The "emergence of a new public" in biodiversity management

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Abstract: *This paper develops a reflexion about the theoretical question of perspectives to understand knowledge mobilisation, production and transformations at the light of the Dewey concept of "public emergence". This theoretical frame is applied to analyse the exchanges recorded between farmers, naturalists and citizens on the question of biodiversity management.*

Keywords: *biodiversity, theory for collective action, public emergence*

Biodiversity management as cultivating the diversity... of practices

In Europe, biodiversity management is, more and more often, linked to livestock production activities. This questions traditional modes of biodiversity management based on natural reserve definition and conservation in order to re-introduce the initial users of these open spaces: the farmers. A recent evaluation of the EU's agri-environmental policies underlines the limits of the leading assumption of these policies: financial compensations and incentives function as a necessary, though clearly not sufficient, condition in this process. The results suggest that it is important to view support for practices oriented towards biodiversity protection not in a static sense – as a situation determined by one or several influencing factors – but rather as a process marked by interaction (Sieberg et al. 2006). But how to specify this "inter-action" ? How to shift from a situation in which the farmer acts as a "simple service contractor" to one where the farmers are working together with others to develop new approaches to biodiversity management?

Drawing on the work of Stengers (2006) and on the work performed by Dewey (1927), on pragmatic sociology, we propose to contribute to the emerging thinking about "the ecology of practices" for nature management through the emergence of a 'public' (Dewey 1925). Indeed, can we conceive nature management not as the elaboration of a common language, with a pacification of the farmer – naturalist relationship, but as the elaboration of a language allowing to assert practices divergence between farmer and naturalist on the one hand, and farmer and citizen – consumer, on the other?

The Emergence of new publics: action theory of Dewey

A **public emerge** (Dewey 1927) when indirect consequences of activities from one part of the population are perceived as harmful to the interests of another part. We can consider the "imposition of Natura 2000" as harming the interest of farmers, yet historically they are the ones who have contributed to the rich biodiversity of the area. For Dewey the state is the instance that will start and develop from the perceived need to regulate the activities linked to the problem that has initiated the emergence of a 'public' (eg GMO case). Nevertheless, according to Dewey, the birth of democratic regimes coincide with the eclipse of the public's emergence: "*Machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of the indirect consequences, has formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify itself and distinguish itself. At present many consequences are felt rather than perceived, they are suffered, but they cannot be said to be know, as they are not, by those who experience them, referred to their origin*". This blinding led to the rarefaction of public's emergence.

Methodology

"Sociologist inquiry" must be raised up by an issue that the research constitutes such as an obstacle to overcome or a problem to solve. The research team aims to learn how a situation holds together

and how it can be transformed under researchers tentative of modification, creating, in this way, knowledge on earning trajectories (Stengers, 2006) Empirical data are produced by a running research-intervention (Hatchuel, 2000, Stassart et al. 2008), mobilising farmers, naturalists and citizen-consumers.

In our case study, the actors from a local farmer market, the Local Action Group (GAL), sociologist and agronomist scientists, are involved in a Leader+ project, called "Beef from Gaumaises Grasslands". This project takes place in an extensive breeding zone with, in some communes, up to 50 % of the grassland included in the NATURA 2000 network. This emerging project aims to articulate, over three years, biodiversity management and the added economical value to beef products which have accounted for biodiversity in their rearing scheme.

Results

- The definition of production rules, articulated around four principles taking into account the expectations that emerged from the interactions between the farmers, the naturalists and the citizens, has allowed the emergence of a public. This result has been achieved by the implementation of the following steps:The organisation of six iterative focus groups of citizens (local consumers and naturalists), merging different expertises, had delivered six specific focus points in a report, at the attention of the producers, titled "*We tell you what we have learned and not what you should do*". These six focus points are (1) the territory (the Gaume characterised by its cultural and ecological heritage), (2) the equity (beef production must be accessible to the diverse breeding systems found on this territory and benefit repartition between the different actors of the chain has to be clear), (3) the biodiversity is well reflected by hay cutting date, (4) a special attention has to be paid to animal welfare with a castration performed under veterinarian control, (5) the necessity to learn to appreciate other meat than the lean and tender Belgian blue beef meat and (6) the necessity to pair, in livestock farming, biodiversity preservation and sustainable working conditions in order to increase farmer free time and so their social implication.
- The creation of an environmentalist think tank, merging professional and local environmentalists, to consider the farmers' proposal in terms of beef breeding-fattening standards.
- The mobilisation of farmer expertise and of similar experience knowledge on extensive beef production to define possible production schemes that address citizens' principles and environmentalists' expectations.

In conclusions, in term of beef-biodiversity articulation, in addition to a normative approach (no pesticides on grazed grasslands and no anti-helminthic treatment for the beef and its herd, no mineral or slurry fertilisers on the grasslands grazed by the beefs and on 0,7ha of late cutting hay per beef), this process has led to the definition of an agri-environmental evolutionary scheme, adapted to each farm. Indeed, at his adhesion to the chain, the farmer co-defines, with an agri-environmental adviser, an evolutionary plan to increase agri-environmental performances of his system. The evolution of the agri-environmental performances of the farm is then evaluated every two years with an adaptation of the targets.

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