

i2connect

INTERACTIVE INNOVATION



Deliverable Number 3.2

Didactical concept and toolkit for advisors trainings

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Dissemination Level

PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
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CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	



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Planning

- 1) 28.02.2020 : kick off meeting
- 2) 02.03.2020 : 1st draft + tools box : Gwénaëlle Fontaine
- 3) 03.03.2020 : Gwénaëlle invite Sophie Duhamel to add some inputs until 06.03.2020
- 4) 03.03.2020 – 05.03.2020 : Robert & Eelke fill the tools box with what they have
- 5) 05.03.2020 : Robert ask partners of Task 3.2 to fill the tools box until March 10th (with only tools they have used yet)+ inform them to the following paths
- 6) 09.03.2020 – 17.03.2020 : Robert & Eelke add some inputs and write the didactical concept
- 7) 13.03.2020 : Eelke + Christèle + Gwénaëlle + Robert (only the afternoon) write the iterative loop
- 8) 18.03.2020 : sending the project to the partners of Task 3.2, asking reactions & ameliorations until March 28th
- 9) 30.03.2020 – 13.04.2020 : Finalization of the document by Eelke and Robert
- 10) 15.04.2020 : sending the final document to the coordination
- 11) After april : selecting the most valuable material of the tools box for training programs of Task 3.6 (To check – Eelke)



Introduction

Innovation and innovative processes have always been part of advisory work. In the past it was focused on new production techniques, the introduction of research results and more and more on methods to lower the production costs and to optimize subsidies. Today its accepted, that knowledge is also gained by practitioners from their own work, from experiences in groups and their raising knowledge from different information channels. The group of stakeholders has been extended by representatives of value chains, consumers, NGO's and research people.

Agro-Ecology will play an essential rule in the transformation of agro- and foodsystems.

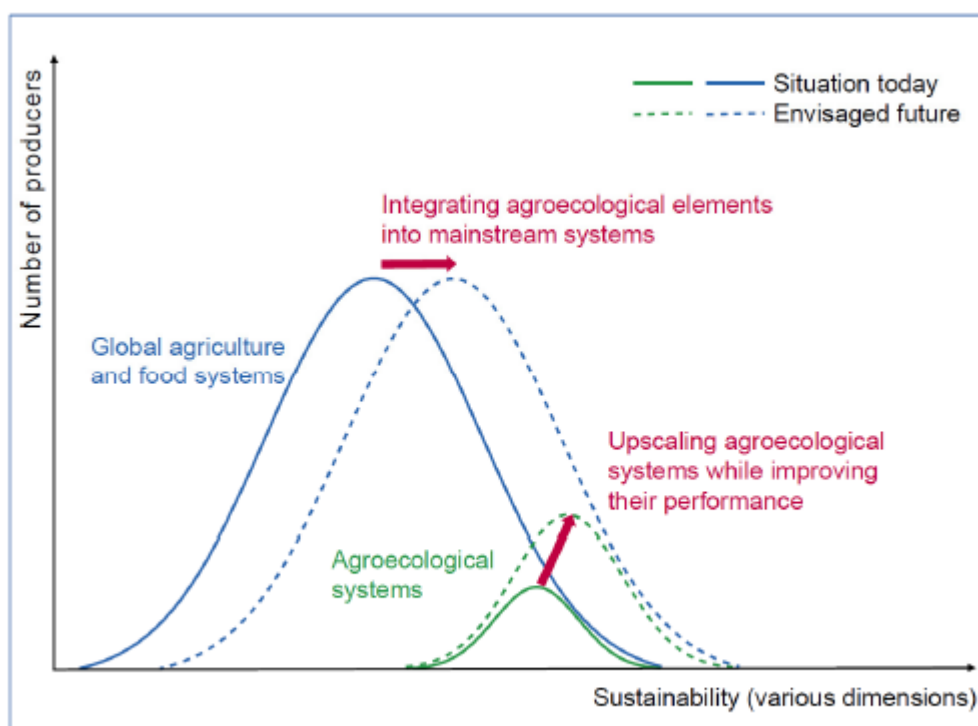


Figure 1: The role of agroecology in transforming agriculture and food systems

Co-creation and sharing of knowledge as one of 10 elements of Agro-Ecology:



Figure 2: The ten elements of agroecology. <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/en/>

Our time offers new perspectives for advisors. The role of knowledge transfer nowadays is extended to the role of a facilitator. And tomorrow more and more advisors are needed to support multi-actor innovation processes. In the past innovation processes were the product of hazards and intuition.

