition demands systemic agroecological reforms related to land distribution, water and seed rights and good practices. The complete regime change is envisioned from the perspective of food sovereignty and climate justice, replacing the current food regime with an ecologically governed food web. The radical rejection of the capitalist agri-food system is widely embraced across Food Sovereignty Movements (FSM). Within the scope of this paper, agroecology is praised for its reformist agenda as it comes supportive for degrowth proponents in their quest for a total decoupling from non-renewable energy sources (Roman-Alcala, 2017).

2.3 Degrowth

The degrowth emerged as a school of thought in the second part of the 20th century when many scholars began to doubt the feasibility of continuous economic growth with respect to natural limits. *Limits to Growth* (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & III, 1972) is considered a milestone explaining the incompatibility between the growth paradigm and resource availability, however it wasn't until the turn of the 21st century when the degrowth movement consolidated, first in France, then it extended to Italy and Spain. The concept of 'degrowth' was introduced to English language as late as 2008 in the first Degrowth Conference in Paris (D'Alisa, Demaria, & Kallis, 2016).

The literature on degrowth encompasses a set of transferable themes. The whole idea behind degrowth is to challenge the logic of capitalist growth and the consumerist

society, advocating for a new self-regulating society rooted in concepts such as autonomy, conviviality, commons and care (D'Alisa, Demaria, & Kallis, 2016).

The academic works of degrowth are flourishing as its proponents are coming from a range of academic backgrounds from industrial ecology to environmental justice, including academics, activists and practitioners or a combination of these. Initially used as an activist slogan against prevailing economic growth regime, degrowth quickly entered the academia as crucial argument in the debate for social and ecological transition (Demaria, Schneider, Sekulova, & Martinez-Alier, 2013). A great deal of academic work is preserved and encouraged through the Research and Degrowth platform as well as through biennial Degrowth Conferences. The year 2018 represented a pivotal year for the movement as degrowth consolidated as an international movement through the conferences in Malmo, Sweden, Mexico City and the Post-growth conference at the European Parliament (Post-Growth Conference , 2018).

2.4 Grounding concepts and theory

This section will elaborate on the guiding concepts and theory that will be used to position *agricultural sustainability* at the core of *societal transition* process as it is portrayed by agroecological movements. Firstly, the concept of sustainability, namely agricultural sustainability will be presented. As an addition to the sustainability debate, nuances of sustainability discourse will be presented. In the context of wider societal transition, transition management theory has been selected.

2.4.1 Sustainability

The concept of sustainability was initially introduced in the context of socio-economic development and become to be widely used in the context of environmental action. In spite of the extensive application of the word, the concept of sustainability is highly heterogenous, being manipulated by competing paradigms. The most cited definition comes from the Brundtland Report in the late 80s 'development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987). The key element that lies at the core of almost all

'sustainability' definitions is the interconnectedness between environmental issues, economy and society, followed by the concept of perpetual wealth to provide for the future generations. Other dimensions are included or excluded from the definition according to the sustaining paradigm. Robert O. Vos (Vos, 2007) has divided them into 'thin' and 'thick' versions of sustainability. According to his division, the texture of the 'sustainable' concept depends on degree of possibility for economic growth. Whereas 'thin' version economic growth is closer to the dominant growth paradigm, 'thick' sustainability advocates for systemic change (Vos, 2007). In the context of this paper, there is a 'thin' versus 'thick' clash in perceptions of sustainability.

The concept of agricultural sustainability has deep interrelated implications at many levels. J.W.Hansen (Hansen, 1996) has identified four major interpretations: ideological, strategical, goal-based and providing continuity. Ideologically speaking, sustainability is regarded as an alternative to the conventional agriculture. Conventional agriculture adheres to the dominant paradigm of 'capital intensive, large-scale, highly mechanized agriculture with monocultures of crops and extensive use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, with intensive animal husbandry' (Knorr & Watkins, 1984). When describing sustainable agriculture, Hansen talks about 'alternative values', as there are several approaches, all focused on ecological ethics and nature mimicry. To each of sustainable and non-sustainable agricultural forms corresponds a set of practices consequently defined as sustainable or non-sustainable.

Discussing sustainability as an approach to agriculture, Hansen points out the usefulness of the concept in driving change, especially social change in the form of agricultural movements. Additional definitions refer to the ability of sustainable agriculture to satisfy long-term environmental goals and ensure continuity in terms of input and output. The long-term aspect of sustainability is useful for the process of envisioning the future, even though it is not quantifiable (Hansen, 1996).

2.4.2 Sustainable Intensification vs Intensified Sustainability

The International Institute for Environment and Development (2015) has issued a paper analysing the differences in discourse around *sustainable intensification*. Originally, the term *sustainable intensification* spawned in the context of small-scale African farming

reflecting the need for smallholders to produce an increased amount of food and fibre without compromising the already limited resources. Recently, the use of the term in the mainstream discourse took on a contrasting meaning overlooking the *sustainable* dimension rather focusing on *intensified* production. In case of the latter, the concept is devoid of its socio-economic meaning, failing to address crucial aspects of 'food access, demand, waste and consumption' practices (Cook, Silici, Adolph, & Walker, 2015).

In the case of agroecology, the essence of the term is subject to co-optation as a repackaging strategy that will maintain the status quo of corporate-dominated food system. In response to unfit *intensification* practices justified as sustainable, IIED proposes an integration of the sustainable intensification methods in a wider terminology of *intensified sustainability*. Consequently, the praxis of sustainability is to be driven by social, economic and environmental ethics such as 'social justice, economic viability and environmental soundness'. Nevertheless, this requires a paradigm shift placing food security above food production when discussing the food system. (Cook, Silici, Adolph, & Walker, 2015)

2.5 Societal Transition

In effectuating the shift towards a low energy input society, especially in agriculture, J. Rotmans points out to the need of total social transition, which can only be implemented through social innovation (Rotmans, 2005). Subscribing to Rotmans's idea, D. Loorbach prescribes a management model for (public) governance (Loorbach, 2010). Both authors relate transition to social system innovation, driven by the desire to achieve sustainability. In this context, transition is acknowledged as a radical process focused on structural societal change which relies on coordinated developments at all levels (economic, cultural, technological, institutional and environmental) meant to influence and strengthen each other.

Transitions are dynamic processes aimed at bringing long-term system innovations to respond to persistent problems (Rotmans, 2005). Transition management is a new approach to governance inspired by complex systems theory designed to encourage societal innovation rooted in practical experiments and experience (Loorbach, 2010). The experimental application of transition in policy-making has emerged parallel to the Dutch polder model as a shadow policy (Loorbach, 2010). Essentially, transition policy is

focused on creating the suitable environment for positive change to occur and scale up (Rotmans, 2005).

The need to clarify the concept of sustainability and dive into the debate between sustainable intensification and intensified sustainability comes from the systematic use of sustainability discourse to vindicate the anomalies of the current economic system portrayed in the food security discourse for more food. Furthermore, societal transition is required to scale up and out positive practices that challenge the existent system. Chapter 4 presents in detail the issue of agricultural sustainability at a macro level followed by a selection of social transition processes at the micro and meso level.

3. Methodology

In answering the question ***‘To what extent would CAP post-2020 integrate agroecological practices to smooth the transition towards a post-growth economy?’*** a set of interpretative methods has been employed. The research focuses on assessing the level of sustainability of the European agricultural policies in place and of the future programming period. In this sense the sources derive from public policy actors and stakeholders in the form of reports, statistics and policy programs. Simultaneously, this paper is concerned with pushing forward the debate around agricultural sustainability, therefore transition literature occupies a crucial role. Transition literature is a mix between academic and experimental generated knowledge derived from social practice.

The broad phenomena of ‘sustainability’ has been addressed from a political, social and environmental point of view in the context of agriculture. In offering a comprehensive overview on the issue, the reasons, practices and means of two competing visions of sustainability have been questioned. Matching the purpose of this thesis, a sequence of qualitative research methods has been selected. Crafting an informed response to the central question of this research required thorough review of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary literature sources. In selecting the sources, the ‘critical reading’ method has been applied. Nevertheless, the quantity of sources should not be rigidly related with the quality of the answer.

The critical reading technique implies a that the reader goes beyond what is said to identify what is meant. Reflecting on critical reading, Edgar Dale (1965) proposes a set of characteristics to be embraced and applied by the reader. From this list, two were of utmost importance for the purpose of this thesis. First of all, the reading must be problem centred. In this case, the problem is sustainable practices in agriculture or the absence of it. Secondly, critical reading implies a future analysis and requires a final judgement from the reader. This thesis will analyse the assumptions and arguments under which the sustainability theme is generating patterns. Additionally, the implications of these patterns will be interpreted and finally evaluated to answer the research question.

In the data selection process the viability of the concepts and frameworks have been tested through the 'critical reading' method. A significant number of established authors and governmental sources have been consulted in various methods. In selecting the academic sources, recognized search engines have been used. Popular academic search engines such as ResearchGate, Taylor and Francis, Jstor, Sage Journals, Academia, Science Direct and MPDI were utilised. The sources were further filtered according to physical features such as publishing date and field of study. In terms of relevance, the theme played a pivotal role. To ensure the compatibility of the literature selection process a variety of academic literature reviews have been consulted.

Relevant to the first part of the research were international press agencies such as Euractiv and ARC2020 as they are quick to report and respond on policy updates such as negotiations and voting sessions. For the second part, the established networks of practitioners accounted for valuable sources in the form of declarations, reports and policy proposals.

The information selected for the purpose of this research comes from an overwhelming majority of qualitative sources. The sources were divided into primary and secondary sources. Among, the primary frames of reference one can identify governmental reports, projects of law, briefings and policy papers. The secondary sources offer structured information on a narrow subject, which contributes to the anticipation of the answer based on their framing methods, which is especially relevant in the case of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000).

To complete the research process, quantitative methods have been used to deepen the understanding and validate the findings. In this context, four interviews took place at various points of the research. The interviews followed to be unstructured to ensure the validity of the answers according to the interviewee experience. The interviewees have been chosen according to the relevance of their expertise. The participants are preponderantly involved with civil society actors, as activists, organizers, journalists and researchers. Some of them wished to stay anonymous, therefore abbreviations will be used. Regarding the information provided in the interviews, no major discoveries were made, however, details were added as result. The interview transcripts can be found in the Appendix.

Overall, this paper can be classified as following a path-dependent research strategy, as no innovative element was added compared to previous research styles and methods. Nevertheless, the methodology used proved to be appropriate for the subject chosen, providing sufficient material for the findings and discussion section.

4. Findings

The findings section will focus on the conditions of the two visions to respond to ecological problems, the actors and instruments employed as well as on the reflection and evaluation. Firstly, key aspects of the Common Agriculture Policy reform currently in place and general agricultural trends are presented. The focus lies on the evidence that supports the sustainability dimension and implications of CAP, moreover includes an emphasis on the Pillar II -Rural Development Policy- and the current debate for CAP post-2020. Secondly, the paradigm shift towards an alternative agricultural system will be portrayed in the context of agroecology and agroecological systems. This section portrays forms of community organization around sustainable agricultural systems from an agroecological perspective. The political dimension of agroecology will receive special attention as it is considered capable to stir social change. Overall, the findings are framed to reflect the opportunities for transition towards a post-growth environmentally sound agricultural system._

4.1 The Common Agriculture Policy

This section will present the generalities of agricultural reality across European countries starting from socio-economic aspects including farm features (structure, labour and land ownership), climate mitigation and biodiversity and farming inputs (technology and substances), followed by institutional budget programs (Pillar I and II).

Two-Pillar System

It is widely acknowledged that the CAP is extremely costly (European Commission, 2017) and low return on investment, even so the allocation of funds is highly controversial for the majority of civil society actors, especially for those concerned with social and environmental well-being. The current distribution of funds between the two pillars is claimed to be in favor of large-scale farming, which more often than not is exclusively relying on harmful technologies and chemical inputs (EEB; BirdLife; Greenpeace; WWF, 2018). As much as 71% of the CAP budget goes to Pillar I, meaning direct payments on a flat-rate per hectare basis (European Parliament, 2016), in the detriment of small-scale

farmers. It is estimated that 20% of farm holdings receive 80% of funds (DG Agriculture and Rural Development, 2018), the countries with a majority of small-scale farms are at clear disadvantage in stimulating investments (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International , 2019).

Pillar II is the designated policy area dealing with social and environmental concerns under the title of rural development, yet it only accounts for 24% of the total CAP budget, Member States being obliged to partially contribute from national funds (European Parliament, 2016). The most pregnant contradiction in the EU policy is the counterproductive approach towards sustainability. On one hand, EU is legally bound to ensure environmental protection- Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union-, investing 25% of the budget towards this goal compared to 20% of the last MFF. The budget will be split between the CAP, Social Cohesion Policy, Horizon 2020 and InvestEU (European Commission , 2018). On the other hand, reform after reform CAP continues to financially support practices that are inherently opposite to the environmental goals, leading to ineffective results and financial loss (Pe'er, et al., 2017). It is widely acknowledged that even though small-farms are the desired operating structure due to their positive impact on environment and vitality of the rural areas (D'Souza & Ikerd, 1996) (IFAD, 2013), they continue to be at a considerable disadvantage in the market orientated politics of the EU (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International , 2019) (IFAD, 2013).

Socio-economic realities

The most poignant trend that can be observed in the European agriculture is the structural changes in farm size and production choices. The change in farm size has direct implication for land distribution, with more than half of the agricultural land belonging to 3% of all farms (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International , 2019). Subscribing to economies of scale, large farms aim at increasing their productivity by investing in mechanization, factor which leads to labor redundancy or job insecurity for seasonal workers. There is a strong connection between agricultural politics and rural exodus, as existing policies fail to defend acceptable standards of working and living for subsistence producers pushing them to the cities. The existing measures are insufficiently addressed towards this issue, 'small-farmer scheme' and 'young farmer scheme' are voluntary for members states and often insufficiently funded.

Redistribution, degressivity and capping of direct payments are generally avoided by decision-makers, hindering positive progress.

Environmental Concerns

In Europe and beyond, industrial agricultural methods are seen to have dramatic impact on the environment and ecosystem functions. Biodiversity loss caused by intensive farming is one of the main concerns for environmental NGOs. According to the numbers, 60% of species and 77% of habitats are endangered. The loss of biodiversity is directly impacting the ecosystem health, which has equal value for agricultural production and human well-being. The causes of biodiversity loss are tight to the reliance on pesticides and fertilizers (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International, 2019). Pesticides use such as herbicide and insecticides prove to be the most harmful substances for wildlife as it diminishes the food sources for other species. Equally harmful is their impact on water sources and soil fertility (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International, 2019). The excessive use of natural (manure) and chemical (nitrogen) fertilizers alike is equally harmful for ecosystem health, as an increased level of nitrates in ground water reaches the lakes and the seas, marine habitats are increasingly polluted (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International, 2019).

The current reform does little to address the issue of chemical inputs. Pillar I 'green' architecture is limited to the minimum requirements of cross-compliance, additionally the proposed introduction of crop diversification method proved inefficient due to the insufficient percentage of land to be diversified (Erjavec, Lovec, & Erjavec, 2015). Pillar II provides funding for organic farming, however Member States usually prefer infrastructure investments or coupled support (ECORYS, IEEP, WUR, 2016).

4.1.1 Rural Development Policy

The overarching goals of Pillar II account for increased competitiveness, sustainable action and climate mitigation and regional development. In order to increase coherence, policy makers have further broken them down in six priority areas: knowledge dissemination and innovation, farm competitiveness, organization of food chain combines with risk management, biodiversity protection, agricultural and forestry resilience and

economic development for rural areas. To each priority corresponds a set of measures, from which Member States are free to mix and match according to the national and regional needs in a Rural Development Plan. The last CAP reform increased coordination between other structural funds mechanisms and agriculture leading to the establishment of European Structural and Investment Funds¹ (Lamborelle & White, 2017).

LEADER Approach

Particularly interesting for the scope of this paper is the social engagement technique, identified under the program name of LEADER funded by Pillar II. The

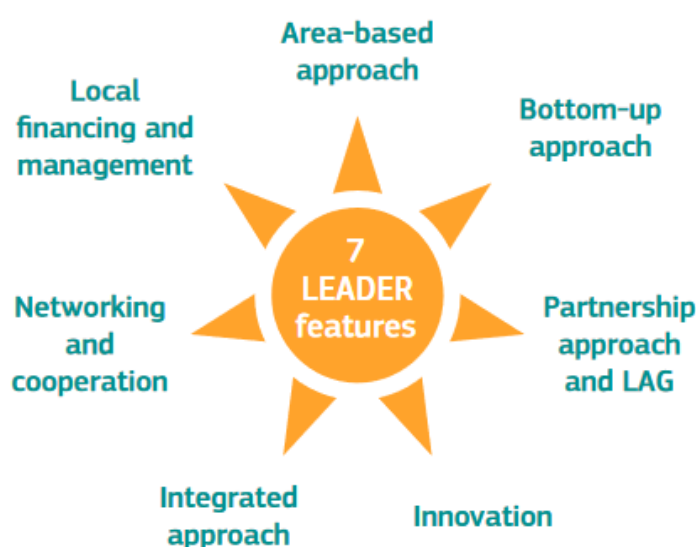


Figure 2 LEADER Approach Features
(European Network for Rural Development)

LEADER approach is a method aimed at financially supporting local actors to engage in crafting development strategies, allocating resources and participate in decision-making. This specific policy instruments subscribes to the broader adaptability enhancing programs, nurturing social learning and innovation towards agricultural resilience (Feindt, Termeer, Candel, & Buitenhuis, 2017).

The *modus operandi* of LEADER is through Local Action Groups (LAGs) opened to actors from private, public and civil society members (European Comission, 2018). During the reform period pre-2013, LEADER was seen as the only viable possibility to maximise the outcome of the measures by combining them. Even so, the LAGs had limited space for manoeuvre due to the high level of bureaucracy. The 2013 reform brought a higher degree of flexibility in combining the measures with a strong emphasis on cooperation

¹ European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; European Regional Development Fund; European Social Fund

and innovation (Bryden & Mantino, 2018). This led to the establishment of European Innovation Platforms (EIPs).

Concerning, the LEADER approach, it has now diversified to indicate various funding opportunities. While LEADER is funded by the EAFRD, the newly established Community-Led Local Development is multi-funded (European Commission, 2018). Yet, the increased funding does not necessarily make the absorption of funds more effective as additional effort must be put into the dissemination of information and practices. Albeit apparent developments in the European rural strategy over time, major territorial differences exist in terms of funding and capacity building ability (Bryden & Mantino, 2018).

Generally speaking, LEADER is seen as an instrument boosting innovation and social learning due to its participatory nature. The success and continuation of the LEADER program, currently under the name of LEADER+ shows that on the ground sustainable development is bringing positive results (van Depole, 2007).

