

ESEE  2023

26th European Seminar on Extension & Education

Sustainability transitions of agriculture and the
transformation of education and advisory services:
convergence or divergence?

Toulouse, 10-13 July 2023



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

26th European Seminar on Extension & Education

“Sustainability transitions of agriculture and the transformation of education and advisory services: convergence or divergence?”

The conference was organised in Toulouse (France), 10-13 July 2023.

More information

<https://esee2023.colloque.inrae.fr/esee-2023>

The conference was organised by two research laboratories:

AGIR (Agroecology, Innovation, Territories)

and **LEREPS** (Economics, Policies and Social Systems)



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INRAE (National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment)
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26th ESEE Book of Abstracts

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Introduction

The **European Seminar on Extension & Education (ESEE)** is a biennial conference about **agricultural advice and education**. It has gathered scholars, advisors and educators since 1973. Click [here](#) to learn about past conferences organised in Ireland (2021) and Italy (2019).

It aims at supporting discussion between science and practice. Hence, it is open to a diversity of contributions, both academic and practical. ESEE gathers and contrast experiences and findings from all European countries, but also between Europe and other contexts in the global North and global South. The seminar has lead to the publication of several special issues in the *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Education* and other academic publications.

The 2023 conference was organised in Toulouse (France), from July 10th to July 13th. The overall theme of the 26th conference is: “*Sustainability transitions of agriculture and the transformation of education and advisory services: convergence or divergence?*”

Sustainable transition of agriculture is at the forefront of both academic and political agenda, especially in the frame of the next European Common Agricultural Policy. Education and Advisory services are expected to be major drivers of these transitions, by co-producing knowledge with farmers and farm workers, enhancing their competences and supporting their innovation processes. At the same time, advisory services and education face major transformations (digitalisation, privatisation, new governance models, etc.). The relations between these two dynamics - sustainable transition of agriculture and the transformations of advice and education are the matter of debates and controversies. The aim of this conference will be to discuss about concepts, empirical evidence and new methods to support the contribution of advice & education to the various dimensions of sustainability, including social dimensions (inequalities and labour & work conditions) and environmental ones (climate change, biodiversity, water).

The conference addressed more specifically five topics:

- **TOPIC 1 - Transitions towards agroecology & circular economy:** Which actors and approaches of advice and education support, what hinders them?
- **TOPIC 2 - Digitalisation of advisory services and education:** what are the effects of digital technology on the practices, actors and organisation of advice and education?
- **TOPIC 3 - Learning for innovation and resilience:** which theory and practice developments for training, life-long learning and education of farmers, advisors, teachers and facilitators?
- **TOPIC 4 - Public policies for innovation and the governance of AKIS:** how to embed advice & education into AKIS strategies and planning?
- **TOPIC 5 - Inclusion and the social dimension of sustainability:** (how) are these issues acknowledged in advice and education?

This book gathers the abstracts presented during the conference. It also describes the topics of the conference, its overall program, including plenary keynotes and roundtables, and special sessions. Information about the scientific and local committees are also provided. This book was edited by Pierre Labarthe, Research Professor at INRAE.

The ESEE community

The organisation of the 26th ESEE was a collective effort. We take the opportunity to thank all the people who were actively involved in this exciting adventure!

International Scientific Committee

The International Scientific committee plays a key role. Its members are in charge of writing the conference call, identifying topics, reviewing and selecting abstracts, and chairing sessions. The members of the 26th ESEE were:

- **Pierre Labarthe, INRAE (France), President of ESEE International Scientific Committee**
- Simona Cristiano, CREA (Italy)
- Artur Cristovao, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (Portugal)
- Maria Gerster-Bentaya, University of Hohenheim (Germany)
- Monica Gorman, Teagasc (Ireland)
- Jozef Kania, University of Krakow (Poland)
- Esmail Karamidehkordi, Tarbiat Modares University (Iran)
- Tom Kelly, Teagasc (Ireland)
- Laurens Klerkx, Wageningen University (Netherlands)
- Alex Koutsouris, University of Athens (Greece)
- Andrea Knierim, University of Hohenheim (Germany)
- Michael Kugler, Chambers of agriculture (Germany)
- Magnus Ljung, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden)
- Livia Madureira, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (Portugal)
- Mark Moore, Teagasc (Ireland)
- Peter Paree, ZLTO (Netherlands)
- Patrizia Proietti, CREA (Italy)
- Eelke Wielinga, Link Consult (Netherlands)