The trainings for innovation support agents, offered by the i2connect project, will focus on their role in multi-actor innovation processes. The aim is to develop a thorough understanding for innovation processes and the advisors role in networks. To increase their ability to reflect on what they do for assisting participants in such processes to become successful and how to spread innovation in agricultural systems. How do they assess the situation at a certain moment? And what options do they have to intervene?

The offer consists of trainings with a duration of 3 days face-to-face (f2f) and half a year of coaching on the job. The f2f training prepares the participants for mutual coaching in peer groups.

The i2connect project does not start from scratch. It builds further on CECRA module 16 on innovation support, which has been designed for the same audience: agents in multi-actor innovation processes. To this content, elements supporting the acquisition of tools for virtual work are added. Indeed, joining innovative networks on a European scale

requires knowing how to access information offered on vital platforms, and to participate actively in human dynamics built virtually thanks to digital tools.

The work of WP1 (Science) and WP2 (Best Practices) will feed into the contents of the courses from the second year onwards. The Creative Contents Group (WP 3.1) is the meeting place where all insights and experiences come together, and conclusions are drawn for improvements. The first series of courses will not wait for the first round of integration. The start is based on CECRA 16, with additions from the project partners involved in tasks 3.2 (course contents) and 3.6 (train-the-trainer concepts and the i2connect Trainers Team).

This document describes the core elements of the trainings, as well as the assumptions on which the training concept is built.

- What assumptions do we have about the agents who will participate in the courses?
- What is our view on multi-actor innovation processes?
- What insights and skills are needed to guide such processes successfully?
- What and how will the courses' offer to improve such insights and skills?
- How do the courses fit into the continuous learning process of the network of agents, to be created in work package 4?

Assumptions about innovation support agents

Many innovation support agents do good work. They use their experience and feeling for human relations. Good communication skills are a prerequisite for successfully participating in the i2connect courses. If some potential participants still have work to do for improving such skills like active listening, making connection or guiding a group meeting, they are advised to join other courses first, like CECRA module 1 and 2.

We assume that for many agents the first focus and passion is on technical matters: the contents of the innovation. Usually their main expertise is technical. Probably they also have access to a network of people with relevant experience or expertise, or to people



in positions in which they can be useful to open doors for the innovation process at stake.

Most agents are unconsciously competent regarding the multi-actor innovation process. They use their intuition for deciding what to do in crucial moments, often without even being aware that they do the right thing at the right moment. The process itself is not consciously in their mind.

On the other side, many things go wrong as well, which could have been prevented if the agents had been more aware of the dynamics in this type of processes and possible interventions they could have made to avoid common pitfalls and keep the process on track.

The courses will focus on distinguishing contents from process, and on creating awareness of typical aspects of multi-actor innovation processes. What patterns can be recognized, and what options are there for intervention when need arises?

The nature of multi-actor innovation support processes

Multi-actor innovation processes are discovery journeys. The actors who embark on such a journey do so because they share an ambition to develop a new practice or to solve a problem. They have a reason for joining forces and they engage in an adventure for which they are prepared to take risks. They have an idea of the direction in which to go and a track to follow, but all sorts of surprises can happen underway that changes their path, and they probably end up with a result they could not have foreseen. If they had known the outcome, nothing new would have been discovered.

These characteristics distinguish such processes from projects with clearly defined targets and detailed plans with steps to follow for reaching the goal. Such projects usually define the task division between the project leader and the collaborators. Financiers or managers keep the project accountable for carrying out the project plan and delivering the targeted results.

The innovation process is wider than projects, although such projects might be part of them. The dynamics are different as well, since the actors engage voluntarily, being



driven by an ambition. The hierarchy which is common in projects does not count in the same manner in such processes. Therefore, innovation support agents depend heavily on the motivation of the participating actors.

In earlier projects we have seen that agents can be useful for multi-actor innovation processes in different roles. They can assist the innovating network in:

- guiding the technical process (design of experiments, ensuring that progress is monitored in a scientific way);
- guiding the social process (keeping internal dynamics healthy);
- creating pathways to external sources (expertise, experience, stakeholders, funds); and
- strategy in order to create space for the innovation in the world outside.