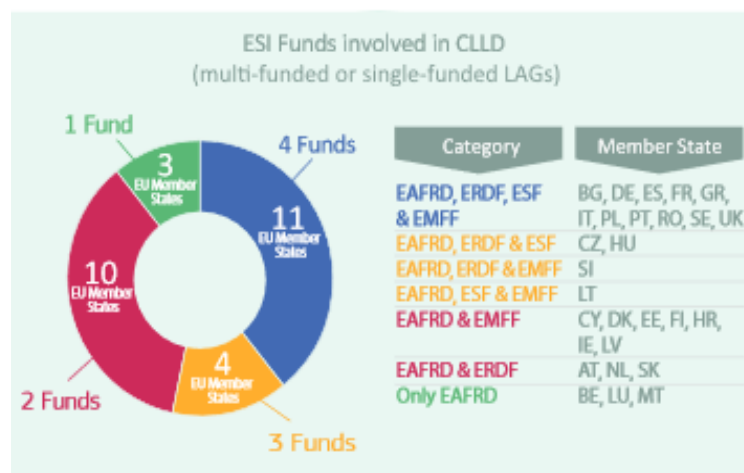


Figure 3 LEADER Funding Opportunities (European Network for Rural Development)

The current programming period places LEADER under Measure 19, implemented in 109 RDPs, most of them focusing themes such as innovation and environment. The budget allocations are the highest in Germany and Italy. On the other hand, Spain seems to be the country with the most jobs created within LEADER framework (ENRD, 2016). The LEADER program will continue to be funded under ESI Funds.

Rural Development Program Measures

Another interesting instrument funded under Pillar II is Measure 16 'Cooperation' sub-measure 9 'Diversification and Social Farming'. The measure is designed to foster cooperation between farmers and/or social organizations in their quest to ensure social

inclusion or on-farm diversification activities. Under M16.9 the applicants can benefit from coverage of set-up costs such as feasibility studies and implementation. M16.9 has been included in 27 Rural Development Programs across 12 MS (ENRD, 2015), the most receptive in this sense are Italian regions. In the case of Italy, 14 regions have opted for implementation of M16.9 in complementarity with M6² (6.2³ & 6.4⁴) and M7⁵ (7.4)⁶ (CREA, 2017). There is 100% support rate which can reach €200,000 (e.g. IT- Calabria) (ENRD, 2015).

SUREFarm report (2017) touches upon the degree of resilience promoted at different levels and regional realities by the policy programs in place. Dissecting the concept of resilience, three dimensions have been identified: robustness, adaptability and transformability. Each dimension corresponds with a set of CAP policy tools. Pillar I is often associated with robustness enhancing instruments, due to the financial support that enables farmers to resist market shocks and maintain their practices even if productivity is low. Adaptability and transformability are inherent to Pillar II instruments, with the latter being rather vaguely formulated.

Adaptability is strongly related with social learning and the diversification of the farming practices to produce environmental goods. As far as it concerns transformability-enhancing practices, organic farming and financial support for niche innovations are often mentioned to have the potential to disrupt the status quo. The agricultural programs in place do act towards farm system resilience. Nevertheless, the results reflect a general trend of the CAP programs leaning towards robustness. It is proven that robustness orientated policies impede the other two resilience dimensions favoring status quo at the cost of inefficiency and low productivity towards path-dependency (Feindt, Termeer, Candel, & Buitenhuis, 2017)

² Farm and business development

³ Business start-up for non-agricultural activities in rural areas

⁴ Investment in creation and development of non-agricultural activities

⁵ Basic services and village renewal in rural areas

⁶ Investments in the setting up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population, including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure

4.1.2 Agricultural Policy Post-2020

The previous proposal (2014-2020) for a reform was ambitiously targeting financial redistribution towards environmental conscious actions, the member states relying heavily on subsidies remained reluctant apropos a drastic redistribution of funding (Swinnen, 2015). The Single Payment Scheme introduced in the Fishler reform was replaced by a Basic Payment Scheme aimed at levelling income distribution across farms, sectors and regions. However, most of the novel components remain voluntary or insufficient (Swinnen, 2015). This was the case of the 'greening' component, which was initially aimed at enforcing sustainability at the farm level but was deemed rather insufficient (European Court of Auditors, 2017), due to its rather voluntary aspect and harmless sanctions for the non-complying farms (Anania & D'Andrea, 2015). The second pillar has seen a further de-centralization of funding instruments under a common framework-the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds-and the consolidation of a single programming document per Member State, the Partnership Agreement (PA). Whereas the ESI funds are allocated according to 11 thematic objectives (European Commission, n.d.), the Rural Development Programs must consist of detailed strategies focusing on 6 priorities distributed across 18 focus areas with a higher degree of flexibility (ENRD, 2019). Risk management measures and income stabilisation tools were transferred to Pillar II paradoxically further 11.1% budget cuts were made (Anania & D'Andrea, 2015).

As the current programming period is bound to expire by the end of 2020, the debates for a new Common Agriculture Policy post-2020 are in full swing. This chapter outlines the circumstances of the negotiations in terms of political actors and decision-making process as well as the main political themes discussed. Building on the analysis of the reform process of the CAP2020 (Erjavec, Lovec, & Erjavec, 2015), the institutional circumstances are similar, therefore the CAP negotiation is divided in four phases involving different procedures and policy networks: pre-negotiation, the legislative proposal, the negotiation and the Trilogues.

As a preamble, the Cork Declaration 2.0 set the start for the Common Agricultural debates stating twelve points of action to be further discussed (European Commission , 2016). Comparing with the initial Cork Declaration 1996 (European Commission , 1996)which was the starting point of Rural Development as a separate policy area, Cork

2.0 seems less socio-environmentally ambitious (Moore, 2016), emphasising digitalization and innovation as the way forward.

Pre-negotiation

The first phase in the CAP negotiations, also known as the pre-negotiation stage takes the form of a public consultation where the European Commission opens the debate for the future CAP. After closing the consultation in May 2017, the outcomes reflect a high public interest with regard to agriculture, further demanding for strong environmental action and better position of farmers on the market (Figure 4,5,6,7) (European Commission , 2017). Hereinafter, the Commission proceeded with drafting the political priorities under a communication paper on ‘The Future of Food and Farming’.

Agricultural policy should deliver more benefits for environment and climate change

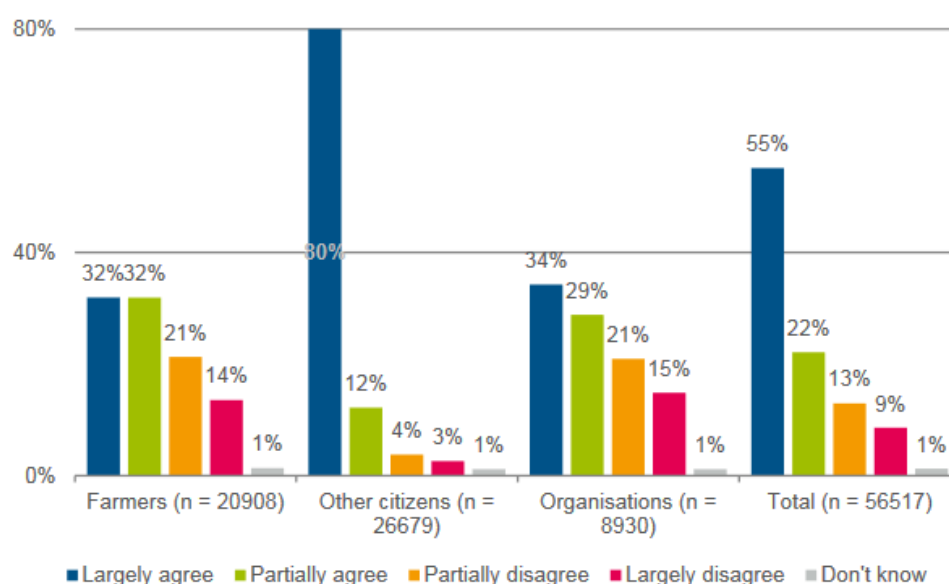


Figure 4 Outcome of the Public Consultation on CAP I (European Commission, 2017)

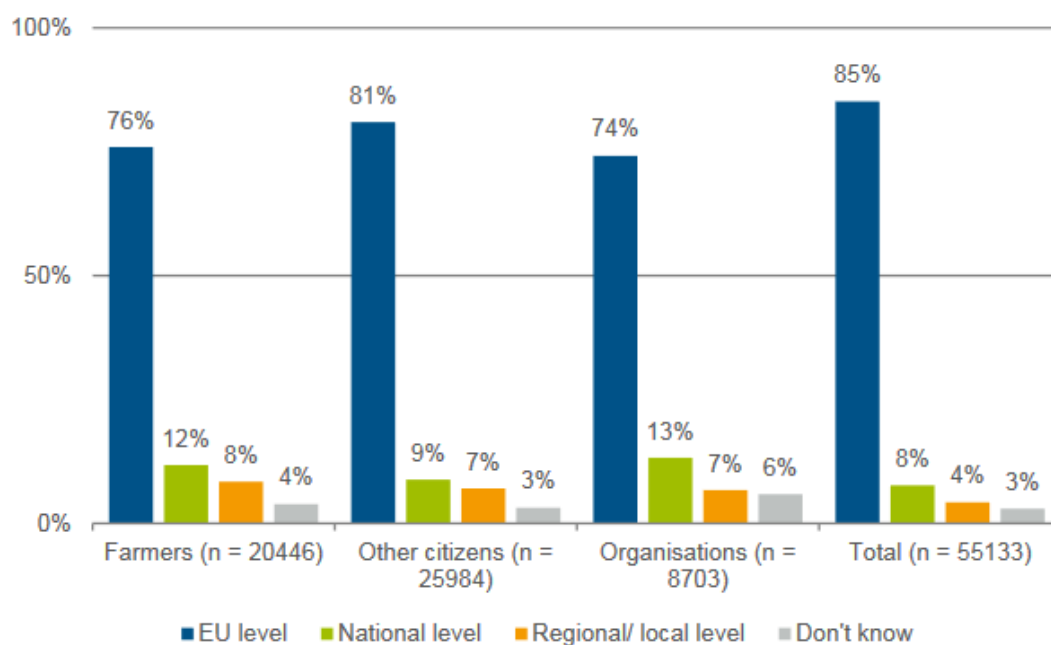
Mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change

Figure 5 Outcome of the Public Consultation on CAP II (European Commission 2017)

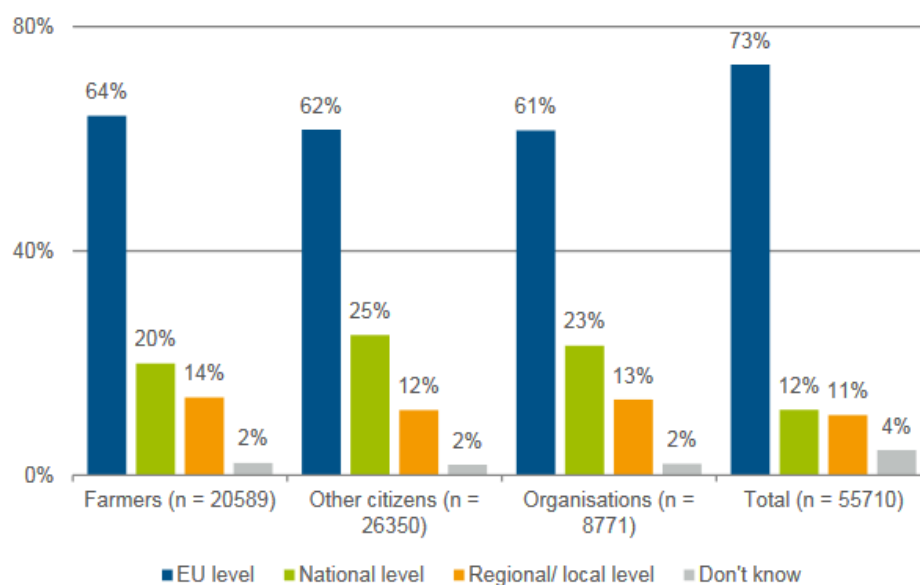
Contributing to a high level of environmental protection across the EU

Figure 6 Outcome of the Public Consultation on CAP III (European Commission 2017)

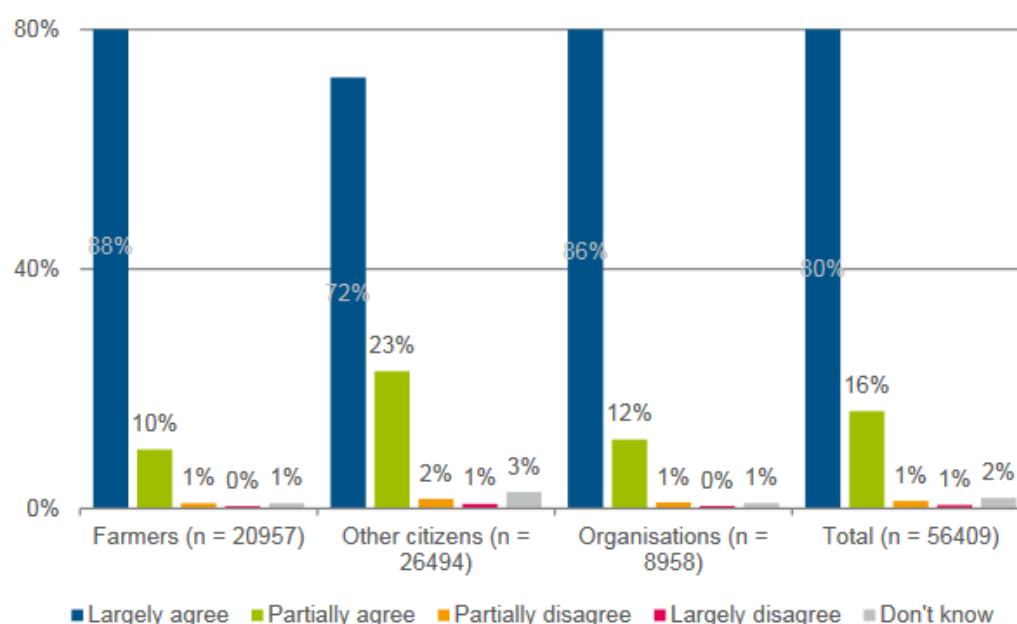
Improving farmers' position in value chains (including addressing unfair trading practices)

Figure 7 Outcome of the Public Consultation on CAP IV (European Commission 2017)

The Commissions' aspiration of the future of European agriculture anticipate for a modernization of practices and bureaucratic simplification. The Commission proposes a new delivery model expected to streamline bureaucratic processes by handing over increased responsibility to Member States in drafting individual agricultural strategies to include comprehensive policy resolutions and control mechanism for both Pillar I and II into a single programming document, the Strategic Plan (European Commission, 2017). The increased subsidiarity approach was well received by Member States (Council of the European Union, 2018). Nevertheless, the European Parliament together with civil society actors oppose the new delivery model from the fear that a renationalization of agriculture would hinder the stability of the common market as well as the joint efforts for a common environmental strategy.

The model of 'smart agriculture' is put forward with a strong emphasis on innovation and technology (European Commission, 2017). The vaguely addresses social or environmental sustainability rather focusing on resource efficiency in the broader sense of biotechnology. Furthermore, the environmental groups remained highly critical of the EU

proposal, demanding concrete measures and increased financial allocations for environmental strategies (Helene Schulze , 2018).

The Legislative Proposal

The second phase was consolidated after 1st of June, when the Commission released its first official legislative proposal for a post-2020 CAP reform. In terms of simplification, the reforming proposal keeps the two-pillars format but demands a new delivery strategy, combining national spending strategies on Pillar I and II under a single CAP Strategic Plan. The strategic plans must be drafted in line with nine CAP objectives and be approved by the European Commission, which is also in charge of the monitoring and evaluation.

Indirectly, CAP simplification implies increased subsidiarity for Member States, however the formulation of market regulations remains in the jurisdiction of the Union. In the context of generation renewal, the young farmers are prioritised not only in the text proposal, but also financial wise as the Commission has allocated 1 billion euros to this matter. In terms of sustainability, the proposal is criticized as being vaguely formulated in addressing environmental concerns.

After the unsuccessful greening initiative, the component has been redefined into a voluntary eco-scheme under Pillar I. Eco-schemes are part of a new green architecture, besides new 'conditionality' measures to replace cross-compliance and the greening measures of the current reforming program. Even so, the positive environmental outcomes are not guaranteed, as there is no national ceiling imposed to insure sufficient financial allocations (Meredith & Hart, 2019). To conclude with, Member States have until 1st of January 2020 to develop their strategic plans that are to enter into force from 2021.

After the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) introduced the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Parliament has been guaranteed decision-making power as a co-legislator next the Council of the European Union. Overall, the most searing negotiation topic is the EU budget, particularly the CAP budget as historically, agricultural policy is the largest recipient of European funds, however the Parliament is excluded from the budget negotiations. Thus, it will not be until the budget is approved that an agreement of CAP post-2020 will be made.

The Negotiation

Meanwhile, the third negotiation phase requires further dispositions from the Member States (Council) and the European Parliament on the Commissions' proposal. Specific for this reform period, the EP's Environmental Committee has been provided with 'shared competences' with the Agricultural Committee under the *associated committee procedure* (Michalopoulos, 2018). Since the beginning of 2019, there were several Council meetings and three voting sessions in Parliament, the most important one being the April vote on the common position of the Agriculture Committee on the proposed legislation. The votes casted in the last voting session are seen as possibly having disastrous consequences on the agricultural sustainability and social equity.

The current European Parliament evidently lacks any consideration for climate change (ARC, 2019) or fair income distribution to small-farmers (Staes, Bové, Heubuch, Häusling, & Waitz, 2019), financially favouring industrial farming as 60% of CAP will go to direct payments. The decisions are not be definitive as the plenary vote is postponed until after the Parliamentary elections. The Parliament elections (23-26 May) together with the new European Commission (November) entail a stagnation of the negotiation processes until late 2019, when the fourth and last negotiation phase will commence with the Trilogues between European Parliament, the Agriculture Council (of Ministers) and the European Commission.

The discussions on the Common Agricultural Policy remain heavily influenced by the budget discussions in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework, which comparably to the last reform does not only spell out the financial allocations but it also prescripts spending (Anania & D'Andrea, 2015). The post-2020 budget negotiations have unfolded further 5% budget cuts for agriculture, prioritising direct payments in the detriment of rural modernization (Michalopolus, 2018). However, in an investigation done by Alan Matthews, the budget cuts will reach 15% in real terms, with a 26% cut in rural development spending in favour of direct payments (Matthews, 2018). This is increasingly unsettling for environmental stakeholders as the Commission neglects to make allocations for greening strategies, additionally the budget reductions of Pillar II are considered equally discriminatory for environmental sustainability (ARC2020, 2018).

Amongst the decision-making actors, the opinions are scattered. In the Council, conservative countries (France, Spain, Italy) are historically against any budget reductions for CAP, while Austria and Central East European countries fiercely oppose rural aid reduction. The EP is a continuous advocate for maintaining the real-term budget without any adjustments. Hitherto, the budget negotiations continue with a final agreement projected at the end of 2019. Only after the MFF has been approved, the last negotiation phase can begin (Matthews, 2018).

