Making minority voices heard?
Tensions between forms of participation in transnational areas

Cases of private multi-stakeholder initiatives in sustainable agriculture

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Context (1)

- Increasing ecological criticism from NGOs
- Agricultural commodity sectors are denounced to be responsible of deforestation (palm oil, soy, etc.).
- From 2003: Emergence of Multi Stakeholder Initiatives to create sustainable voluntary standards through a series of transnational “Roundtable”:
  - RSPO: Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
  - RTRS: Roundtable on Responsible Soy
  - Etc.
Characteristic of those Roundtables

Roundtables are MSI (Multi Stakeholder Initiatives)

- Involve growers, processors, traders, importers, banks, environmental NGOs, social and development NGOs, etc. (Private agents – Business / NGOs)

- Voluntary processes (non mandatory)
- Transnational
- Aim: Define & promote sustainability by:
  - Definition of good practices: list of Criteria
  - Control: 1/3 party certification
Context (2)

- MSI based on a rationale-legitimacy- on (in the discourses of participants/promoters):
  - Failure of Governments to take responsibility for environmental goods
  - « Inclusiveness »: open, balanced representation, include all categories of stakeholders in participative and inclusive processes, dialogue/consensus.

  = speak for a large number of voices (stakeholders)
  => Presented as principle of efficiency and authority of MSI
  => Equal participation requirements
Critical Perspective

• Local communities and small family farmers feel they have a difficulty in making their voices heard in the format of debate proposed.

• How those Roundtables:
  * Address the question of « equal participation »?
  * Focus the legitimacy of participants?
  * Address the question of pluralism of visions?

• Critic of the inclusiveness capacity of those MSI.

You do not know what it is like to lose your land. Many of our compatriots finished in a psychiatric hospital! (family farmer)

We need forest to stock carbon

Sustainability is a more efficient production to feed many people

We need to satisfy the demand for oil markets

The forest for us is a patrimoine

Sustainability is a more equitable distribution of value between operators in the chain to guarantee living conditions for rural populations
### Plurality of « regimes of engagements » (Thévenot, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime of engagement</th>
<th>“Participant figure”</th>
<th>Good engaged</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justifiable action</strong></td>
<td>Moral subject</td>
<td>Qualification of the common good. “What is sustainability”?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement in a plan and Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder, highlight his interests</td>
<td>To defend specific interests/strategy, Trade-off, Action accomplished</td>
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<td>desire to talk about justice, Pluralism of principles of justice, Moral responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Familiar Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Attached or affected person</td>
<td>Express personal affects, ease, care</td>
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- **Practical and quick action**
- **Voluntary liberal capacity**
- **Speed time / present time**
<table>
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<th>Capacity of the device to recognize the people affected?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Industries &amp; international NGOs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Forms of knowledges</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Forms of language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimacy of experts or real lives?</strong></td>
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**Expected in the Roundtable**  **Disqualified in the Roundtable**
# Role of local NGOs

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<th>Regime of engagement</th>
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<th>Roles played by the local NGO</th>
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<td>Justifiable Action Qualification of the common good.</td>
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<td>Transform the attachments of smallholders/LC in general causes</td>
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<td><em>Empowerment</em> of smallholders to become a stakeholder (go to negotiations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar Engagement</td>
<td>Attached or affected person</td>
<td>Express personal affects</td>
<td>Take care of smallholders in the Roundtables / concern / Ease</td>
</tr>
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</table>
MSI:

– While speaking for a large number of voices and are founded on the principle of “inclusion”,
  
  • They find it difficult to recognise pluralism in defining the “common good”.
  
  • They also experience difficulties in taking account of personal attachments opening up to people “affected” in their real lives.

– Role of local NGOs in reintroducing care and attachments