Capitalisation of research results on the multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?

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Need for mapping the meanings and making MF a useful concept

- Emergence and spreading of MF in different contexts
- ... resulting in different meanings
- Few explicitation and difficult use in academic and policy making contexts
Emergence and spreading

- Emergence: late 80’s = not only food production
- Spreading
  - International institutions:
    - looking at sustainability (Rio summit; FAO)
    - Looking at international trade negotiations (WTO, OECD)
  - EU: looking at the CAP reform
  - National contexts: Austria, Swiss Constitution, French LOA, …
- Economics in response to political issues & then other disciplines

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
A framework for comparative analysis: co-evolution of political and scientific agenda's

From local to global political arenas

Epistemic Communities

Policies & legislations

Theories, knowledge and expertise

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
Case studies: diversity in the intensity of the use of the word MF

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
• A need for clarifying

• by organizing the available literature

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
Concept Oriented Research Clusters (CORC): what is it?

- A way to understand how research communities work on MF
- Based on homogeneity in research questions and research practices (concepts, disciplines, stream of thought, epistemic community)

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
Concept Oriented Research Clusters (CORC): what it is not

- It is not:
  - A definition or concept
  - An operational tool
  - A way of classifying countries

- Refers to a set of research and knowledge production practices

- Possibility to articulate specific, partial and overlapping knowledge

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
“The multifunctional sheep that gives birth to lambs, feeds them, produces wool and ends up as low grade meat also provides a mobile landscape feature, a grass nurturing and manuring machine, an icon of local identity and a contact point with non-human nature to those humans wandering through the rural landscape.” (Henry Buller)

How research deals with such a reality?
Which questions? Which practices?
Ex: CORC 1: A joint production of commodities and public goods

Based on OECD definition (2001)

- Efficiency and acceptability of public policies for private production of joint goods (landscape, meet, wool, etc)

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
To what extent does the policy recognition of MF lead to changes in farmers’ practices (N animals/ha, breed selection)?
8 CORCs

- Joint production of commodities and public goods
- Multiple impacts and contributions from agriculture to rural areas
- A complementary and conflicting connection between commodities and identity goods
- Farmers strategies and practices: multifunctionality, technical change, livelihood systems
- Multiple use of rural space & regional planning
- A way toward sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) regulation
- A social demand towards agriculture
- Governance, policy and multifunctionality)
For each CORC

- Disciplines
- Research questions and controversies
- Use in policy making
- List of related functions
- Weaknesses or limits
- Other concepts used instead
- Related concepts

*Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?*
Strengths and weaknesses

• Strengths:
  – Re-embedding agriculture within society (demands, services, public good, etc)
  – Opportunity to formulate and address new questions
  – A « connecting » concept

Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
Strengths and weaknesses

• Weaknesses
  – looseness and diversity (what MF refers to? what is the best level to address MF? Etc)
  – Ambivalence and fuzziness: political goal or analytical framework
  – Controversies because of use in WTO negotiations

• Reinforces the interest of CORC
Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?

MF and SARD

Multifunctionality
- Demand oriented
- Activity & jointness oriented
- Analytical
- Static

Sustainability
- Need oriented
- Capital oriented
- Normative paradigm
- Dynamic

Source: Multagri research group
Multifunctionality: a concept for problem solving?
• The possibility to better characterize and articulate diverse knowledge production
• Refocusing a spreading concept for looking at sustainability
• A goal oriented framework to be tested

“Once we understand more about multifunctionality, it will be possible to address sustainable development and to design adequate policies”

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