The post-2020 Green Architecture

In the wake of severe environmental implications especially on the side of European agricultural model, the Commission spelled out its commitment to 'bolster environmental care and climate action to contribute to the environmental and climate objectives of the EU'. In planning to do so, the Commission has renounced 'greening' strategy, after the results proved unsatisfactory. Matthews (2018) makes an eloquent synthesis of the so-called new green architecture. The newly proposed green architecture will continue to be delivered by both Pillars.

Pillar 1 instruments have been redesigned under the name of eco-scheme under Article 28, whereas the Pillar 2 brings forwards a set of ambitious however voluntary agri-environment-climate measures (AECM). These two instruments are built on 'enhanced conditionality' requirements which replace the combined cross-compliance and greening. The new requirements draw on the provision that the MS must adapt measures to account for at least 25% of the total budget to climate orientated action compared with 20% from the current programming period, even so the environmental measures within the CAP have not been delimited by a budget simultaneously Pillar II allocations will see a drastic reduction. The MS can fill the gap by transferring funds from one pillar to another.

Interestingly enough is the overlapping nature between eco-schemes, conditionality and AECMs despite the fact that eco-schemes are only available to the previously defined 'genuine farmers' whereas the AECMs are also open for non-farming actors (Matthews, 2018). On the other hand, environmental NGOs were not pleased with the new proposal, claiming these measures will prove utterly inefficient if there is no guaranteed spending given (Greenpeace, 2018). Birdlife Europe representatives are equally disappointed

accusing the Commission of the lack of comprehension at the state of climate emergency (BirdLife International, 2018).

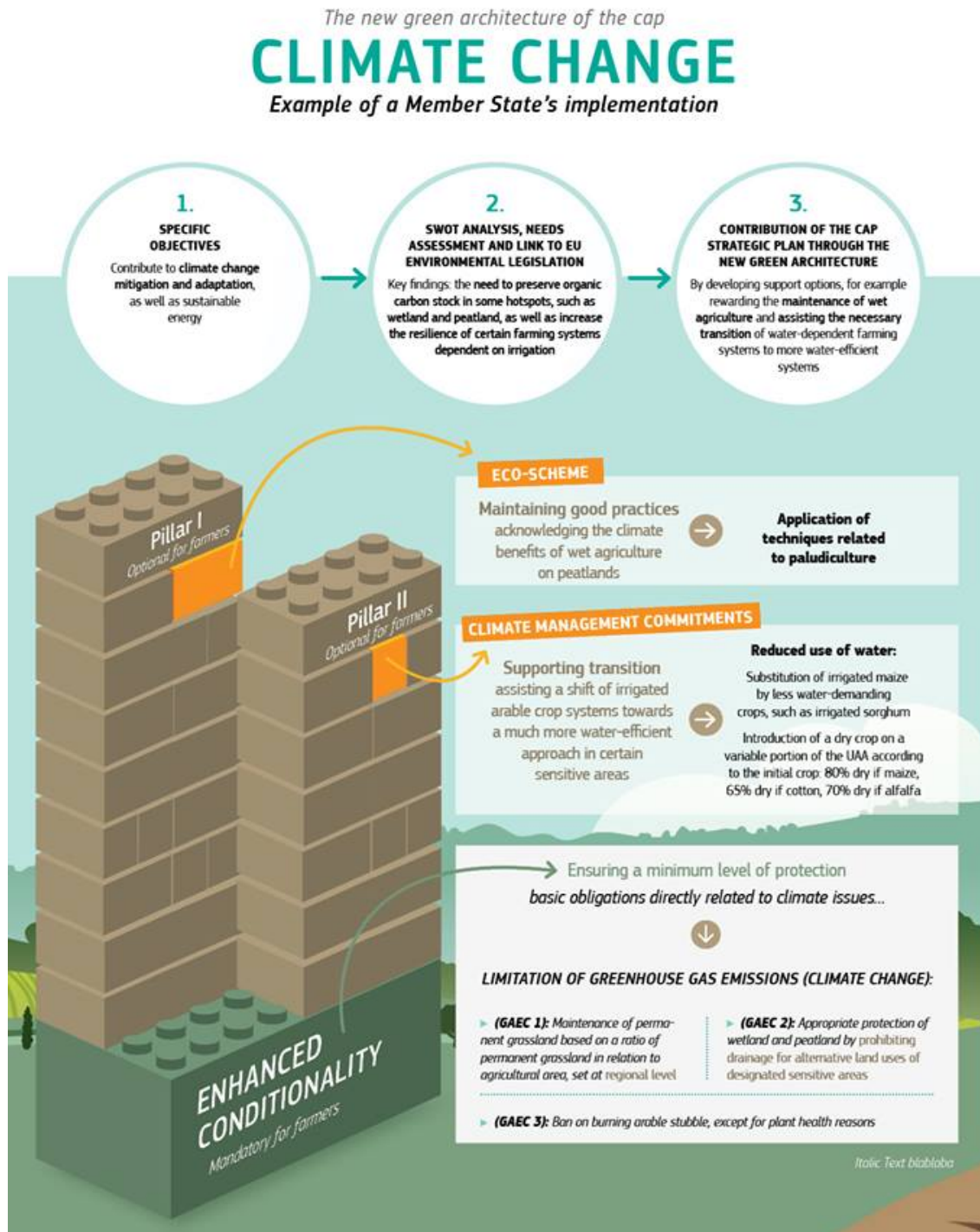


Figure 8 The EU Green Architecture I (European Commission, 2019)

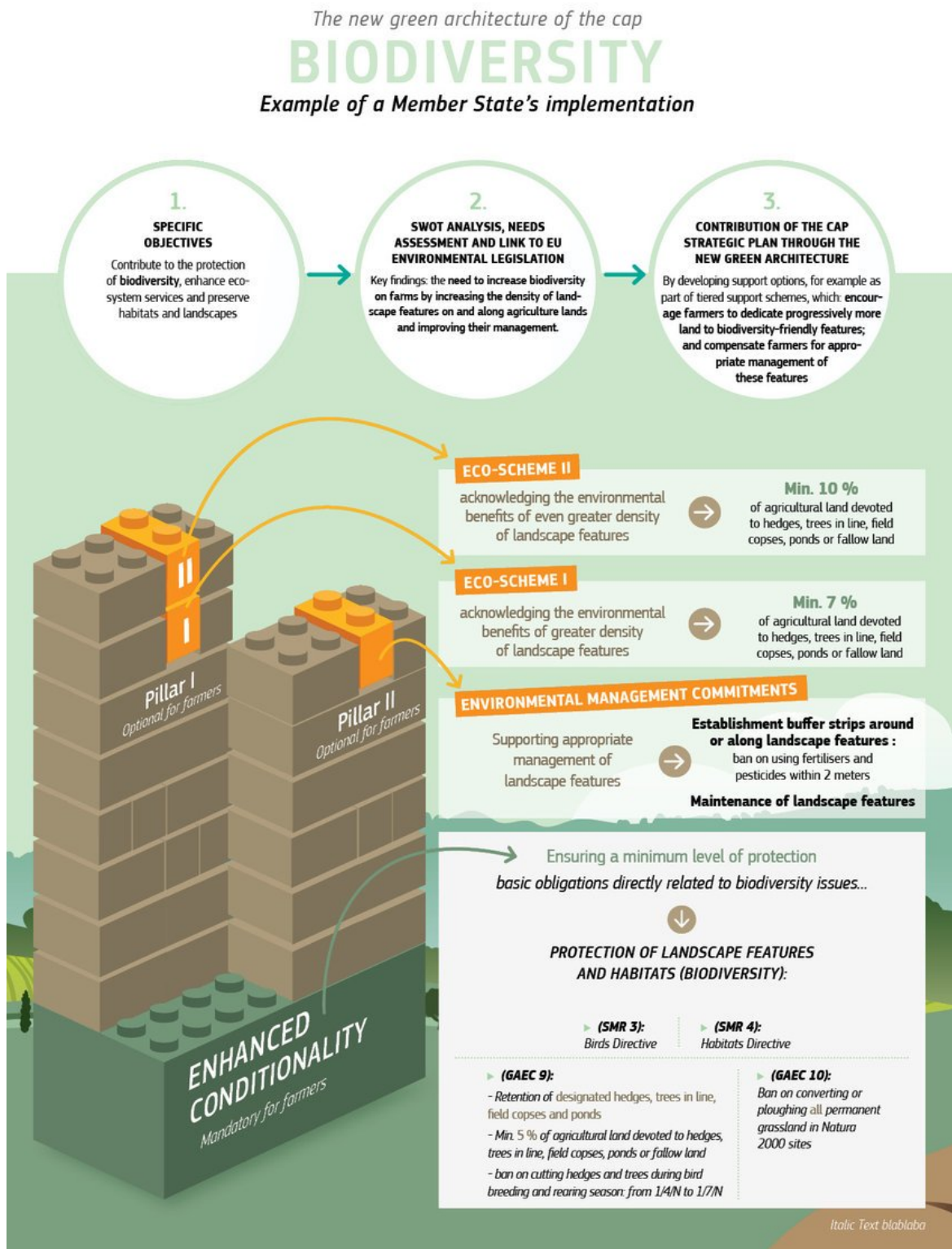


Figure 9 The EU Green Architecture II (European Commission, 2019)

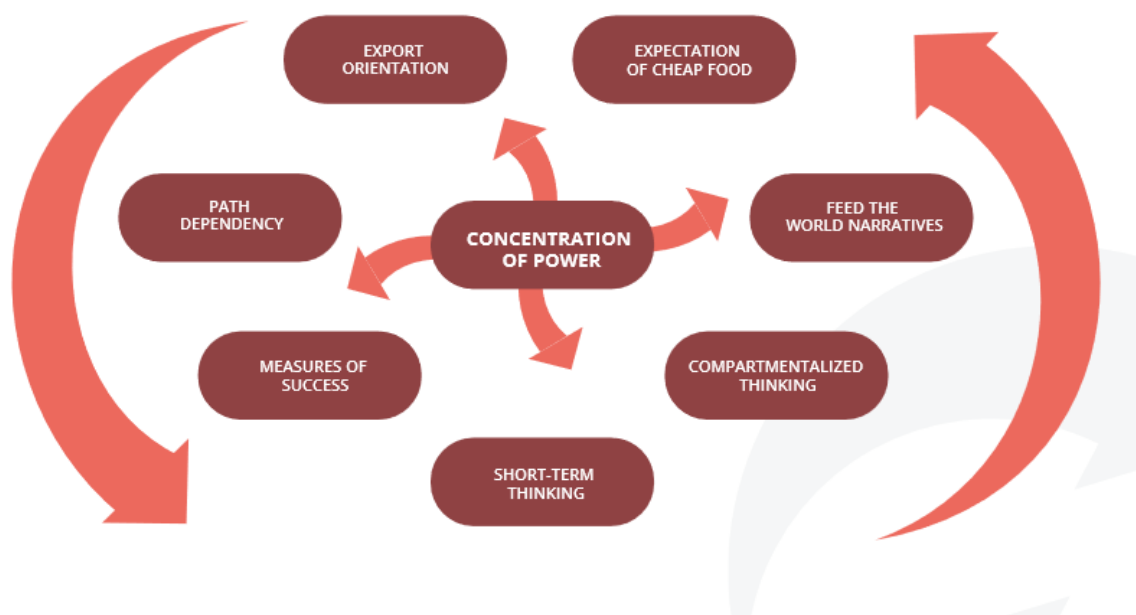
Challenges to Transition

figure 10 The Eight Key Lock-ins of Industrial Agriculture (IPES-Food, 2016)

In a recent effort to identify the challenges that stand against a comprehensive European Food Policy, IPES-Food have identified eight public policy lock-ins which are maintaining the neoliberal status quo. These lock-ins can be easily noticed as watering down the discussions for the CAP debate post-2020. As a first observation, the Common Agricultural Policy remains geared towards supporting large-scale production and specialization, subsidies allocations on a per hectare basis and/or coupled support are a clear example of path dependency. A recent study cites that the biggest share of subsidies goes to farms specialized in crop and livestock production (Matthews, Salvatici, & Scoppola, 2017), products known for their reliance on valuable resources such as water and land which adversely contributes to environmental degradation through high CO₂ emissions.

Secondly, subsidizing large scale specialized farming contributes to the creation of an economy of scale orientated towards trade, which moves the bargaining power upstream to multinational agri-businesses and food retailers. The focus on the economy of scale has pushed many small farmers out of business, leaving communities dependent on a volatile agricultural market. Trade agreements are regarded as being 'urban biased' in favour of middle- and high-income countries. EU export orientated trade policy has led

to the disruption of local markets in developing countries contributing to the nutritional insufficiency of the local population. At the beginning of the year, 17 European farmer organizations from 7 European countries have expressed their dissatisfaction with the establishment of FTA⁷s as it leads to abolition of tariffs and increase in quota in an already saturated market (Via Campesina , 2019).

The third challenge for the transition towards a more sustainable agriculture as identified by IPES is the consumers expectations shaped by low-cost, low nutritional value products packaged to embody convenience and modern lifestyle. Consumers are victims of the global food system as they have been excluded from accessible information on food production and processing. Topics such as health implications and food waste are overlooked in the CAP negotiations. The European Parliament rejected the proposal of European Economic and Social Committee for a cross-sectorial Common Food Policy. Other challenges refer to the compartmentalization of knowledge; short-term thinking in policy making usually based on productionist narratives and unbalanced power-relations in decision making.

Stakeholders Involvement

The lobbying environment is polarized between big businesses and land owners' associations versus coalitions of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations. The European food regime is dominated by big corporations and agribusiness (Howard, 2016), fact that contributes to the political outcomes of CAP. On one hand, business lobbying can be seen as far more powerful due to the higher disposable resources, financial and informational, most lobbying activities coming from large firms (Coen, 2009). On the other hand, NGOs have developed great capacity building strategies in the form of alliances and coalitions across various policy areas, with a concentrated activity record in the area of environmental protection (Long & Lorinczi, 2009).

The current debate on CAP reveals a strong affiliation between the Commission and COPA-COGEA, the 'farmer's' group as spelled out by the Commissioner on Agriculture Phil Hogan in a press conference (Hogan, 2018). Meanwhile, the environmental NGOs are restlessly advocating for a more sustainable CAP and vocally expressing their

⁷ Free Trade Area

concerns through various campaigns, public mobilization practices, formal policy proposals and research.

A recent study has revealed that in spite of the Commission claiming that the multinationals account for 30% seed market value, the real numbers reveal a more than 50% market shared among only five multinationals, leaving less than a half in the hands of small and medium companies (Mammana, 2014). Subsequently, the Bayer-Monsanto merger led to a lock of power in the food chain, especially in the agrochemical industry. The concentration of the seed market and pesticides market will inevitably lead to increased prices and imbalances of power affecting farmers capacity to produce food (Leroux, 2018). The merger is seen as a direct threat for a more sustainable agriculture (Euractive , 2018), as Bayer-Monsanto has an increased lobbying capacity and 2.5 billion euros to be invested in Research and Development on industrial agriculture (Hopkins, 2016).

The civil society and non-state actors are increasingly concerned about the state of affairs in the European food system. The year 2018 has seen the biggest public mobilization with respect to CAP under the name Good Food Good Farming Campaign (2018) initiated by a handful of well-established environmental NGOs. The campaign was organized in a decentralized manner, inviting organizations and individuals across Europe to manifest their expectations from the future CAP publicly in semi-structured Days of Action during the whole month of October. The Good Food Good Farming Manifesto (2018) proclaims itself against the current state of affairs in the Common Agricultural Policy, namely the unbalanced allocation of funds towards intensive agriculture, trade disrupting behaviour and the lack of support for public goods. The movement demands food sovereignty for small farmers, increased accessibility to public resources, especially land for new entrants and higher environmental standards. The campaign reached its highest point in the months of October and November, when 80 public manifestations across Europe were independently organized. The GFGF petition received 114,000 signatures and was handed in to the Austrian Agricultural Minister on the 19th November.

4.2 Agroecological Transition

Agroecological systems can be portrayed as sites of food production and consumption emanating primary source of knowledge for sustainable transition to low-

input farming (Wit & Illes, 2016). As any other system, agroecological systems are complex but dynamic systems delimited by space and time (Thompson, 2007). Figure 11 consists of a comprehensive depiction on what agroecology entails. Understanding the rationale behind agroecological systems leads to a further understanding of the political implications of agroecological practice.



Figure 11 FAO's 10 Elements of Agroecology (FAO, 2018)

Agroecological transition can take many facets as the main emphasis is put on diversity rather than uniformity (IPES-Food, 2016). In general, any effort put into redesigning the food and farming system has been categorized as an agroecological transition effort. Most recently, the Nyéléni Declaration (2015) established a comprehensive definition followed by a call to action to achieve food sovereignty. Such type of an agroecological system would simultaneously work on a diversified range of issues including farm structure and income sources; avoidance of chemical inputs in favour of integrated practices and processes; preservation of biodiversity; fostering ecosystem synergies and social well-being.

Food sovereignty is a key component underlining agroecological transition. In this sense, the emphasis is put on the imbalances of power inherent in the conventional food system (Patel, 2009). Peasant farmers are seen as key actors in the battle against industrialisation and dominant food chain regimes. Peasant farming is seen as mainly

subsistence farming embodied in ethical and cultural considerations. Nevertheless, in order to reproduce their livelihoods, peasants incline to enter the markets, then subsistence shifts to self-sufficiency (Roman-Alcala, 2017).

The current mission of agroecology is to scale up and/or scale out. In this sense there are many challenges and opportunities ahead. In a recent FAO report (FAO, 2018), the focus lies with the scaling up of agroecology through cross-cooperation between actors. The report is based on a series of seminars focused on agroecological transitions. The findings show that in nurturing transition, social mobilization is key. Agroecology can outperform industrial models solely through networks of diverse actors and hubs of knowledge committed to create the specific conditions for the practice to work (Kay S. , 2014; FAO, 2018). Furthermore, the reliance on agroecology exclusively in terms of agricultural practice is deemed as insufficient, as it can be rapidly absorbed into the mainstream discourse reinforcing the status quo (Gonzales, Thomas, & Chang, 2018).

Four Dimensions of Transition

IPES-Food (IPES Food , 2018) has identified four key dimensions that are crucial for a wholistic agroecological transition. The changes enquired can be found in various degrees across different agroecological transition cases, however integration of all four is stressed across agroecological literature. Initially, envision as an agricultural practice, agroecology combines traditional agricultural knowledge with ecological system thinking with the aim to optimize food production and distance itself from chemical inputs. The reliance of farmers on agrochemical inputs and technology enforces power imbalance along the food chain, leaving the producers with debts and precarious living conditions. Substituting the use of chemicals with an integrated farming approach rooted in natural ecosystem balance (pest management, crop diversity, heirloom seeds) has proven to have beneficial impacts on biodiversity preservation.

Gliessman (2016) envisions a gradual transition to sustainable farm plots which slowly builds on the existing farm practices, starting by renouncing chemical inputs to fully redesigning the farm plot. However, the successful adoption of agroecological practices by farmers depend broadly on the local socio-economic conditions. Access to common resources such as water and land as well as the degree of bargaining power of the farmer are important aspects in the success of agroecology at the farm plot.