Awareness about these different roles and what it takes to perform them well: this will get due attention in the courses and the coaching that follows.

Essential insights and skills

Some essential insights and skills can be derived from the previous paragraphs:

- a. Intuition (to be distinguished from emotion) is the agent's most important tool to navigate on the uncertain discovery journey of a multi-actor innovation process.
- b. Tools and methods should be helpful to sharpen this intuition, but not replace it.
- c. Joint reflection among peers is essential for integrating the contents of the course with everyday practice of the participants. After being back on the job, when agents try to apply what they learned, questions will arise. That is when peer coaching is most useful. Skills and methods for peer-to-peer coaching are part of the courses.
- d. Innovation processes cannot be controlled like ordinary projects. It is helpful to recognize patterns and enlarge the repertoire of possible interventions to act according to what the situation demands.
- e. Agents need to be aware of different roles they can perform in the process, so that they can choose what is most needed at a given moment.



Guiding principles for the courses

There are a few guiding principles for all courses:

- a. **Meet participants where they are.** Their realities and their views are the starting point of every course. The training needs to offer an environment where participants feel safe and recognized.
- b. **Concrete cases from participants** are preferred material to work with in the courses.
- c. **Co-creation** is what multi-actor innovation processes are aiming for. The key question is “What can we make possible by pooling our resources, experience, knowledge and networks?” It is more than a question: it is an attitude, as opposed to; “I know what is good for you”. The courses offer opportunities to experience the difference, and to strengthen the skills that are belong to such a co-creative attitude.
- d. **An exploratory attitude** is to be stimulated. ‘The best way’ does not exist. Participants need to find out what works best for them in the culture in which they operate. The courses offer exercises where they can discover, rather than learn to follow instructions. Participants decide for themselves what they take home from the training.
- e. **Intuition** is an agent’s most important tool for navigating on the uncertain discovery journey of a multi-actor innovation process.
- f. **Motivation** is key in multi-actor innovation processes. This is tangible in the **energy** that can be felt between people. The **‘warm process’** is to be distinguished from the **‘cold process’**. In the warm process, people find each other for collaboration: making things possible that they cannot achieve alone. They share ambitions, and the hope that something can be achieved generates energy. When trust grows during the process, social capital builds up, which makes the network capable of coping with disappointments and other surprises. In the cold process, structure is built and maintained for aligning activities and being accountable to the outside world. This usually takes energy. Both processes are needed simultaneously. The energy from the warm process feeds the capacity for the cold process. Without due attention for the warm process, the cold process is hard to maintain.



- g. **Learning by doing** is a leading principle for the courses. Exercises will create opportunities for learning and making mistakes in a safe and supporting environment. Every mistake is an opportunity for learning.
- h. **All that happens is learning material.** The process taking place during the course has many similarities with the processes taking place in the groups they are guiding. What participants learn from what they experience 'here-and-now' in the training will be remembered well.
- i. **Mutual coaching** is what the trainings will focus on. After the 3 days f2f training, participants are capable of assisting each other in reflecting on situations they encounter.
- j. **A buddy system** is helpful to maintain contacts after the f2f training. Choosing buddies and starting to work together should already take place during the f2f training.
- k. **Continuous learning** will take place through regular invitations to individual and collective reassessment, in a process of constant improvement and adaptation.
- l. **On-line training and coaching:** will be part of the training. The participants can get used to online tools that they will have to be able to use themselves.

Contents of the courses

A training manual will be composed with concepts, tools and exercises. When trainers translate these materials in their own language, they have the freedom to add materials they are comfortable to work with. They are then strongly invited to share these tools with the i2connect Trainers Team, in order to support a constant improvement of the proposed training, and a continuous enrichment of the trainers' practice. The i2connect Trainers Team (task 3.6) is the place where such materials are being discussed and tried out. It is important, however, that these materials fit into the guiding principles as described in the previous paragraph.



The manual for CECRA module 16 offers concepts and tools to start with.