Local organising committee

The local organising committee was in charge of organising five field trips that provided interesting case studies to feed discussions about the conference topics. It was also in charge of all the logistics of the conference. The organisation was a joint effort between researchers and management staff of two research laboratories: AGIR (INRAE-University of Toulouse) and LEREPS (University of Toulouse & Sciences Po). The members of the local organising committee were:

- Pierre Labarthe (INRAE)
- Camille Berrier (INRAE)
- Nicolas Gallai (ENSFEA)
- Nathalie Girard (INRAE)
- Héloïse Leloup (INRAE)
- Rachel Levy (ENSFEA)
- Catherine Milou (University of Toulouse)
- Geneviève Nguyen (INPT, University of Toulouse)
- Gaël Plumecocq (INRAE)
- Pierre Triboulet (INRAE)

with the support of

- Christel Moder (INRAE)
- Mathieu Solle (INRAE)
- Clémence Rigal (INRAE)
- Marina Lefebvre (INRAE)
- Anne-Marie Beyssens (University of Toulouse)
- Sophie Regnier (Sciences Po)

Session 2B – Designing & Selecting the right digital tool for advisors

Working with farmer organizations to co-design more user-relevant and responsible digital advisory services? An analysis of motivations and blocking factors.**Chloé Alexandre¹, Teatske Bakker¹**¹CIRAD**Short abstract:**

Because of their in-depth knowledge of farmers' profiles and local contexts, but also because of their ability to interact with international actors and projects, farmer organizations (FOs) are increasingly considered as key players in the development of digital advisory services. This co-design with FOs is indeed put forward as a way to produce a more user-relevant and responsible digital advisory services. However, several recent initiatives in Africa show that this is not always the case. Based on a synthesis of literature in two domains (socio-anthropology of development; work on the digitization of advisory services) and a case study in Burkina Faso, this paper analyzes the diversity of reasons motivating the inclusion of FOs in the process of developing digital advisory services; and explores the conditions necessary for the inclusion of these FOs to effectively lead to the creation of a more user-relevant and responsible services. Practical recommendations are also formulated to this end.

Extended abstract**Purpose**

Participatory approaches and co-design with users are increasingly emphasized in order to develop digital advisory services that meet the expectations of users (farmers and/or advisors) (Klerkx et al., 2019; Steinke et al., 2022) and respect their data rights (McC Campbell et al., 2021). In Africa, the vast majority of digital advisory services are developed in the framework of international development projects, involving international actors (NGOs, research, etc.) and local actors (Alexandre, 2022; McC Campbell, 2021). Because of their in-depth knowledge of farmers' profiles and their working environment, but also because of their knowledge of the functioning and "vocabulary" of development projects, farmer organizations (FOs) are increasingly considered as key actors in the development of digital advisory services. The expected benefits of collaboration with FOs include access to specific knowledge (knowledge of the agro-climatic context and farmers' activities), logistical support for the service development process (identification of potential users, conducting interviews, etc.), but also the legitimization of development projects that are often designed by actors from Northern countries.

Recent studies analyzing the development process of digital advisory services in Africa show, however, that the willingness to include FOs in this process does not necessarily result in the creation of a service that is more relevant for farmers and more responsible (Alexandre et al., 2022; McC Campbell et al., 2021). This can be explained, among others, by the fact that the collaborative context is not conducive to the inclusion of the FO in major design choices, that the interlocutors chosen within the FO are not able to convey the diversity of user expectations, or that FOs do not have the capabilities to voice their ideas in such a multi-actor innovation process (ibid.).

Given this observation, this paper proposes to explore in greater detail the reasons motivating advisory service providers to include FOs in the development process of digital advisory services; and to analyze the conditions necessary for the inclusion of these FOs to effectively lead to the creation of more user-relevant and responsible services.