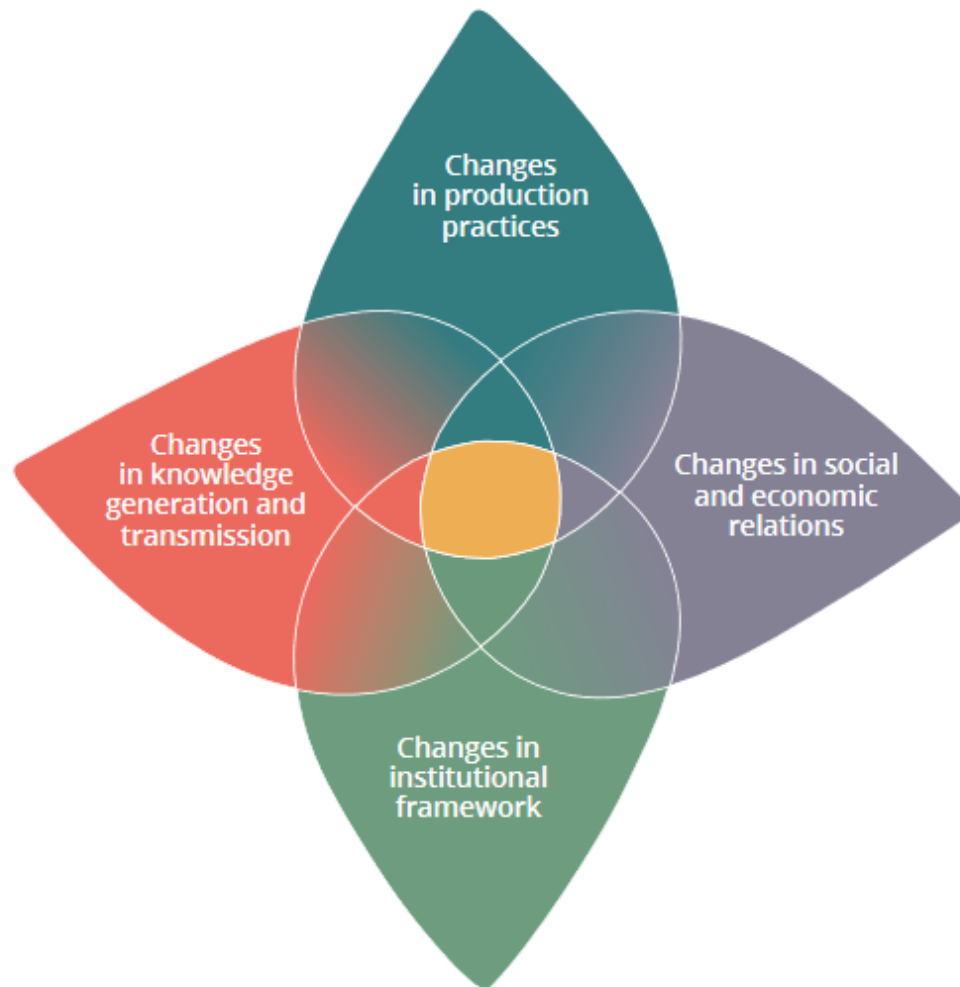


Figure 12 The Four Dimensions of Change: An Analytical Framework (IPES-Food, 2018)

Dissemination and creation of knowledge add to the degree of success of agroecology as a practice. Agroecological practices are labour and knowledge intensive, therefore bottom-up networks of farmers sharing and experimenting with knowledge represent the immediate channel for innovation. Equally important is the engagement between farmers and other knowledge generating actors such as researchers and scientists. Knowledge creation and dissemination is a form of empowerment which facilitate the scaling up and/ or out of agroecology (IPES Food , 2018). A viable example is L'Atelier Paysan, a network of small-scale French farmers supporting farmer-led technological innovations in the form of collectively- designed tools and machineries (L'Atelier Paysan , 2019). Another example of such networks are initiatives such as

seedbanks, German Open Source Seeds combines practical knowledge with big data management (Laursen, 2017).

The local delimited socio-economic relations and their evolution play a key role in the making agroecology appealing for farmers. In this sense, solidarity economy projects challenge the existing power relations within the neoliberal economic system having as central scope the creation of an alternative economic system based on shared ownership and economic activities that prioritize people and planet. Agroecological transition relies on strong social ties at the community level usually manifested in collective action. Simultaneously, trans-national cooperation and collective action are needed for scaling out (IPES Food , 2018). ECOLISE is the European network bringing together other community-led networks of practitioners including Permaculture practitioners, Transition Towns and the Global Ecovillage Network. Each and every of the actors involved in agroecological transition are rationally or irrationally pursuing a socio-political ideal, often voiced as food sovereignty (ECOLISE, 2019).

Last but not least, full agroecological transition cannot be achieved without adjustments in the current policy landscape and creation of alternative governance structures. In the context of agroecological production the emphasis should first and foremost put on the access of resources and adequate financial support. The new EU Organic Action Plan (European Commission , 2014) suggests that the European institutions are aware of the potential of agriculture for sustainability, however the proposal lacks commitment in terms of both financial and non-financial resources. The organic sector remains an underdeveloped measure under the Rural Development Policy competing for resources with other measures (IFOAM EU, 2014). Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that the food regime has wide implications across an extensive range of issues including agriculture, environment, health, trade, development and research. At the moment, the only actor involved in the EU decision making aware of a paradigm shift towards a comprehensive food policy is the European Economic and Social Committee. The proposal for a Common Policy calls for cross-sectorial cooperation stressing the multi-level approach, acknowledging the emerging power of alternative food systems. Additionally, IPES-Food has put forward a Common Food Policy project.

This section showed a simplified version of the complex interdependencies harnessing agroecological transition. The transitioning process relies on an array of

factors delimited at the local level such as ecosystem conditions for production, socio-economic landscape and cultural factors enabling or inhibiting cooperation. The following section will dive into the details of agroecologically driven initiatives in two countries experiencing different levels of agroecological transition.

4.2.1 Successful Agroecological Transition Practices

Agroecological practices encompass more than agricultural techniques, embracing the totality of social, cultural, environmental and economic factors surrounding the practices of food production and consumption (IPC, 2015). In opposition to the food security discourse, food sovereignty is at the core of agroecological transformation, emphasising culturally appropriate and locally produced food that is equally rewarding both consumers and producers (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). The applications of agroecology are many, diverse and scattered across urban, rural and urban-rural networks. For this section the focus lied with Community Supported Agriculture.

Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) can be referred to as a strategy for producers and consumers to offer mutual support for the sufficient production and adequate consumption of food. In these circles, the emphasis is put on the crucial role of agricultural renewal in the wake of reductionist industrial methods (Groh & McFadden, 1998). In reality, there is no such a thing as an ideal CSA model, however, there are a set of principles that are ubiquitous to this type of grassroot organizations. First of all, there is an evident direct relation between farmer and consumer based on solidarity and risk-sharing. Secondly, the food production is striving to be culturally appropriated and ethical with respect to the environment and the community. The farming practices are inherently agroecological, small-scale production sites seeking continuous improvement in quality and biodiversity enhancement. Last but not least, CSA's are often recognized as educational hubs directly or indirectly participating in the production of knowledge (Henderson, 2016).

Across European Union, CSA are a reality, such initiatives being present in 22 European Countries. The widespread presence of these bottom-up approaches reflects a commitment from European citizens to agroecological production and the deeper

dimension of socio-environmental sustainability. The research done in this direction presents CSAs as hubs of knowledge and innovation horizontally created to reflect citizens' concerns and deepen democratic processes through self-organization and autonomous decision-making. Food sovereignty is recognized as having intrinsic value in the establishment and functioning of such structures (Urgenci , 2016).

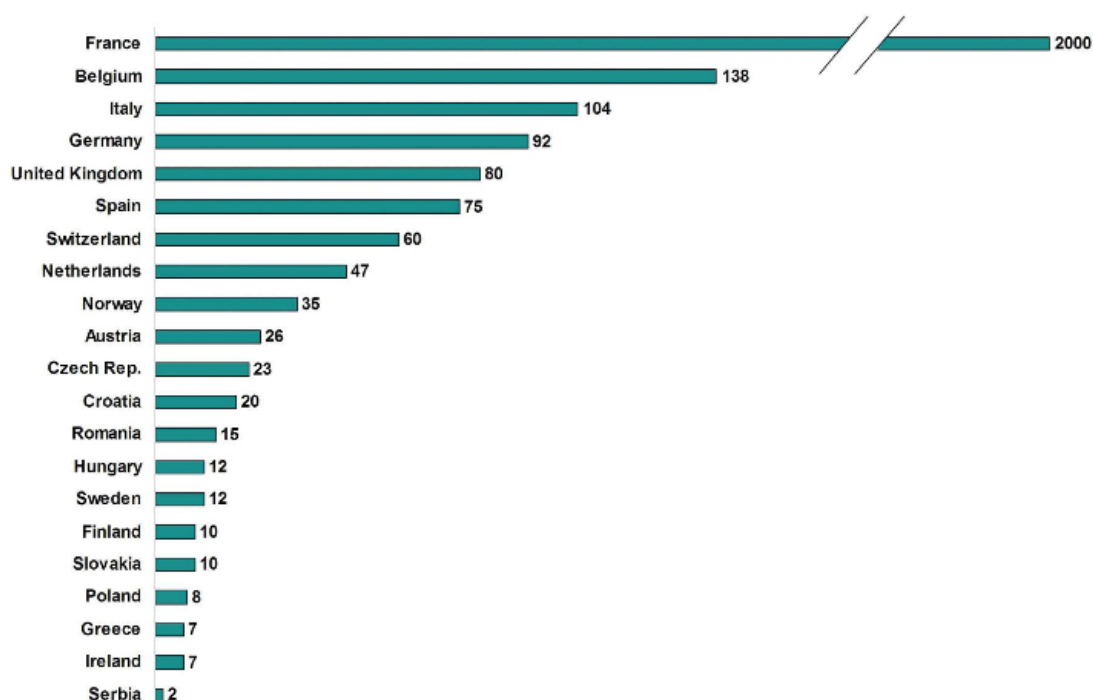


Figure 13 Number of CSA in Europe (Urgenci,2016)

In a recent report released by CSA international network URGENCI, European researchers and practitioners released valuable information about local and national Community Supported Agriculture initiatives. The figures show that in Europe there are between 3000 and 6000 such initiatives, depending on the definition applied. In particular, there are variations from the historic definition especially in France (Cocagne's Gardens) and Italy (Solidarity Purchase Groups). Nevertheless, the belief in a short supply chain driven by social and environmental equity stands at their core. It is speculated that one million European consumers benefit from these services. The propagation methods include trainings and networking within the CSA international network (URGENCI) and also with other like-minded networks (Nyeleni Declaration, permaculture, open seeds

banks, European access to land network). Experimentalism and innovation are equally important for the members, as they are continuously developing knowledge outside the farm plot, for example logistics and distribution. The socio-economic pattern is dominated by rather young city dwellers with a substantial educational background driven by ecological values. The production is mainly focused on supporting plant-based diets, but animal products are not excluded, depending on each CSA entity capacity (Urgenci , 2016). For to strengthen the vision of how such CSAs function and what are the opportunities and challenges for scaling up sustainability, the next two paragraphs will focus on examples from the same report concerning country information about Italy and Romania.

Italy

From an agricultural point of view, Italy is dominated by the existence of small farms. From an estimated number of 1.5 million farms, 10% are characterized as practicing subsistence agriculture, or self-sufficient production, 88% having an annual turnover no higher than €50,000. The number of farms focusing on organic production corresponds to around 3% of the total farms. The Southern region, agricultural land used for organic production is approximated to 71% of the total agricultural area (Urgenci , 2016).

The Italian model of community led agricultural initiatives is divided in two types of experiences: CSA and GAS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale⁸). The main difference between the two lies in the modus operandi and level of commitment of the participants, whereas CSA involves close cooperation between producers and consumers in farm planning and resource pulling, the latter resembles mainly with a consumer driven group choosing to support existing producers that focus added value production practices. Organic farming and agroecological practices are key requirements for the existence and propagation of such initiatives. The organic certification is not necessarily required by the consumers; however, trust and transparency are continuously reinforced by farm visits and/or labour participation (Urgenci , 2016).

The experience and expertise of GAS is richer, currently there are 1000 registered GAS initiatives. Organizational wise, most GAS adopted an informal status, however

⁸Solidarity Purchase Groups

there is opportunity for them to take a legal form under the existing national legislation. The majority of CAS on the other hand, take a legal form be it association or cooperative. Despite the fact that there is no such thing as an umbrella organization for this type of solidarity economy initiatives, the CAS and GAS often find themselves in synergy at different administrative levels. The most important national organizations in this sense are Districts of Solidarity Economy⁹ (DES), Networks of Solidarity Economy¹⁰(RES) and the national network of GAS national network. The involvement of the individuals in GAS happens on a voluntary basis, besides the management of purchase and distribution, members actively engage social activities that includes producers and the larger public. Overall, the GAS are historically established organizations with more than 20 years experience, the CSA are consolidating their position as evolutionary structures from GAS. The difficulty lies in the commitment and determination of consumers to participate in and share production risks long term (Urgenci , 2016). Nevertheless, both structure models acknowledge and renounce the abnormality of the food chain.

Romania

The situation of agriculture in Romania is particularly interesting as one-third of the ten million European farms are located within the Romanian borders. Dominated by small-farms, the farm size average is three hectares, 55% of the agricultural land being divided into small family farms (Eurostat , 2011) (Heinrich Böll Foundation; Friends of the Earth Europe; BirdLife International , 2019). The trend of organic farming has not been very popular in Romania; however, subsistence agriculture is often associated with low-input production methods (Urgenci , 2016).

For Romania, the history of CSA is relatively recent. The first CSA was established by Asociația pentru Sustinerea Agriculturii Tărănești¹¹ (ASAT) in 2008. The association encourages the partnership between city-dwellers and adjacent peasant producers. The initiative is usually taken by the urban consumers searching to establish a CSA within the rural area and further promote the initiative in the city. Experienced CSA often do voluntary consultancy work for emerging CSA structures. At the moment, there are 15 such types of organizations across the country, not all of them associated with ASAT. The movement receives great support from civil society actors supporting alternative

⁹ Distretti di Economia Solidale

¹⁰ Reti di Economia Sociale

¹¹ Association for the support of peasant agriculture

economic and production practices. ASAT itself is registered as an NGO, as for the CSA they act as informal organizations. The country has special legislation and taxation in place for small-farms, therefore production and small-scale trade are acceptable (Urgenci , 2016).

The level of commitment of CSA consumers differ depending on CSA affiliation. The ASAT norms expect consumers to be involved in all farm-related activities, from production planning, to distribution and practice dissemination. The majority of economic risks are shared with the farmers, sometimes financial investments are made. The connection between the Romanian CSA programs and agroecology is deeply rooted in the already existing traditional peasant structures and the need to preserve their practices starting with the open pollinated seeds (Urgenci , 2016). Concurrently, key aspects from the Neyleni Declaration (2015) have been inserted into the ASAT vision and mission, including food sovereignty, social justice and heritage conservation (ASAT, 2016). Broadly speaking, observing the progress over the last decade, the prospective for Romanian agriculture is gloomy. The country is experiencing a rural exodus as rural development is insufficient to provide a decent living. Equally worrying is the land grabbing and the rapid expansion of the agribusiness, 0.8% of farmers currently owning 44% of agricultural land (Urgenci , 2016).

The experiences of Community Supported Agriculture structures reveal how agroecological transition can occur outside institutionalized structures. In the European legislation there is only one mention to CSA -Article 35, paragraph 2 (k), Reg. (EU) No 1305/2013- *'diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food.'* Regardless, there is no evidence that any CSA project have ever benefited from such measure (Marks, 2018). The reasons, says Marks (2018) are strongly related to the bureaucratic burden.

In different circumstances, CSA together with other similar agroecological driven projects are positively contributing to the degrowth debate supporting the idea that a shift towards a low-input society is possible in the right circumstances. The next section will focus on the complementarity between food sovereignty movements and the degrowth project.

4.3 Food and Degrowth

The proposal for economic degrowth was the initial response to the realisation of biophysical limits in the discussion of socioeconomic development. Alongside the ecological bias of degrowth, the idea of a reorientation of human centred society was developed through concepts such as conviviality which entails a reorganization of society around a new set of values and technologies that would spur social responsibility and care for the commons envisioned as voluntary simplicity. The degrowth scholars have done extensive work on social and environmental justice as well as urban and industrial economy and resource dependency. However, degrowth scenarios for food production and consumption remains poorly explored.

Amate and Molina (2011) recognize agricultural production as the most energy demanding section of the agri-food system, followed by post-purchase food preparation and preservation, transportation and packaging. The research proposes a shift towards organic production and new consumption patterns in the light of degrowth measures, focusing on reducing the use of fossil fuels and the green gas emissions. The suggested approach fit within Serge Latouche's eight 'R's' framework: re-evaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, redistribute, re-localize, reduce re-use and recycle (Latouche, 2009). In the vision of Amate and Molina (2011), the eight goals are specifically adapted to the agri-food systems asking for 're-territorialisation of production, re-localization of markets, re-vegetarianization of diet and re-seasonalisation of food consumption' (Amate & Molina, 2011). Regardless, a shift of such nature would not be able to emerge until key aspects such as feasibility and viability of alternative agricultural aspects would be proven, along with the desirability for such a societal change (Giampietro, Mayumi, & Ramos-Martin, 2009).

Most of degrowth proponents regard agroecological alternatives as compatible with degrowth, rather Gomiero (2017) is concerned with the lack of evidence of the societal impacts of a large-scale transition to a low-input agriculture. For Gomiero, achieving local food self-sufficiency, short food chains and low-input farming practices would be relatively impossible as due to the population pressure on resources. Energy efficiency is the focus point of Gomiero's critique argues that even though a switch to low-input agricultural model is feasible, it is not necessarily viable with the current rates of consumption (Gomiero, 2017). The shift to a low-input food production will mean a redesigning of the

whole societal metabolism (working times, lifestyles) where the desirability still needs to be measured. Whereas the idea of sudden and total economic contraction remains hard to grasp, gradually transforming socioeconomic and cultural relations to acknowledge the biophysical limits can be more appealing. The first phase of degrowth comes with the abstinence from growth.

In an attempt to assess the potential of food sovereignty movements in accelerating the transition towards a post-growth society, Roman-Alcala (2017) finds peasant agriculture and its supporters the ideal socioeconomic arena to counteract the capitalistic paradigm of growth. Roman-Alcala, leaves from the presumption that peasantries are sites of production driven by concepts such as self-sufficiency while remaining culturally appropriate. The idea of self-sufficiency supports the occurrence of markets 'nested' in the ecological and social context. The creation of such markets requires a certain degree of decision-making and institutionalization, these gaps are often addressed in food sovereignty discussions.