- a. **Three modes of collaboration:** transfer, exchange (negotiations), and co-creation.
- b. **Warm and cold processes:** how to distinguish basic elements of both processes?
- c. **The Innovation Spiral:** seven stages from early idea to embedding, each with their distinctive actions, actors to relate to and pitfalls to avoid.
- d. **The Network Analysis:** visualising actors in different positions regarding an initiative. What connections need to be strengthened and in what order for creating space for the initiative?
- e. **The Circle of Coherence:** visualising interaction patterns between actors in a process. How to recognise what interventions could help in a certain situation to reinforce motivation and nourish 'vital space'.
- f. **The Triangle of Co-Creation:** visualising positions of key actors in a process of change. Which positions contribute to co-creation, and which positions do not? What can be done to increase the chance that co-creation will take place?
- g. **The Energy Timeline Method:** a quick and effective method for assessment of the process with the participants involved. It strengthens co-ownership of participants of their joint endeavours.
- h. **The Learning History:** a method to report about the process, analysing the moments that appeared to matter most.
- i. **Peer-to-peer consultation:** a method to structure consultations among peers, in order to ask relevant questions, to analyse different assumptions and options, to respect the choices of storyteller for what (s)he does with the advices, and to avoid debates that do not contribute.

Descriptions practical exercises will be added for the purpose of the trainings in i2connect.



Some pedagogical principles to be used in the course

Innovation and learning processes happen to be supported by certain common elements. This is not surprising: training and learning aims at changes in individual and collective level. So it is at the service of innovation. That is why considering some principles taught by some famous educators will help that the format of the training matches its content, not only to respect the principle of congruence, but also to make the training more effective. Indeed, training offers access to a culture from which a posture is derived. It is important that the participants experience it with the trainer and then adopt it in their practice as advisors.

- a. **"It's in doing that you learn."** The pedagogues of New Education are unanimous: the human being is supported in his or her learning when (s)he is an active agent, because (s)he then gives meaning to the subject being taught. This is why it is important that training courses are organised in such a way that participants are actors in their learning process. It is therefore excluded to give them pre-thought information that they should passively listen to and retain.
- b. **Reaching the person in their reality.** As Edward Claparède explained: all teaching must consist of a response if it is to become learning. This is why it is essential that the training courses start from the real problems expressed by the course participants. This will support learning transfers. Because the more the training venue will have elements in common with the action venues, the easier it will be for the participant to transfer the knowledge into his or her practice.
- c. **Act on the environment, not on the person.** Roger Cousinet taught: It is always on the environment that the educator acts. In fact, the educator is responsible for creating a stimulating environment that is conducive to learning and encourages transfers into practice. Therefore, he does not have the authority to want to change one of the participants; the participants change themselves if it makes sense for them. The trainer will therefore have to be careful to work on the training space, and moderate the participants so that the training environment is stimulating and conducive to learning.



- **Peer practice sharing** helps participants to link their practice to the tools and topics offered in the training. Indeed, it brings the information proposed closer to the practice, makes it more accessible, more pragmatic, and allows each participant to position himself differently according to his own reality. This avoids the existing deviation of the trainers-experts, bringing a theoretical knowledge that is unquestionable and far from practical application.
- Carl Roger pointed out the following paradox: "It is when I accept myself as I am that I can change." **The trainer's attitude is essential to support self-confidence.** Indeed, according to the Pygmalion principle, participants respond to the silent prescriptions of the trainer. **It is therefore essential that the trainer focuses on the learners' resources, with esteem and confidence, in each of his interactions with them.** Conversely, criticism of their person or doubts about their abilities will reduce their self-confidence, their ability to learn in the context accordingly, and would not favour a posture of personal questioning.

The pedagogical objectives

At the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Explain the necessity to restore farmer's central role as the actor and designer of his operating system, rather than considering him as applying the rules laid down by scientific and technical prescribers.
- Describe the particularities of innovation processes and the associated challenges.
- To apply tools to remove possible blockages.
- Explain different roles in supporting an innovation process and analyse their own role.
- To identify classic patterns of innovation processes and to propose reactions adapted to the situations.
- Plan to accompany groups in collective approaches and to promote creative processes.
- Use online tools to animate a geographically extended network.
- Use results of innovation processes in advisory activities and spread innovation



The continuous learning process

The first edition of the trainer's manual will be available in English before the first Train-The-Trainers course starts (T3.6). Trainers are required to report about the results of their trainings. Furthermore, they will be stimulated to capture case stories of agents participating in their courses which come up during the coaching period. In WP4 an environment will be created where such experiences can be uploaded and shared.



Summary

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