It is frequently speculated that even though there are powerful alternatives to growth, the lack of genuine democratic representation hinders the progress of such alternatives. Deliberative approach to democracy has yielded successful initiatives, such as food policy councils. Simultaneously, a multi-level strategy is encouraged by Via Campesina members as the only viable way to challenge corporate power, often engaging in 'agonistic' dialogues (Juarez, Balazs, Trentini, Korzenszky, & Becerra, 2016). Even so, food sovereignty proponents are not only interested in challenging the existing power structures, but also acknowledge that state institutions are losing their traditional roles of ensuring any type of sovereignty in favour of corporate actors. Food sovereignty movements seek to disperse themselves across all centres of power locally and trans-locally without expanding state sovereignty, emphasizing a form of relational sovereignty. Due to their experience and success of penetrating growth orientated discourses at local, national and trans-national level, food sovereignty movements namely, Via Campesina are regarded as valuable assets for envisioning a post-growth future (Roman-Alcala, 2017).

4.4 Wider Social Transition

Research done into transition reveals the concept as timely complex phenomenon in need of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach. The development of knowledge is characterized as being non-linear and rooted in social experience. Complexity and uncertainty are dominating transition processes, co-evolving coping mechanisms must be developed to lead to irreversible changes. There are three knowledge developing processes which require to be involved: learning by doing, doing by learning and learning by learning (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009).

In the context of agri-food transition, complex system theory and transition management constitute appealing conceptualizations for spawning and pursuing change in the European food-production system. Before we go further to discuss the degree to which agroecological practices can be part of the degrowth transition process, three core provisions of a transition management framework can be outlined: problem structuration, vision development and experimentation (Kemp, Loorbach, & Rotmans, 2007). Each of the three dimensions corresponds to a different type of governance and continuously co-evolve to enforce each other. Specific to each governance style are a set of actors and instruments (Loorbach, 2010).

Implementing transition management to achieve social change requires a thorough understanding of the social system a detailed analysis of system dynamics (Rotmans, 2005). The transition management cycle has four dimensions: strategic, tactical, operational and reflexive. Each of the four dimensions is characterized by a set of instruments, actors and ruling concepts (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009).

The strategic level takes the form of a 'Transition Arena', a virtual space where a multi-actor innovation network (forerunners) meets to discuss a transition issue. The goal of the arena is for the forerunners to agree on a common vision for the problem. The envisioning process is prone to be tedious and time consuming, however is crucial for giving direction to the transition. Once the vision is complete, transition paths can be opened. This means the initial network disintegrates and regroups in separate focus group. At this stage the network will most probably expand, with actors leaving or joining the process. The transition paths are integral parts of 'the Transition Agenda' (Rotmans, 2005).

'Transition Agenda' materializes at the tactical level in the context of an expanding transition network. At this point, negotiations between interests, motives and policy will lead to new strategies being implemented. The actors should not have competing interests but should have a high degree of authority in their field and capacity to 'translate' the transition vision in their organizations. A conflict between transition agenda and public agenda is expected to arise. As a consequence, the direction will have to be revised and new actors included (Rotmans, 2005).

At the operational level, the transition must be encouraged through experimentation. Transition experiments have to follow the vision and paths developed at strategical and tactical level. Successful experiments will be scaled up from micro to meso level. At this point transition management is concerned with creating a portfolio of experiments that complement and enforce each other (Rotmans, 2005).

The reflexive aspect must be present at every stage, instrument and set of actors of transition management to facilitate social learning. It is equally important for the actors in the transition arena to be closely followed in their activity as part of the arena or agenda setting, as it is to monitor the experimental development. The reflection should produce knowledge and assist the co-evolution of transition systems (Rotmans, 2005).

In practice, transition management has been reported to take many forms. As a follow-up research, Loorbach and Rotmans have extracted lessons from a few sample cases in Netherlands and Belgium. The examples differ in terms of level of governance, societal dimensions and geography. Management practices have been spelled out in Dutch National Environmental Policy and Health Care Plans as well as in resource managing businesses (Loorbach & Rotmans, 2010).

Transition management has been mentioned in this paper in an attempt to offer a possible strategy to connect deliberative democracy efforts with a multi-level approach in the quest for achieving wider societal change towards sustainability.

5. Discussion

In the above listed chapters, the current state of affairs is presented for what concerns an overview of agricultural policy measures in Europe and their shortcomings, followed by successfully implemented agroecological practices and their significance for a societal transition towards a post-growth economy. The last section emphasizes a possible approach in addressing societal transition at the institutional level. The most remarkable findings are IPES's proposals for a Common Food Policy outlining the challenges of the current governance system and the opportunities for an agroecological transition to occur. For that matter, this section comments on the likelihood of the current supranational arrangements to trigger meaningful change at the local farm level and assesses 'To what extent is CAP post-2020 enabling the possibility for an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy?'

Leaving from the presumption that food production and consumption are two facets of the same coin namely food politics, transitioning to a sustainable food system largely depends on the political strategies and instruments employed to challenge power relations in food production and consumption. Currently, the mainstream agri-food narratives fail to provide a comprehensive long-term strategy, focusing on short-term production and quantity rather than long-lasting quality. The power of the prevailing agri-food system lies in the hand of food monopolies which managed to establish a food regime driven by a narrow productivist argument. Food consumption practices rely on cheap widely available products dependent on economies of scale. Regardless, the narratives supporting an increase in production are counter-intuitive to the complex and highly uncertain social and environmental challenges foreseen.

CAP State of Play

The provisions of CAP post-2020 are worded vaguely with regard to the public demands voiced in the public consultation. The new elements of CAP are insignificantly contributing to an amelioration of the public concerns regarding the environment and

socioeconomic situation of rural areas, which is one of the main variables in Member States interpretations of the CAP. The proposed new delivery model of increased subsidiarity does not guarantee neither simplification nor modernization as many MS have intricate bureaucratic systems. Even though the post-2020 programming claims to be result orientated, there is a lack of coherence in the result assessment framework, MS receiving the freedom to measure their outcomes themselves which can hinder accountability.

The CAP has been long contested for financially favouring large-scale farm structures under Pillar I, issue which remains currently underrepresented under the current negotiations. Capping direct payments and degressivity continue to play a minimal role in the CAP discussions, remaining voluntary. At the same time, the new regulation does not clarify the status of the recipients as there is no common definition on the concept of 'genuine farmer'.

CAP financial preferences

The Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations play a significant role in the CAP priority setting. Over the course of the CAP reforms, financial reduction has stirred discussions with regard to funds distribution, however the previous experiences show that CAP budget cuts are mostly felt by Pillar II. The same happened for the next programming period 2021-2027, even though the CAP is expected to not go below a 3% total reduction, Pillar II will see a reduction of 14% in real terms. This makes it clear that, the CAP primary stakeholders' preference lies with Pillar I which is proven to be counter-productive in the quest for sustainability. Maintaining the high financial share for direct payments without alternating the distribution methods in terms of capping and degressivity, the policy measures subscribe to the 'business as usual' strategy.

CAP and Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is vaguely worded in the current Common Agricultural Policy debate, lacking concrete action. The severe budget cuts for Pillar II are a perfect example of incompatibility between discourse and action. The reduced budget for rural development measures does not only reflect the lack of political support for rural development, but since the policy instrument does not specifically sets aside a spending ceiling for agro-environmental measures, other measures might be favoured by MS. On top of this, the cross-compliance elements of 2003 Reform are being re-negotiated along

with the mandatory 'greening' elements introduced in 2013 Reform which have been replaced with voluntary Eco schemes. The new green architecture falls short when compared with the public environmental expectations, undermining previous progress towards sustainability.

It is obvious that by ignoring the outcomes of the public consultations and the continuous feedback received by environmental NGOs, once again the current political system including the EU institutions and the Member States are refusing to see beyond the industrial paradigm and economic growth. Apart from ignoring rural realities, the political preferences tend to overlook the potential of rural areas in ensuring sustainable development, favouring 'mandate' solutions.

Agroecological transition

The statistics show that there is immediate need to paradigm change when it comes to food production methods. In this context, agroecology is the perfect call to social awakening, proposing not only an alternative set of practices, but an equally stable political vision and mission. The overarching vision of agroecological movements is food sovereignty, which can only be achieved by an agroecological transition. Agroecology is looking to challenge the status quo of the current economic system advocating for a re-localization of production and consumption. Food sovereignty is inherently counter-discursive to food security, which is the leitmotif for increased industrial production. Agroecological transition has the potential to continue the battle for sustainability only through a cross sectorial reconciliation which is expected to be approached equally bottom-up and top-down.

As presented, agroecological practices are diverse and complex and cannot be reduced to one functional model, therefore against the common approach 'one size fits all'. Being knowledge and labour intensive, agroecology depends on an ever-expanding network of supporters open to continuous experimentation and diversification. The best space to experiment with agroecology practices is at the farm and community level, assuming that the involved parties are in a state of cooperation, rather than competition. The ambition of agroecology stretches beyond obtaining a yield, aiming for increased biodiversity and soil health, all this by maximizing the power of clean energy sources.

Given the above-mentioned reasons, the question whether agroecology can successfully scale-up/out depends on the level of support it receives in the decision-making circles. Up until now, agroecology had a marginal position in the decision-making circles, only recently being embraced in the mainstream international discourse by FAO. Acknowledging the potential of agroecology in achieving sustainability in the food system, IPES-Food positioned agroecological transition at the forefront of their Common Food Policy project. Even so it seems like agroecologists will have to wait yet another EU programming period to reach the Common Agricultural Policy. Even so, there are some funding opportunities for agroecologists within the future programming period. Specifically, CSA is entitled to receive financial support under Measure 16.9. The measure would aid the development and set-up of such initiatives. However, the measure is limited depending on the willingness of MS to include it in their RDPs and the accessibility for farmers and organizations to make use of it. For example, even though Italian regions have adopted the Measure, there is low turnout for CAS or the Italian equivalent of GAS initiatives within the bureaucratic framework of RDP.

LEADER Program is another appealing opportunity for agroecologists to make use of, even more so as the measure is ring-fenced with 5% fund allocation at the EU wide. In essence, LEADER could contribute to two of the Key Dimensions of Change proposed by IPES-Food namely 'changes in knowledge generation and transmission and 'changes in social and economic relations', if successful this could impact another key dimension 'changes in institutional framework'. For example, the first step of LEADER is capacity building, meaning that local actors are involved in collective activities

The bottom-up approach LEADER ensures a certain level of genuine decision-making through Local Action Groups, built on strategic partnerships between various members of society (farmers, organizations, small-businesses). Furthermore, LAGs are the carriers of a self-designed community-led local development strategy. The LEADER approach can represent a window of opportunity for agroecological proponents to engage with the local community.

Societal Transition

In the context of degrowth theory, the transition process is inherent in the idea that the current societal metabolism is not benefiting neither the environment nor the society at large in terms of well-being. The discussion breaks away from the idea that economic

growth will contribute to the realization of human potential. In the context of the food system, the emphasis is put on the unbalanced relations between energy inputs and outputs, claiming that the only way forward is to renounce the dependency on fossil fuels and adopt new technologies that foster autonomy and conviviality.

The adoption of a low-input agriculture would undoubtedly need to be supported by a total societal shift towards other types of activities. Lautouche's eight 'Rs' framework combined with the multi-level approach of transition management can lead the way towards such transition. Judging by the 'transition management cycle' proposed by Rotmans and Loorbach (2009), we are finding ourselves somewhere between the strategic and tactical level. At this point, visions are still being discussed, however some groups have opened transition paths before the 'Transition Arena' was closed. The challenge relies in the pluralistic nature of such movements and the different locales they perform. For example, while agroecological movements have already been acknowledged by the policy makers, the idea of degrowth is still struggling to take roots. The difference lies in the practicalities, agroecology being easier to grasp by the society in general due to its social class focus. Nevertheless, agroecology and degrowth enforce each other on many levels starting with the rejection of capitalist technology to the focus on social and environmental justice.

The European decision makers refuse to acknowledge the implications and limits of economic growth, strongly believing that further mechanization and technologization accompanied by liberalized trade will spur prosperity. However, there is disconnect between the political agenda and socioeconomic realities, which will only diminish the trust in the European project. Luckily, it seems that the rates of social involvement have diversified to fill the gaps left by inadequate leadership as more and more citizens are orientating themselves towards alternative production structures and lifestyles (e.g. Community Supported Agriculture)

Food production methods are externalizing their costs which in turn are supported by political systems addictive to growth. The growth paradigm is perpetuated across the food system from production to transport to consumption. The dependencies of industrial agriculture on primary resources such as land, water and fossil fuels are destabilizing natural ecosystems and social communities worldwide. The competition for resources affects rural communities, directly threatening their livelihoods and food security, leading

rural population into poverty and social exclusion. At the other side of the spectrum, the food industry is directly responsible for perpetuating obesogenic environments, depriving consumers of healthy and nutritious foods. Assessing the incontestable damage generated by this particular agricultural system it is crystal clear that the prolongation of such methods will result in the accentuation of the already existing socio-environmental crisis. Albeit an environmental urgency for a paradigm shift in production and consumption, the prevailing political and economic system persists in the belief that achieving sustainability can be done through quick technological fixes, rather than ideological fixes.

6. Conclusion

In the context of this paper, the political support for industrial agriculture has been challenged as unsustainable, proposing radical alternatives. The final CAP provisions will set the direction of the European agriculture for the next seven years, this includes financial allocations and instruments. This research was aimed at identifying possibilities for the European agriculture to shift away from the industrial model towards an alternative model of sustainability encompassing socio-environmental and socio-economic reforms. This paper concludes that the on-going political debates on the Common Agricultural Policy happening in Brussels hold to be inconsistent with the demands of the civil society actors and non-state actors in terms of environmental and social protection.

This research draws on the Public Consultation regarding the future of the CAP which showed increased awareness of the potential of agriculture to deliver public goods. In spite of the results in favour of greater environmental protection and social support, the Commission's Proposal for the future of CAP together with the MFF negotiations proved to maintain the 'business as usual' approach towards agriculture, neglecting the potential of Pillar II for the transformative role of agriculture. Simultaneously, community-led initiatives with a pronounced sustainable agenda are increasingly driving social change across Europe.

After having assessed the potential of agroecology and agroecological transition, the research found an inherent incompatibility between the current economic system and sustainability. In this sense, the eight lock-ins in food policy have been carefully examined and proved to be perfectly fitting in the context of on-going CAP negotiations. The findings show that the agricultural reform is prone to be path dependent consolidating unjust power relations, favouring neoliberal trade systems in the detriment of local supply chains. When it comes to innovation and modernization, the emphasis is put on top-down technological fixes rather than bottom-up social innovations. Normally, these socio-economic and socio-political aspects vary across member states, yet the EU narratives pursue a 'one size fits all' approach. Assessing on-the-ground initiatives showed that the capacity to support an agroecological transition depends on change being pursued multidimensional, this includes practices, knowledge generation, socio-economic relations

and institutional frameworks. In this sense, the Community Supported Agriculture model can be used as a starting point to reflect on the wider transition.

Regarding the question ***‘To what extent is CAP post-2020 enabling the possibility for an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy?’***, it can be concluded that whereas there are few measures supporting alternative production and organization methods under Pillar II, the European institutions involved in the decision making prioritize competitiveness in the detriment of environmental protection granting substantial financial support to unsustainable forms of agricultural production. The future CAP proposes a higher degree of subsidiarity in designing territorial strategies which has the potential to stir positive change in the MS with a strong presence of environmental groups and agroecological initiatives (e.g. Italy). The element of growth is omnipresent in the EU narratives, therefore any reorientation towards economic contraction is highly unlikely in the near future. The discrepancies between grassroots action and institutional decision-making in terms of resource allocation and political consideration additionally weaken the likelihood of an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy.

7. Recommendations

Drawing upon the conclusion of this research, the initial proposal consists of pursuing further research of the viability of agroecological transition across regions and national states. It might be that, some states and regions are more prone to devote themselves to such a change than others, depending on the cultural, socio-economic and political circumstances. Having concluded that for a genuine agroecological transition, the challenge lies mostly within the current economic system, it can be confirmed that socioeconomic and socio-political factors are to trigger such a change.

Second of all, policy changes are needed in order to ensure the fair access to resources such as land, clean water and nutritious soils. In the context of CAP, the need for land redistribution is seen as a condition for generation renewal, which might trigger local reforms. It has been stipulated that there is unlikely the ongoing negotiation will bring radical changes in the current state of affairs. However, agroecological proponents will have until the next programming period 2027 to prove the viability of agroecology and

mobilize resources in favour of the transition. Nevertheless, until then the possibility of influencing local, regional and national institutions remains open.

Last but not least, the Degrowth movement needs to further consolidate its position in the area of food by putting more attention into how sustainable food systems can be supported by a degrowth society. At the moment, degrowth proponents are lacking a strong strategy that addresses food matters. Even though Food Sovereignty Movements contribute to the vision of agriculture in a post-growth economy, there are still many aspects regarding food security that need to be addressed.

8. References

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9. Apendix

9.1 Interview 1

Interview Introduction Ana-Maria: Good morning, this is the interview with Francois Schneider, I am Ana-Maria Gatejel and this interview is for my Bachelor Thesis.

A: Francois, as you have probably read in the Consent Form you have already signed, I am writing my final dissertation on a mix of issues, among which Degrowth and agroecology, but also the political debate around the Common Agriculture Policy. Now, most of the Degrowth related sources I used in my paper are mentioned on the Research and Degrowth Platform, which I have to say made things very clear for me about what Degrowth implies. As well, your tour (book release tour) was very helpful. Correct me if I am wrong but according to the definition, Degrowth rejects the economic growth paradigm seeking to enable human progress outside a market-based economy. Is that right?

F: Yeah, well I guess there are always different interpretations, and some people would still keep some degree of market relations. I think the exact point we should arrive at in maybe not completely defined. Some people would say there is no use of currency anymore and some people would say there is still use of currency. Some would say there is no market exchanges anymore and some people would say 'ok, maybe a little bit'. It's like, it doesn't need to define exactly where we go, but to give a direction. It's not like an ideology that would define an exact utopia, on all the details. There are many possibilities, we don't need to all agree. However, it is something very good if we agree on the direction.

A: What would be this direction?

F: For example, on these issues, the aim is to challenge the search for (financial) profit. The sources can be different. It can mean to increase the availability of resources or rather reduce the destruction of the natural resources. I don't know if I should get into the theory ...for example Odum. Some say is more about recovering ecosystems and some say is more about reducing the resource destruction. But anyway, there is this issue

on the availability of (natural) resources, there is the issue on the well-being and meaning of life, to live in accordance with what we believe in; the issue on analysing the interpersonal relations, more convivially not market-based; increasing the capacity to decide democratically. I mean these are the different sources that you find.

A: I know that degrowth proponents are actually trying to re-politicize the social-ecological transformation. What does that exactly mean?

F: Basically, degrowth is like a missile word that challenges our way of thinking (status-quo) and tries to bring more awareness in society. Personally, I think that just about challenging our ways of doing. What we actually need is more cooperation, a wider web of solutions. Solutions require deepened coordination as for example, democratic debates, discussing what we want. This is actually re-politicizing no? For the degrowth society the key is to discuss on many more systems of thought, negotiating, debating, deciding collectively. It is much less about single solutions and much more about webs of solutions. It is not like we are going to solve things with single techniques, we cannot keep doing the same and only believe in innovation. It is important to bring new techniques, but it is more about a change in lifestyle and how different aspects connect with each other. Some issues are meant to be solved at the local level and re-politicization means to bring all the issues together.

A: I think this connect well with your work on the frugal innovations and adjustments, right? I remember you make a reflection on the 'rebound effect' as an argument against mainstream agenda on sustainability. As you are saying, the current society is looking for innovations, single innovations, single technical solutions. In your writings you are often mentioning reduction of collective capacity to exploit which I consider it to be an important thing for economic degrowth. How far would this reduction have to go for the European society?

F: Well that is exactly one thing that we have to decide collectively. It will need years to come to a level that is truly sustainable. Anyhow, is not about reducing indefinitely for sure. But, I find it important that degrowth is not only a missile word, but it also addresses the flows of exploitation.

A: When you mention sustainability what exactly do you refer to?

F: Sustainability is a way of thinking and acting that would enable human race to live indefinitely, it is necessary for our survival. Right now, we are destroying the basic conditions that allow us to live well. This is problematic. Very problematic.

A: This 'living well' refers to well-being...

F: Well-being but also simply we need our ecosystems, climate stability and ecosystem. It is not just a matter that 'oh it will be a bit warm', it will influence our survival capacity.

A: What I remember well from our last meeting is the concept of 'conviviality'. When you are mention degrowth as a collective solution, it popped in my head again. To what extent would conviviality concept can guide food production and consumption practices? How can it be adjusted to resemble conviviality?

F: Conviviality can influence our food production system re-orienting it towards genuine human relations, on cooperation, combining different concerns. As I said, it is about simple techniques that we could develop ourselves (community based) replacing complex systems (food chain). I don't know, there are some things that are very simple, I mean if we reduce pollution (e.g. water contamination) than we could use that water to water the plants, therefore we won't need such a complex system of water treatment, which eventually would prove very convivial. I know it sounds very general, but the conviviality concept can be found in many more forms. But generally speaking refers to simplicity of action, that we relate to our surroundings and put effort into caring for what is around us, instead of consuming products coming from far away which in turn need to be transported long distance. Consuming local and unconventional products are another way of sustainability (e.g. 'wild' plants). Food is a big concern. Conviviality refers to being observative and preventive in our actions, but it also refers to our relations with time. It is hard to be convivial in your human relations when you are constricted by time. I will give an unusual example...for instance when we use the solar oven to cook, it depends so much if there is sun or not and only then you can schedule cooking (e.g. bread-making, meals require long cooking time) around other activities, as there is no risk the food will get burned. We can nurture our interpersonal relations.

A: What are you describing so far it seems more like a life-style choice to me. To what extent do you think it can be brought up in the local policy making arena or at higher decision-making level?

F: I think the type of organization that we do individually, and/ or locally needs to be reflected at a higher level. It needs that, it needs different scales. But there are many things that block this progress. Firstly, are the self-organization skills of the individuals, there needs to be more coordination between people at Can Decreix or people involved in other local projects. We also need this between representatives of different areas (care, waste-management, agriculture and agroforestry). However, this needs to be brought at higher level.

A: How do you think this could happen? Should it be through reform of the existing institutions, through rejection? How would this work?

F: We need to start from where we are, to improve and consider the feedbacks, especially the negative ones. We have to re-think and reassess the goals of our society. Is it just to produce more or is it to full-fill higher needs? For me is the latter. That means we are going slowly towards finding/re-imagining our goals and purpose, towards more democratic decision-making. There is so much to gain from collective processes, looking at the history of cooperativism. Since prehistoric times, people were collectively hunting and gathering. We, as human race has lots of experience. The contemporary examples are sociocracy and wholocracy, but they need to be taken serious at different levels and scales, starting from local projects. Basically, the knowledge is there, it is all a matter of experimentation.

A: You can say that much of this knowledge got lost or has been diminished and replaced by the reductionist ways of (Western) learning and experimenting (science)...

F: I mean, these things...the issue is that it is difficult to provide explanations, however I really believe in the trying, we have to try various ways of organizing and transformation.

A: So, trying would be the first step...Wouldn't be first collective envisioning (social dreaming), making up strategies and then trying them out...

F: Well, there are some things where we have alternative solutions, but the problem is that we simply have habits that keep us stuck in the wrong doings. This is the difficult part, how to convince people to actually be ready to try different things. This is a little bit where I get stuck. How to make the society realize that we simply need to try more democratic ways of deciding?

A (interrupting): This is where activism gets involved...

F(continues): I don't know how to make society try new things 'cuz we are stuck with that. The trying process is quite easy, we try then we evaluate, and we try again, applying the learnings and so on.

A: This process of continuous learning is the concept many people are scared of. People are usually looking for a closed cycle...

F: One important thing I observe in my encounters, even in our meetings...When people encounter problems in their doings, ideally would be for us all to listen collectively to these problems, give space for people to share these problems and to hear their proposals in dealing with these problems. The proposal should be again assessed collectively and given feedback... What is the problem and what can be the solution and how can we improve it together...

A: What you are saying is that first dialog needs to be established, however space for dialog is also needed...

F: It is not necessary to bring all the problems in the same dialog at the same time... it doesn't work very well. Discussing problems is often seen as time consuming, however it can save a lot of time if we really get into the listening, into emphatic listening most of all of someone's proposal. Don't get me wrong, is not like we have to take proposals for good, but it is important to identify the need behind and really take the time to find solutions which are compatible with the needs of the collective as well. Finding a balance.

A: What you are saying sounds resembles much of the Transition (movement) work. Also, permaculture is about first scanning the issue, the territory and then coming up with appropriate solutions...

F: I think is mostly about listening each other equally. If for example we have a project, and someone is blocking this project, we need to understand why. It is more

about that, than sitting together with our problems. Let's say we want to plant cabbage and we are all sitting together discussing how to plant cabbage, when we should actually listen to the people who are against planting cabbage and how can we support their views... It is more than collective decision-making.

A: I think is quite clear so far. We can go further with our discussion towards the rural dimension of degrowth, and the contrast between rural and urban spaces. What are the major distinctions between the two?

F: I think every place is specific, it is not just urban and rural, but there are many things in between. There are different types of rural contexts and equally available for the urban contexts. It is more about a diagnosis: where are we? What are the conditions? What are the resources? There is no such thing as a single model...this is the difficult thing, but also the beautiful thing. It is not like any industry, it is not about replicating.

A: So, it depends really on the specificities of the locale...

F: Actually, I just thought of a general difference. Generally speaking, you can find more solutions based on the collective in urban spaces, for example waste management, ethical group purchase initiatives, urban-rural synergies initiated in the urban space...it will be more difficult to use a solar oven in an apartment... urban spaces are less likely to focus on individual solutions. But any context needs to be looked at carefully.

A: I would have said the opposite, there is more opportunity for degrowth in the rural areas as it is assumed that rural communities are tighter together, more connected in their human relations. For example, your degrowth house (Can Decreix) is in the rural area. What are the challenges you encountered?

F: The difficulty is that people continue to desire an urban lifestyle, they are not ready to go back to the rural life. We are still very much hanged on urban habits, the intensity of relations, the conditions (artificial light) being disconnected by real environmental conditions. To change that is really an important step forward.

A: Would you say then that the most challenging work on degrowth is in the urban areas?

F: On the contrary, I think is more difficult to talk about degrowth in the countryside. What I see happening a lot in the countryside is the orientation and adaptation towards

urbanization. Trying to adapt the countryside to the urban context. The result would be dramatic.

Human relations are also more difficult in the countryside, it is harder to meet people, to stay connected. You need a personal car to travel around, whereas in cities, there is the option of public transportation. Just different pace of relationships.

A: What does de-growth mean for public policy?

F: For now, the progress is slow, degrowth is impregnating here and there, but there is no consideration for the wholistic views degrowth holds. That is still challenging the movement. So, for now, I don't think it means so much...

A: Turning the question around, we can ask what public policy means for degrowth at this stage?

F: It is key, that the movement evolves outside the small circles. In order to change I cannot emphasise enough the need for communication, understanding the progress of events. What are we working now for the Degrowth Summer School (June-July Barcelona) are stories for transformation. To enable communication, especially with policy makers, but also with the wider public. A process of envisioning of change, steps to be taken. We need (compelling) stories, we need scenarios on transformation. For me reaching the public policy needs a lot of work on telling the story of change so that at least we overcome one thing that blocks. If we don't have the vision of one of the ways, or more ways, it is impossible to go further. We do have already lots of ideas, is just that they need to be coherently brought together. That where I am working now.

A: I think we can both agree that the current doings of the EU are clearly growth orientated. Do you think EU would even exist without this commitment to growth?

F: I think yes. But right now, there are ups and downs. We tried to establish dialog... we organized this conference in Brussels and it was very clear that degrowth proponents were ready to talk, however the EU representants were not necessarily ready to listen. We need to all sit at the table and it would be nice if the possibility of challenging growth would be actually viable for other parties as well.

A: How does degrowth perceive the CAP, especially the subsidy system?

F: Agricultural subsidies? This is not really my area, but for sure the current distribution of subsidies is wrong, because it unfairly goes to the big producers. If we need subsidies at all, this is a matter of discussion...I believe they could be beneficial if financial aid would go towards more sustainable ways- supporting organic agriculture (no chemical inputs) by providing help at the beginning. Renewables could also benefit from subsidies.

A: What it can be observed in the current CAP proposal is the emphasis on modernization and digitalization. What is degrowth perspective on the use of technology in agriculture?

F: In general, new technologies are very much associated with growth, as these new technologies suppress the natural limits leading to an increase in production and consumption. Frugal innovations on the other hand focus on innovation but also on reducing consumption. I am not against innovation at all, but I think innovation should be directed towards consuming less. The best strategy is prevention to see if we can avoid the use of a technique all together, that would be the first innovation. If you are taking preventive measures, you won't need a solution for the problem, because the problem won't be existing in the first place.

A: This makes me think of permaculture again. What is your experience with permaculture?

F: I have been involved in different permaculture meetings. It is a great way to go, the only problem is that sometimes it is interpreted the wrong way. People reduce it to a set of techniques, which is undermining for its essence, continuous observation and adjustment.

A: Can it be seen as an ally to the degrowth movement?

F: YES! Locally. It does go in the same direction for sure.

A: What about agroecology? Especially for their politics...

F: It would be really logic for permaculture to become politicized. As for agroecology, I like the approach very much, because it makes it clear from the start that it is very much about movements and political engagement. We had a meeting at Can Deceix about it, it was great!

A: Can you recall any highlights of that meeting?

F: It was 7 years ago, 'Beyond our back yard', it was about local solutions with a global impact, about organizing at the international level. The meeting was itself international. We also discussed a bit about to what extent do the degrowth and agroecology merge and how can cooperate and scale up the movement.

A: What were the outcomes?

F: We worked a lot on the democratic aspect of decision-making. Different approaches and introductions for degrowth.

A: What kind of future do you envision for agroecology?

F: It is a very important area that should be integrated with other aspects. Myself, I am quite dedicated on the aspect of food production. We are developing concrete practices and ways of organizing. I like really to think of agroecology strictly in local terms.

A: The fear of agroecologist at the moment is not to be co-opted in the mainstream discourse. As the status quo supporters are overlooking the politics behind agroecology, only borrowing the scientific aspects.

F: Food for degrowth would definitely need agroecology, however capping consumption of animal products is also important and maybe more accessible for now. At the same time, using unconventional plants and parts of the plant is another approach. Supporting organic agriculture is another way to increase the share of the plant we can eat. Inspired from agroecology, food processing methods should be adjusted to reduce the energy inputs (cooking at low temperature with renewables, eating raw). Using agricultural by-products to produce energy. All these things we lost should be reintroduced on the political agenda. The existing solutions are really reductionist, for example current agricultural doings overlook the potentials of wild harvesting, when they should actually complement each other. The value should be put on natural ecosystems equally as a source of food, with areas such as semi-spontaneous cultures. It would be more like creating/maintaining the soil and optimal growing conditions without much effort. This is one thing I can not see EU sitting around the table and discussing it.

A: Well, they can also be valuable educational lessons.

F: It's really difficult to do proper education right now as there are few people who know these practices or that had time to experiment with it. Education should be experimental.

A: Thank you Francois for all the valuable insights! Just as a closing question: What are the opportunities do you foresee for degrowth and what are the threats?

F: I see that degrowth is slowly entering larger debate circles, there is this Biodiversity Report mentioning Degrowth. We are being mentioned, but the road to entering mainstream politics is still long. I don't see it happening in the short term but is not impossible. For this we will have to work a lot on changing socio-cultural circumstances. Stimulating people's appetite for transition, for novelty and democracy.

A: You are totally right with the trend of 'rural urbanization' I see it a lot in the discussion of the CAP. The efforts are mostly orientated towards modernization rather than conservation, pushing rural areas to resemble urban centres in the idea that this will slow migration. Do you think this is an attainable goal? Does in any way satisfy development needs?

F: Well, anything is possible, however what degrowth supporters should do, is to stay strong individually and/or with their groups as a form of resistance, however this won't reach very far as long as coordination is missing.

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If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

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I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Signed: Francois Schneider Date: 20 05 2019

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'FS' or similar initials, located below the signature line.

9.2 Interview 2

Interviewee: ARC2020 contributor who chose to stay anonymous.

This interview will focus on issues of Rural Development, Agroecology and public policy issues in the context of the current CAP debate. The interview lasted for 25 minutes.

A: To start with we will focus on agroecology. What do you consider to be the most important topic for agricultural sustainability?

H: The most important topic? Hm... In Europe?

A: Yes.

H: That is a huge question. For me it comes down to who is in control of decision-making and what governments look like in these agricultural regimes. People actually growing our food and actually working the land are in many circumstances really disempowered, they are not the ones making decisions where the 60 billion euros from the CAP goes to and so we have an incredibly unjust system where few key people and corporations are profiting from a really really exploitative system. Exploitative to the Earth, to the animals, to fellow humans and so on. Issue number one would be that we need a seriously rebalancing of this system, where farmers but also consumers are the ones involved in the decision-making process and not just select select select few beneficiaries like large landowners or agrobusiness.

A: So basically, we need a redistribution of funds and support.

H: And power and decision-making...I think that would be the first step.

A: As far as I am concerned agroecology it's putting the finger on these exact issues, compared with permaculture for example which is not affiliated with any political ideology or debate.

H: Yes, I think you are right. I haven't had so much experience with permaculture, but I think generally for that reason. We need quite a significant shift in the way we govern

space and food and yes, permaculture does not address that to the same extent that agroecology does or tries to.

A: What would then be your personal definition of agroecology?

H: Another good question. Simply, it also what makes it exciting. It is not a specific set of doings or practice but rather a set of theories of doing, a philosophy but also is linking all sorts of different topics together which means that the question 'what is agroecology?' can be overlooked. Broadly speaking, would be in alignment with natural processes and observation and so it's less about domination and exploitation.

A: From the readings, one of the core aspects of agroecology that comes up is food sovereignty. What would be the most successful agroecological practices that you encountered that work towards food sovereignty?

H: That is hard to say, I mean food sovereignty is about collectives having control over their food system and so that can be related to all sorts of different scales. On the community level there are groups that really managed to build up a food system that involves all aspects of the community. I think it would be very difficult to point to an agroecological practice that encourages food sovereignty because that is so much part of the essence of agroecology that I am not sure it can be split up. I see food sovereignty movements like groups of landowners which take agroecology very seriously, which I feel very encouraged by. I am not sure that really answers your question.

A: To some extent, what I usually think of as a successful practice is Community Supported Agriculture. Also, I think you are involved with something similar, the seed bank. Can you elaborate on that?

H: Yes. Well this is on seed sovereignty in the context of food justice and the larger sovereignty movement. I was involved in food justice work that hadn't really considered seed, I don't know how much you know about the global seed trade, but it is controlled by about 10 companies. They are the same agrochemical companies which produce pesticides and fertilizers, which is wrong for many reasons. When you lose control of the seed you totally lose control over the food system and 90% of our caloric intake relies on just 10 crops globally, and that is incredibly incredibly delicate system especially at a time of such profound uncertainties like climate change and so on. We are hugely at risk, not to mention the whole biological diversity that we already lost. So, what we do with the

seedbank is-it's very small, it is based in London-is we save about 30 vegetable varieties and herbs (adapted to London growing condition and London soil) with the intension to keep varieties alive and encourage more people to try and grow their own seed so that we can slowly dislocate from this corporate consolidated system. So, for me, food sovereignty naturally begins with seed sovereignty. You know, when communities have control over their seed then they are able to produce and share their seeds freely and then, only then food sovereignty can follow. Food sovereignty without seed sovereignty doesn't make sense.

A: You were mentioning soil adaptability just now, is there any practice you are involved with that focuses on soil health?

H: M personally not, because I am not able to grow that much yet, but I am aware of some really exciting initiatives. Do you know Ecosystem Restoration Camps? It is a wonderful organization that runs little camps throughout Europe and the world about regenerative agricultural practices to bring to life areas that have been severely affected by desertification or agricultural exploitation. Simultaneously, there are lots of farmers across the continent that are trying out new things when it comes to soil practices. Is that what you are writing about to?

A: Not specifically. My paper is mostly focused on the generalities of the CAP debates and the progress on CAP to integrate sustainable practices. Because, from what you are saying it is clear that on the ground projects and genuine interest from the practitioners. The issue here would be that they are not scaled up to reach the policy level. Why do you think is like that?

H: Not to oversimplify but part of it is that we have an incredibly powerful industrial agricultural lobby that works systematic and it is in their interest to keep other voices out of that...and they are doing pretty well. They are direct beneficiaries of this system where 30% of the CAP goes to only 2% of the beneficiaries. It is incredibly unequal. It is a system that is not based on public goods and public services model. This is model that rewards its beneficiaries only for having land not the maintenance of the ecosystem and so it is in their interest to keep things how they are. Which is why agroecology has troubles to get in.

A: Have you witnessed any breakthroughs for agroecology? I mean, recently is becoming quite popular in France...

H: Hmm...France has been mentioning it for quite a while...it hasn't led to that much difference actually on the ground yet. I am noticing though that is becoming much more mainstream discourse, I mean when you hear FAO talk about it, you know you have reached the mainstream. I haven't yet seen that much practical action on the national and international policy levels. It is interesting at the moment to hear the debates in UK, to observe the post-Brexit negotiations about agricultural policy and the push for agroecology inclusion in that and on how that process looks like. But I am convinced it is not gonna be a big part of the next CAP. The CAP isn't gonna get better now, after the negotiations, that's that.

A: Are there any measures in the CAP that fit with agroecological thought and ambitions?

H: For sure, I mean Pillar II is the one, the only one that is can be mainly used to push agroecology and a lot of the instruments in there are in the right direction, it is just that they don't get nearly as many funds. The emphasis is still totally wrong. When you look at the former CAP reforms, the budget cuts primarily affect Pillar II and so I feel like a lot of the progress that we are pushing for certain practices is being whammed back. We really need to strengthen Pillar II or get rid of the two-pillar system at all and rather make payments not based on land but based on service provision and in that case, I think agroecology would have far better shot at becoming a more established way of growing food.

A: Do you think that the outcome of 2019 parliamentary elections can influence CAP in any way?

H: It will affect the CAP reform, first of all it will lengthen the CAP reform. I don't think we can expect any reform for about 2-3 years from now. And there is still quite a lot to be decided, there is potential for the new ministers to really take a lot of the CAP reform as it is, I doubt they'll do that, but there is potential for that.

A: You mentioned lobbying before, to what extent do the 'good guys' have access to the decision-makers? From my observation I feel like civil society is involved only in the pre-negotiation and little of the implementation process.

H: Well there still perhaps some potential that requires some analysis and consideration in the following period, is the new delivery model. With the increased subsidiarity, the decision-making will take place at the member state level and this is a process which I am tracking at the moment and which occurs in different ways in different countries. If it comes through, it actually means that MS will have to formulate the so-called strategic plans about a tailor-made agricultural policy. But it looks already as it is a race to the bottom, that it might lead to loosen environmental standards for example, or certainly to a wide disparity of environmental implications of the policy across Europe. It also means that decision-making it looks a little different because I believe MS have to invoke civil society to a certain degree in these different negotiations, so it is an interesting process at the moment to work with national member organizations like Pour une autre PAC or Meinelandwirtschaft about the ways in which they have or haven't been involved in these initial discussions. Because of that there is also potential to counteract the powerful lobby in Brussels through national lobbies... I am aware there are national lobbies as well, that is not unproblematic, but maybe there is a shift in terms of who is allowed in the discussions and that will reveal slowly in the upcoming month.

A: Let's talk a bit about the new conditionality measures put in place of cross-compliance. What do you think this means for the environment?

H: To be honest, I think is a repackaging of the previous reform. It doesn't bring any real improvement. I am not optimistic this is good news for the environment. I am optimistic about the environmental movement though, I wonder if the increased pressure from that, an increasingly vocal farmer movement across movement maybe there is also a need for agriculture to take that more seriously. There is some slow growing awareness there simply because agriculture would be the first most affected sectors by climate change, but also is one of the most significant contributors in Europe.

A: From what are you saying overall, I see a transition towards agroecology can only happen bottom up rather than top-down.

H: It is happening bottom-up. Across Europe you are seeing really exciting innovative approaches on local level, but also regional and not necessarily small areas. I think it won't be enough to happen bottom up, I think that we would need top-down agroecological focus in order to have any hopes that is gonna be a wide scale change, I

am just not convinced the structures currently in place allow for such a transition, because it is actively not in the interest of those making decisions to forward and agroecological transition. But I do feel a growing momentum throughout Europe that such a transition is necessary.

A: Are there any structural models already proposed by agroecology?

H: I am not sure they can be reduced to agroecology, but there are some structures out there. Food councils for example, or city-wide food governments, in London for example there is a 'people's food policy'. Those are the kind of structures that I am talking about that foreground agroecology principle is on what they operate but I am really talking about governments systems and who makes decisions and whose voice is heard, that's what I want to see more of at the national and European level.

A: Thank you for your time!

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Signed:



Date: 22.05.2019

9.3 Interview 3

Verena Gunther, the European coordinator for Good Food Good Farming (GFGF), European Days of Action

V: hello

A: hi just to start, could you give me a bit of background information of this

V: yeah sure, GFGF is a EU campaign that was first launched in 2012 during the last CAP reform, organizing protests then and it was mainly one big good food march it was called and then last year having in mind the new CAP reform, some organization, some of them also had been involved in 2012 and 2013, re-initiated the campaign with the call to action for the European days of action on 27th and 28th of October, so this decision was taken in the beginning of the year and the group which was I think it was a meeting that was held in January with around 20 to 30 organizations after the demonstration that takes place every January in Berlin (I don't know if you know about it; it's something that has been going on for almost 10 years now: every January when there is a big agricultural fair in Berlin a German coalition of about 50 organizations is organizing a demonstration and its always around 20/30, I think the largest number was 50 people and a lot of tractors, this year was 170. And in 2018 after this demonstration there was a gathering of German but also European NGOs and they started the campaign for the Europeans Days of Action and formed a steering group of about 10 members. And we still have this steering group, there were some movements in it and now we are around 8 members, and we decided to employ and European coordinator that was hired then, which its me.

A: Are you part of any NGO?

V: Well, Im hired by the German Coalition that its called Meine LandWirtschaft because they offered to host the coordination so Im based in their office, Im hired by them, but I'm not part of them, so I am independent from all the organization and responsible to all of them, to the whole steering group. The steering group consists of different organization some of them are European umbrellas ie: friends of the earth, slow food, bird life.... I formed (or iFarmed ?) which is the umbrella of organic farmers... and then there is also two national coalition represented which is the German campaign I just

mentioned that is organizing the big march every Jan, and the French platform Pour un autre PAC which is similar to the German coalition, so they are both coalition of the NGO from different sectors, unifying farmers organizations, with environmental orgs, development orgs, consumers orgs, labour unions... yeah, so we have mainly these 2 categories of orgs in the steering group, so it is always networks but sometimes is European networks that coordinate their national partners and then it is national networks that have also members.

A: So it's a coalition of coalitions, basically.

V: exactly

A: you said that they are from all other sectors as-well, from consumers and everything comes together basically.

V: yeah, that's one of the main ideas of GFGE, that the coalition should be broad, and that's also an experience of the German demonstration and German coalition, its very important to stand together the farmers with the consumers and the environmentalists and so on, to unify the issues and topics that all the sectors have, but also in the aspect of credibility and legitimacy in the public, it gives you a lot of strength for instance having a demonstration about sustainable reform of agricultural policy that is supported by farmers that are there also physically with the tractors, the whole image that is created represents farmers, and that gives you a better stand in the public.

A: Can you explain a bit the general scope of this campaign?

V: yeah, so as I said last year was the 1st year and we started, we were all very excited, we didn't know what to expect, but we were quite satisfied in the end. There were actions in 19 different European countries and there were about 60 actions that happened. 1st it was planned as just a weekend of action, but then the experience showed that it's better to have a broader time frame because, for example in some countries it was difficult to do in these days, because for instance in Greece there was a day that was associated with an historical happening that its used by the right parties, and I mean that's just one example, so it's better to have a broader timeframe. And that's why we decided to have it for this year for the whole month of October. So we had actions in 19 countries, and we were supported by a lot of organizations... the country that was involved the most

was Spain, there was a broad of different actions happening there... yeah the good involvement there was also possible because there is a coalition that has been formalized last year that is similar to the German and french coalitions that has coordinated the Days of Action last year in Spain; they have been very active and got a lot of organizations involved. So that was pretty successful. Also there was a second new coalition in Poland that was formalized last year, so it's also one of our aims to strengthen these new coalitions that are taking shape, and to have a platform for them to grow but also to exchange with the others; for instance last week we were in Brussels and we had a meeting of different national networks from these 4 countries, to have some platform for exchange.

A: and these coalitions are mostly like lobby groups? Or are they doing projects on the ground? Or what is mostly their....?

V: So the coalitions are a bit different in their purpose and main activities. I mean, they are all coalitions of NGOs, some of them rather focus on advocacy or lobby work, addressing decision makers; and others like the German one are rather focused on campaigning and mobilizing public activity; and then for instance de French one was for a long time rather focused on advocacy but its now also building campaigning, mobilizing... but yeah, besides having the goal of creating a network and exchange between the countries, they have these I would say two main purposes: the one is advocacy and the second one is mobilizing and campaigning, and some focus rather on one or the other.

A: I know that part of the GFGF was this open letter that was to be signed and handed to the EU agriculture minister. How was it received, how was the feedback from it?

V: Yeah, so exactly, the letter was written by the steering group by the GFGF Campaign and then we came up with a petition and got over 100.000 signatures and we handed it over with an event or protest that we organized outside of the council building, so it was handed over during the meeting of the Council on agriculture, so it was agriculture ministers gathering and through a representative of the Austrian presidency (because last year, second half of the year it was Austria who was having the presidency of the EU) came out and joined our action, so we organized a disco soup in front of the council and we offered him some soup and handed over the petition and we had some

delegates that talked to him from different countries and organizations. So he received and said he would take the message to the meeting and then also the Spanish Coalition handed over separately the petition to a representative of the Spanish commandment and the Polish also had plans to do it back home after the event because there was no one coming specifically from their country. So we handed it over centrally to the Austrian who was in the function of being there for all the ministers; and we had these immediate reaction during the handover but afterwards there was no other reaction to that... I mean, it's also a bit difficult now because with the European elections the process is kind of interrupted so there is not that much happening, at least at European level; of course the national states are working on their national strategic plans for the CAP, but the process at European level is right now on hold mainly.

A: Maybe this was relevant, because I know that now the position of Austria for the CAP, when they heard of the cut of rural development they put forward, not a complaint but a paper against that...

V: yeah

A: it could be either this or also that they received a lot of rural development funds... (laughs)

V: (laughs) I mean, there's also a coalition of NGOs in Austria that is active and they also organized a protest in September last year, when Austria hosted a meeting in the country... so the coalition there is quite active.

A: How effective do you think are these public mobilization actions?

V: You mean effective for the...?

A: to influence decision making

V:... the policy process. Because, I think there could be two ways of effectiveness: one is the political pressure, but other one is the public outrage and public awareness, and I mean, think it's very difficult to judge on the impact. As I said, we have these manifestations in Berlin or in Germany on the CAP and on Agricultural Policy for 10 years now, and still it's very difficult to say 'ok this happened because we are in the streets every January... and that's why our minister decided to ban some pesticides...' So I think it's

very difficult... it's a bit easier to argue for a change in public awareness in Germany on the whole issue of for example meat consumption, the milk prices, in general ecological agriculture and so on, so I think for that, public events, mobilizations can be successful. On the political side it's much harder. It's still... I mean, maybe I'm a bit of a pessimistic person to talk for that issue, and I'm sure there's others who have a bit of a more optimistic view, but it's so difficult having in mind that we are just one of many stakeholders, and the weakest ones; and we are competing with other lobby organizations that are much stronger and also receive more attention by the decision makers, because for example, when we invited the Austrian presidency last year for the hand over of the open letter they didn't confirm for a long time, and one of the things they said is that they are quite busy on that day because they are meeting a lot of stakeholders... and then we said like 'ok, but we are one of the stakeholders' but they didn't even see us as the stakeholders in the process... so yeah, it is very difficult, but it is still very important to have public pressure, but also something that was strategically decided for this campaign is to, for the emphasis on the public pressure on the countries, because that was an analysis after the first activities of the campaign during the last reform, that the most difficult point to crack are the national ministers and national governments, and not so much the commission or the MPEs. So the idea of the campaign is really to have the activities des-centrally in the countries to create pressure there on the national government, and then have like one culminating moment that brings all of this together and creates a nice picture of the whole mobilization and also translates on European level to make use of this mobilization. But yeah, the focus are the des-central action and that's key important.

A: So that should be, for further reference, it should be really important for the countries themselves, for the grass root organizations in the country to come together and start pressuring the national government to.

V: Exactly.

A: Would it be only with the national government or you think regional and local could also have an impact?

V: I mean, also the campaign involves other levels. So last year we had some events that were very local and that will be able to create pressure on the national government. Of course if you have an event in some remote or rural area would be very

difficult to create pressure on the national government. But I think it also depend on the country and the political resistance there, because in some countries that have a federal system you can also achieve changes of course in the regional or the local level, but I think it's very important to have these national coalitions, because as they are a broader coalition unifying different organizations they can pull resources, they get more outreach, they have more legitimacy to claim space in political decision-making and they can mobilize much more people. So I think that's one of the main things GFGF can contribute to, to strengthen these networks and allow them to also cooperate between each other. For this year for instance there will be an action organized in Strasbourg and the Parliament in cooperation between the German and the French coalitions or platforms, and there will also be other actors joining, but there will be mainly them in cooperation; so the idea is that the French coalition that just started working on citizen mobilization and campaigning can also make use of the experience that the German coalition has for ten years now almost on citizen mobilization. So I think that's also one of the advantages of GFGF, to make these ties and link people, link different organizations and coalitions.

A: Yeah like, resource pulling as you were mentioning

V: yeah

A: and for this GFGF, actually, talking about resources, how is it? Because you said there are in the... is it the steering committee who's going to be dealing with resources or other organizations as well

V: You are referring to financial?

A: Yeah

V: So we have a budget for the European coordination where we pay for the coordination position, for the creation of some resources, like visuals, news, posters, the website that we created, the meetings we organize for the steering group and the national networks, some video and photo material we got from the action last November for example... so yeah, we have a budget for that, that is the European coordination, but then all the events that are organized des-centrally are managed by these organizations that organize it, and unfortunately we don't have a budget to support them. Thought there are some exceptions, like for example I know that one of our steering group members, which

is friends of The Earth, they applied for some project that gives them budget to support the members; for example in Poland or in Spain or in Malta or in other countries... so some get support but there's also a lot of, like specially I already mentioned these very small local actions, where organizations like the one you organize, organizations that cover their own expenses and of course a lot of volunteering work that goes into the organization of these actions.

A: And you mentioned that Friends of The Earth is applying for funding now, where is this funding coming from, do you have any idea? Is it EU or...?

V: Exactly, so FoTE is also contributions to our European budget and, I mean, I can let you know where we get the money from for the European budget, so it's some money that's coming from the EU through FoTE, and then we have money from foundations that we get, some of them are German foundations, but also some from France. And that's basically it. And then we get some other minor contributions from other steering group members that contribute to the budget. But yeah, the main part of the funding comes from different foundations, so it's lots of small parts building together the budget that we need

A:.... I want to ask you more about the opportunities you foresee. You mentioned already cooperation is a big part of it, are there are any positive aspects about this, and opportunities, strengths?

V: Yeah... Another strength or opportunity of the campaign is also put the very small organizations that are at local level that they can link to something that is much bigger behind them to support the message and to say today maybe we are only people but we stand together with thousands of people all over Europe that are seeing that we are in a big crisis and that we need substantial change; and yeah, to get.... when they communicate their activities and also of course we offer some resources that they can use like the visuals for the online use or the posters.. and also this year what we are planning to do is to have a web in our online and offline campaigning for the organizations that are joining GFGF so that the idea would also be to have some space for learning and getting new ideas, new inspiration... and that's definitely something that's happening I think in many ways, like for example, when we gathered in November in Brussels there were some delegates we have from different countries and some of them for the 1st time participated in a disco soup, and for them it was like 'wow that's a nice atmosphere, nice

format for an event, maybe I'll repeat that back home with my organization'; or like the meeting we had last week with the different national platforms, they also had exchange on recent activities, and the platform presented how they presented the coalition as it's new, and they had an event in the ministry with good press coverage, and that's something the Polish coalition was very interested in because they are struggling with cooperation with media, getting journalists to talk about them... or, there was... right now the French coalition is doing a campaign for the European elections and they were also sharing their experiences and there were lots of ideas being exchanged, and I think this inspiration and learning from others, getting new inputs, it's also one of the strengths of this coalitions

A: What can the wider public public get from this, except awareness? Are there opportunities for physical person, like...?

V: I mean, of course the public can participate in different actions. The idea is also always to have at least some kind of action that is accessible to many many people, also people that might maybe not leave close to a place where there is some action organized in the Month or Days of Action... like last year we had the petition everybody could sign... But yeah the general public is addressed to participate and to change behaviour, to support farmers, vote differently, to all the small bits we can do to contribute to change.

A: Ok, now to go on the other side, what threats do see? What weaknesses do you think this eh...?

V: I mean, the big challenge is to have the political impact that we need, because this situation really is bad, and really, thinking that right now they are designing the politics for the next decade, which would be crucial... yeah, facing climate change is really urgent. There is an urgent need for change and the challenge is of course to create public pressure that is strong enough to change, and for that, I mean, we are still a very young coalition that is learning and growing up, so it's still small. But also what we are trying to do with an action we are planning in Strasbourg is to gather with other movements and campaign on climate, pesticides, on other related topics, maybe even trade, to combine all forces... But I mean, I would say this: the main challenge, and then of course, looking at the way we work there's also difficulties there's within the different countries of course different cultures of protest, different cultures of communications, different languages that already are sometimes a challenge when you design a postcard, a poster, banners and

so on. So sometimes they are very practical difficulties that you face in the day to day work. But we are trying to offer some basic things that we hope organizations can use, and also try to give them as much flexibility as possible in doing their own emphasis on certain topics that they think fit their agenda and public discussions in the country. Of course also being free in doing their own visuals maybe using some parts like the icon with the spoon, but then embedding it in different designs, and so on. Yeah, so I think getting this flexibility is very important when you are in such a broad coalition or network.

A: yeah, talking on so many actors, because you said there's consumers organizations, also health organizations and so on, how is the dialog and what's the impact? Are all the interests managed to be represented? Aren't there conflicts of interests at some point?

V: Of course there are, yes. Because, I mean, as you know the discussions on the CAP, there are different positions of different organizations, like for example "La Via Campesina" representing small farmers has different position on some aspects as does Birdlife, as a nature conservancy organization. So sometimes it's difficult. Also in the wording, that we take to agree, but so far we always managed luckily to agree. And also the strategy is to... I mean, because what we are doing as a coalition is campaigning, so we are not doing advocacy work, and we said that we have some basic messages that we agreed on, like for example we don't really work on imposition paper doing very specific suggestions on the CAP, so we'd rather have a positions that is very basic and drawn on, like we have these demands that are like in the cultural action that are I think around 10 to 15 demands that unite us, and that's our position. Everything that gets more specific to that is done by own organizations so the advocacy is done by them or by other coalition that exists, that is actually one that is right now taking shape at European level that are focusing on advocacy, but we said that this is specially not our goal, because then it really also gets more complicated to agree on positions. So, we decided to these common messages... that also we are not so easy to find but... yeah, of course there is different ideas on how the CAP should look like, but I think if you take a step back and think about the vision that we have for the future of food and farming, then you can see that it is very similar.

A: It's basically everything opposed to industrial and multinational

V: yeah, I mean that was one of our main slogans last year “Stop industrial agriculture”, because that's something that unites all the organizations, and that's like the opposition to the current model and subsidies going to the promotion of this model is something that unites all of them.

9.3.1 Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

1) Project Title:

Assessing the CAP post-2020 provisions for sustainability: To what extent is CAP post-2020 enabling the possibility of an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy?

2) Project Description

In this final dissertation, the emphasis is put on the current CAP debate (2021-2027) and the extent to which the EU acknowledges the benefits of agroecological practices for achieving social and environmental sustainability. The research digs into concepts of agroecology, permaculture and economic de-growth while monitoring the direction of the CAP negotiations. The CAP provisions will be analysed in accordance with their relation to specific sustainability practices, with the aim of concluding whether the social and environmental challenges European agriculture is confronting with are correctly addressed. In order to achieve this objective, this research will use agroecological practices and de-growth as reference framework. This paper will:

1. Report on the current Common Agricultural debate
2. Assess whether the EU is correctly representing the interests of civil society groups (small producers, consumers, other non-industry actors)
3. Investigate the role of agroecological practices (permaculture) for a more sustainable CAP
4. Evaluate the possibilities of agroecological alternatives to shift towards a post-growth paradigm

If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher and relevant university assessors. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Signed: V. Gatejel Date: 23.5.19

9.4 Interview 4

Interviewee: Irina Toma

A: Good afternoon Irina. For the record, this is the fourth and the last interview for the Bachelor thesis which is focusing on the CAP and possible provisions that could lead to or hinder the development towards a post-growth economy through agroecology. Before we get into details can you tell me more about your professional experience?

I: I have a background in sustainable development so a research master at Utrecht University on Sustainable Development and a Bachelor in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at University College Utrecht, I graduated in 2014 and alongside my studies and since then I worked for several NGOs and consultancies. I worked for an advocacy organization called Fair Food International which focused on advocating for living incomes for small farmers in the Philippines but also in Madagascar in several tropical fruit and spices supply chain. I also worked for a Global Reporting Initiative which is an organization developing CSR standards for reporting and transparency for companies and more recently, for the past 2 years I have been working as a consultant or Highclere Consultant in Romania and I am working on several research projects focused on small-farms and their contribution to food nutrition and security, but also on understanding the Farm Advisory Systems in several districts, here I have mostly a technical role and more policy research orientated role. I have also worked freelance for fair trade advocacy on several competition law assignments, so this is sort of my experience.

A: Really impressive. I hope the following questions will be able to sum up your experience. From what are you saying it seems you have a lot of international experience but also in Europe. From this experience, what do you think are the major trends in the European agriculture?

I: It is hard to say, I don't know if I can answer that question at that scale. Various countries, various type of farmers they have various interests in putting the agricultural policy in line with their interests and I guess there are at least two competing forces, but there are more developing in more political dimensions, in Europe and particularly from the lens of the projects I worked on there is the lens of small farmers vs big farmers so

understanding the scale at which agriculture in Europe is so commercially viable and what kind of model basically the CAP is supporting indirectly, because directly is supporting all types of farms but when you look at which farms are able to make in the current economic system you see that there is a sort of silent preference for bigger farms, but this might not be entirely due to the CAP but more to the economic model in which the farms operate, so there is that dimension. Small farms vs big farms. This is also overlapping with the discussion about the geographical divide and the farm structure divide, so if you would locate Eurostat data you would see that farms in the North or North-West of Europe they are predominantly big farms and farms in the South and the East of Europe are much smaller or medium farms. While the North is very industrialized, in the South is much more of a slow-food and traditional agricultural movements supporting peasants and local food systems so there is a division between what the food system should look like and a bit of a fight, or a conflict maybe at the European level as to whether European policy should support one or the other, and I guess from an environmental perspective there are different movements in Europe some promoting more environmentally friendly agriculture, there is an agroecology trend, some more isolated to certain groups and there are others who I guess advocate for the current state of things for increasing profits, profitability of farms and seeking ways to optimize that, so a very low concern for environmental standards and so forth. These are just a few of the trends which are maybe shaping Europe, but there are of course many more. Also related to the use of technology in agriculture, but that is very much related to also the structure of the farms and whether there are big industrial farms, it is easier to digitalize and to mechanize or whether there are smaller farms. It depends very much on the sector and many other factors, so it is quite difficult to speak of really overall trends. The things I have mentioned manifest in each country at various levels and also between countries at a European level.

A: Thank you. This is a really comprehensive answer. You mentioned the regional division, what I have observed in my research is the existence of environmental movements mostly supporting small-scale farming. What is interesting for me is that the countries with industrial farming have a more active civil society rather than in countries with predominantly small-scale agricultural systems in place. What do you think influences environmentalists in these countries?

I: I talked in very broad lines about this divide, I think we should be talking more specifically about countries and types of movements, because otherwise we risk sort of making statements that are not actually valid. I would also say that some of the agroecology movements do come from Italy and Spain and the Southern countries. If you look at the slow food movement, Via Campesina, they have a very strong representation in the South, so we have to talk about specific movements first and foremost and while I have some idea about you should factcheck this. There is the degrowth movement, and then there is Via Campesina the Slow Food and many other movements that I am personally not aware of. In general, I think there is an increase of environmental concern in Northern countries a) because a lot of biodiversity, food quality (taste/nutrients) has been lost in the North, because of the larger scale industrial models of agriculture. So that is one reason. b) my personal view, and this is a personal opinion, but I could argue it also with data, it is that the more developed the countries are in term of socio-economic conditions and the more social problems and the more social issues have been already solved, the more refined become the problems with which citizens are concerned with. So, having lived in the Netherlands and visited often in Germany, I noticed that this increased quality of life helps people to focus on other issues which I think for the North is environmental issues. Of course, there are some people in the South who are increasingly suffering from climate change and noticing the environmental impact of larger scale agriculture. I wouldn't overgeneralize this, but I do think that the Northern countries have a stronger green movement and environmental movement because of having solved many other things. I have seen very strong agroecology and degrowth movements in France for example, which also has a very industrialized model overall, but I think certain societies, after they get to a certain level of wealth and welfare, but also depending on other factors you know, they start asking whether they would like to continue or assess that, that has not brought them type of lifestyle that they would like or gets them to realize that they could now live a simpler life in the countryside. I think these are personal sort of observations rather than sort-of data supported findings.

A: Yes, you were mentioning trends like agroecology and degrowth...to what extent do you think these trends are influencing the current CAP debates?

I: I think the agroecology movement has gained more ground in terms of CAP discussions. I wouldn't say the degrowth movement has the same kind of impact. At least,

I haven't come across it in that way. I came across of the degrowth movement more in terms of rural communities and maybe it can be seen as a model of rural development, but it is not very prominent at the EU scale and I think is being talked about in other terms. EU has a lot of jargon and I think it would rather be referred as rural renewal initiatives rather than in degrowth terms per se, but this might vary. I don't claim to have read everything on CAP policies, I simply did not come across it. The agroecology movement, I think is started to benefit from increased lobbying at the EU scale through movements such as Via Campesina, but also through the very interesting movement of the IPES representative, Olivier de Shutter, the FAO rapporteur on agroecology and socio-economic issues. In March this year he gathered a bunch of agroecology supporters and experts and he produced on the inconsistencies between various CAP objectives, but also between CAP objectives and another EU policies. So, it's people like him and Via Campesina which really bring the heat on environmental issues associated with agriculture in Europe.

A: Even so, there is not much movement towards it in Brussels.

I: It is not an objective for everybody and it depends heavily on the objectives or measures you are looking at, if it is just agroecology or degrowth, because as I said degrowth it is not an objective while environmental protection is an objective of the European policies in general, but also specifically the CAP, degrowth isn't. So, I can already tell you that I think you will come across only minority movements when speaking about degrowth in agriculture. But to ask the CAP whether is facing progress towards degrowth is a nonsense because it doesn't want to degrow. If you look at CAP objectives you will see that it wants to be more competitive, the CAP wants agricultural system to be more competitive, it also wants it to be more environmentally friendly so that's where you could speak about agroecology, but when a sector wants to be competitive it's not really saying it wants to reduce its growth, especially its economic growth or otherwise.

A: Do you think competitiveness can reconcile with environmental protection?

I: I think it requires a system shift, and I think several people have spoken about how the current system does not support that necessarily. I think several economic incentives have to change in order for there to be an authentic reconciliation between the environment and competitiveness objective. Fundamentally, I thought about this a lot in

the past years, if you look at the planetary boundaries and at the earth system in general as an environmental system, you are talking about rates of depletion and sustainable rates of working the land or extracting from the environment the capitalist system where you are always asked to extract more and more, and you don't look at the planetary boundaries and how much the system can take. Even if you want to talk about agroecology and about sustainability you are just talking, I don't think you have a really big impact and I think a lot of these (environmental) movements are just talk until you can reconcile the slower pace of nature and the natural cycles of nature with your economic system. If you are talking about competitiveness and more and more, then I don't think you are thinking about nature actually works. Unless you are talking about avoiding sort of a catastrophe in which case producing less might be help you avoid a catastrophe, but I don't think we are there at the European level or at least not fully.

A: Wouldn't then degrowth be relevant to discuss?

I: I don't think we, as a society, and I am speaking as an environmentalist who has been in the environmentalist bubble, I don't think us as environmentalists really understand that most of the other people are not yet conscious of the dangers ahead and I think we assume that everybody wants this degrowth, but I don't think it is the case and speaking here from my Romanian researcher perspective there is not a single farmer that I have spoken to recently who would want to degrow. Besides agroecologists, sort of activists, friends who have really taken on the idea of living in 'poverty', because they really believe in the agroecology principles or in the degrowth principles. Farmers are leaving the countryside because it is not economically viable, because they cannot make enough money and they want to make more money. Rural areas in Europe still have high levels of poverty and the vast majority of farmers they want to escape poverty, they don't want to stay in degrowth 'poverty'. This is what I meant earlier when I said I think Northern countries are starting to accept a degrowth agenda or some environmental movement because they have already gone over the poverty phase into high societal well-being and therefore accepted afterwards that they can live with less. But I think for people that have been in poverty to ask them to stay in relative poverty and degrowth and to give up a lot of luxuries which the modern world obtains, I think is still unrealistic for many and there is a revolution of values and worldviews that is not taking place equally within Europe and that is making the whole degrowth agenda relevant only for some and not for everybody, so

that is why the degrowth movement isn't yet so to speak desirable even if you think about it from a very theoretical (academic) point of view, you still have to look at society and at the stage of societal development in Europe to really understand why it is or it is not taking off.

A: That is a lot to think about. Going back to the CAP and the reform developments, what could be the opportunities and challenges for the future CAP? Can farmers get out of poverty with the current CAP provisions? Can CAP slow down the rural exodus?

I: I think is trying but is not succeeding and I don't know if it's its fault necessarily, I very much appreciate the work of Donella Meadows 'Systems thinking are primal', she is one of the founders of the Club of Rome, that book really changed my whole worldview. From a system's thinking perspective, in order to change the way, the system works you need to find the triggers and I think the triggers of the rural exodus, what is causing the poverty is not CAP so in that sense just changing CAP isn't gonna solve all the problems, because that's not where the problems are created. The problems are created I think in the economic model, in the fact that it is increasingly easier to make a living in the cities, it is cheaper to have a conglomeration of income sources, of companies and of businesses in cities and there is not enough employment and opportunities for paid work in the countryside, in many countries. Because, and I am speaking here of Romania but you can look up the figures for most European countries, supermarkets have taken over most of the consumer market for food, I think for Romania, it is now that 70% of consumers are shopping from supermarkets and only 30% would still go to the farmers market or try to source their food otherwise for countries that so long relied on subsistence farming until just a few years ago I think this is an alarming rate to which the food system has been concentrated on supermarkets. Supermarkets work with big quantities of the food, so in order to be able to sell your food to a supermarket to make money, you need to be a big farmer or be a big cooperative and be able to withstand the high-quality requirements in supermarkets and the quantity and all the price requirements, because supermarkets are extremely price competitive and I don't think many farmers have the power to be part of the supermarkets' supply chain. I think this is where the source of the problem is, that we all find it more convenient to go to a supermarket than to go to the farmers' market, or farmers' markets are now further away, they are not open 24/7. The convenience element that the supermarket food system creates is what is driving the agricultural system to a

place where not everybody is able to make a living off agriculture at the moment. And while the CAP comes to the subsidies and programs to help support farmers, it doesn't mean that is able to fix all the problems that are created at a macro-level by the food system itself. Some farmers are able to understand what the CAP has to offer and they are able to apply for measures and subsidies and start competing in this food system, but others, particularly the older generations, which are predominant in many areas of Europe, find it harder to adapt, and so I think this is the problem for European agricultural system we really need to ask what would still be viable in the next 20-30 years? Because at the rate to which things are happening and considering how blocked the reform of the CAP is? And the implications from the trade systems...I don't think we will be able to create that shift of more people going back to the countryside so easily. I also want to say there are people moving to the countryside because cities are becoming too expensive or uncomfortable for many reasons so there is also a counter movement that is looking for higher standards of life in the countryside, but I think you have to also look at which models of lifestyle support that kind of transition and again think about how CAP could support this return to the countryside and see whether the current measures in the CAP are able to offer that kind of support for example. For example the CAP doesn't necessarily fund cultural activities in the rural areas, nor does it fund entrepreneurship per se, but these are things which might attract people to the countryside so I think more research will be needed to see how the measures should be changing in the coming years to prevent further exodus and maybe a reverse.

A: From what I understand the imbalances in the current food regime comes from power imbalances, how do you think agroecology addresses that?

I: Agroecology is a production system, it is about how the farmer deals with the land and the food system also has a trading system, so how the farmer gets their food to the market, and marketing and shelf availability components so that the consumer can get to it so, just the fact that people are producing agroecologically doesn't really solve all the issues of the food system. You need much more to make it commercially viable. In agroecology the production takes longer and there is slightly less food, it comes with certain labour that are extra to what you would get in a very industrial food system. You need to create a movement or a system where these costs are compensated, so the consumer is accepting that there are more channels between the farm and a conscious

group of consumers who is willing to pay that extra price, in order to get these natural products. You need more marketing support in order to promote the benefits of agroecology and the products and the health aspect. You must also make sure that is convenient for the consumers to buy from those channels, I think this is a big issue of these alternatives. You have these apps where you can order from the farm, but the way the delivery and the logistics are organized they have to be convenient for the consumers also and there are measures also within the CAP, the short supply chain measures (M16; M16.4) that supports better linkages between the consumers and producers and all sorts of arrangements. There are also some other tools in the CAP that can help farmers with some elements of this, but not with all. For example, consumer education is not something that is currently included in the CAP and from our activity here in Romania with HighClere appears that it should be something that either states or the EC gives money for.

A: What would it take for it to be? How can it be brought forward?

I: There are a lot of dimensions for it, but first we need to make sure the current measures work. Considering that now, the European countries would have to develop their rural development plans for the next programming period, it is a bit late to lobby for changes of funds. But some measures already exist, and for those it is important to gather as much data about what has worked and in which conditions they have worked to replicate case studies and to show results at a European level. Also, it is important for farmer organizations to gather this data and lobby their national governments. In the next programming period, national governments will have more freedom to develop their national rural development plans and with this freedom they may choose to try to develop their own measures, some of which have not existed before. We will be able to see this in the next years, how creative national states will be, based on this new delivery model of the CAP. Considering that the next opportunity to fundamentally change the measures and the policies of the Commission will be in 7 years, it is a good time to dedicate more time to researching and the practical application. If there will be a lot of small farms or bigger farms using the agroecology model and being profitable or viable and if there will be a lot of consumers showing that they want to buy, that they are buying from the agroecology movement and that they are willing to support that system, I think the Commission will be more inclined to dedicate more resources to it. So, I think is also for

the agroecology movement to demonstrate its viability and for more young farmers to go in that direction knowing what they are doing and show the results. Certain ideas might be great on paper, but if you get one third of the harvest that you would get in a conventional system, that is not yet considered viable and it's a question of putting all this elements together, making sure you have the right farm structure, the right crops, that you have looked at consumer preferences you found the marketing channels, there is a lot of complexity to make this ideas work in practice. The more dedicated people there are to make this work, the more professional they are also at convincing consumers that this is a good idea the more the system has chances to work. I don't think it's completely depended on the CAP.

9.4.1 Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

1) Project Title:

Assessing the CAP post-2020 provisions for sustainability: To what extent is CAP post-2020 enabling the possibility of an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy?

2) Project Description

In this final dissertation, the emphasis is put on the current CAP debate (2021-2027) and the extent to which the EU acknowledges the benefits of agroecological practices for achieving social and environmental sustainability. The research digs into concepts of agroecology, permaculture and economic de-growth while monitoring the direction of the CAP negotiations. The CAP provisions will be analysed in accordance with their relation to specific sustainability practices, with the aim of concluding whether the social and environmental challenges European agriculture is confronting with are correctly addressed. In order to achieve this objective, this research will use agroecological practices and de-growth as reference framework. This paper will:

1. Report on the current Common Agricultural debate
2. Assess whether the EU is correctly representing the interests of civil society groups (small producers, consumers, other non-industry actors)
3. Investigate the role of agroecological practices (permaculture) for a more sustainable CAP
4. Evaluate the possibilities of agroecological alternatives to shift towards a post-growth paradigm

If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

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4. Evaluate the possibilities of agroecological alternatives to shift towards a post-growth paradigm

If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher and relevant university assessors. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Signed:  Date: 24/05/2019

9.5 Students Ethics Form

European Studies Student Ethics Form

Section 1. Project Outline

i) Title of Project:

Assessing the CAP post-2020 provisions for sustainability: To what extent is CAP post-2020 enabling the possibility of an agroecological transition towards a post-growth economy?

ii) Aims of project:

In this final dissertation, the emphasis is put on the current CAP debate (2021-2027) and the extent to which the EU acknowledges the benefits of agroecological practices for achieving social and environmental sustainability. The research digs into concepts of agroecology, permaculture and economic de-growth while monitoring the direction of the CAP negotiations. The CAP provisions will be analysed in accordance with their relation to specific sustainability practices, with the aim of concluding whether the social and environmental challenges European agriculture is confronting with are correctly addressed. In order to achieve this objective, this research will use agroecological practices and de-growth as reference framework. This paper will:

1. Report on the current Common Agricultural debate
2. Assess whether the EU is correctly representing the interests of civil society groups (small producers, consumers, other non-industry actors)
3. Investigate the role of agroecological practices (permaculture) for a more sustainable CAP
4. Evaluate the possibilities of agroecological alternatives to shift towards a post-growth paradigm

iii) Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, internet surveys etc. –?

YES / NO

Section 2.

i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):

The participants have been invited to answer a set of questions based on their knowledge and expertise on the topics addressed in the research paper.

ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?

The participants have been selected according to their professional background:

1. A strong proponent and cited scholar of the Degrowth movement.

2. A research expert and consultant on rural development in the EU with knowledge and experience in sustainable development in the food sector.
3. An agroecological enthusiast and journalist for ARC2020.
4. One of the coordinators for the European Good Food Good Farming Campaign (2018-2019).

Some of the participants were discovered during the research process, others were part of my existing professional network. Both participant groups have been contacted via e-mail. The interviews were organized via Skype.

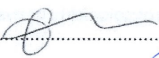
- iii) **What sort stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to, tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below?**

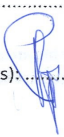
Questionnaires []; Pictures []; Sounds []; Words[X]; Other []

- iv) **Consent:** Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. By means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data.

- v) **What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' data?**

The participants will not have their names disclosed in the research paper. Pseudonyms and incomplete abbreviations will be used in the paper. Additionally, the audio recordings will only be shared with the designated assessment board members directly concerned with the outcomes of this research.

Student's signature:  date: 5/06/2019

Supervisor's signature
(if satisfied with the proposed procedures):  date: 6/6/2019