To this end, we propose a cross-analysis of studies in socio-anthropology of development on FOs in Africa and studies in social sciences (management sciences, innovation studies, etc.) on the development of digital agricultural advisory services. The work in socio-anthropology of development is mobilized to reposition the contemporary discourses on the need to include FOs in development projects in a longer historical trajectory and to provide a "demythified" reading (Olivier de Sardan, 1995). This work indeed emphasizes the need to go beyond idealized representations (or myths) of FOs in Africa, in order to analyze, among others, the games of interests and power struggles between FO members (ibid.). Studies on digital advisory services (in management sciences, innovation studies, etc.) provide insight into the expected benefits of co-designing digital services with producer organizations, but also into the factors that help explain the difficulty of effectively involving farmer organizations and thereby developing more relevant and responsible digital services. Finally, we formulate recommendations for the inclusion of FOs to participate in the creation of a more user-relevant and responsible digital agro-advisory services.

Design/Methodology/Approach

The results presented in this paper are based on a synthesis of peer-reviewed scientific articles from two communities: studies in socio-anthropology of development on FOs in Africa and their inclusion in development projects; and studies in social sciences on digital agricultural advisory services, which mention either the expected benefits of including FOs in the service design process or the factors that hinder this inclusion. The analysis of the articles provides the framework below (Table 1).

Table 1: Analytical framework

Categories of the analytical framework
- Development of FOs in Africa and state of play
- Contemporary representations of FOs
- Discourses on the inclusion of FOs in development projects
- Motivations expressed for co-designing digital services with POs; expected benefits
- Blocking factors

This literature synthesis will be highlighted by exploring a case study in Burkina Faso, tracing the development of digital agricultural advisory services within multi-actor partnerships involving businesses, international NGOs and producer organizations. This case study is the result of a field survey conducted over 1.5 years (2018 and 2019) based on semi-structured interviews, observations and secondary data analysis (Alexandre, 2022).

Findings

- a. The motivation to include FOs is embedded in a long historical trajectory and may be based on distorted representations of farmer organizations*

After tracing the development history of producer organizations in West Africa (Blein & Coronel, 2013; Bosc et al., 2002; Dugué et al., 2012), we put contemporary discourses on the need to co-construct digital advisory services with FOs into the longer trajectory of the evolution of international development paradigms (Jacob & Lavigne Delville, 1994; Olivier de Sardan, 1995). We then present two myths associated with FOs that still tend to permeate developmentalist discourses and thought patterns: the myth of "needs" and the tendency to stereotyping; and the myth of farmers' organizations as a consensual community, invisibilizing internal power issues (Olivier de Sardan, 1995). We illustrate these two myths in the cases studied in Burkina Faso and discuss their implications for the development of digital agricultural advisory services.

b. Expected benefits of including FOs in the development of digital advisory services and identified blocking factors

We present the expected benefits of including FOs in the development of digital advisory services (more relevant services, responsible innovation, legitimization e.g.). We then draw on case studies conducted in Africa on the development of digital advisory services to identify the factors blocking the engagement of FOs in this process and the consideration of their interests (Alexandre et al., 2022; McCampbell et al., 2021; Ortiz-Crespo et al., 2020; Steinke et al., 2022). Table 2 shows these different blocking factors, grouped by category. We analyze these blocking factors in Burkina Faso and illustrate how they impacted the development process and the digital advisory services created.

Table 2: Factors contributing to explain that co-design with FOs does not automatically result in more user-relevant and responsible digital advisory services. Source: Authors, based on literature synthesis and the case study

Categories of factors	Blocking Factors
Willingness of the FO to represent the interests of the users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technicians and elected representatives of the FO do not represent the interests of producers (or service users) - Operating FOs vs. “empty shells”
Capacity of the FO to represent the interests of the users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A diversity of users that cannot all be satisfied (various farmers; various advisors; various elected representatives – with potentially contrasting goals and/or demands) - Interaction with non-representative users when designing services - Weak open innovation capabilities - Low digital capabilities
FO organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Top-down</i> culture and lengthy decision-making process - Lack of organizational memory on participatory processes
Collaboration environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development projects that are too restrictive (too short in duration; no room for experimentation because activities are planned in advance and cannot be adapted; focus on results rather than learning; limited opportunity to take risks). - Methods of collective decision-making that are not conducive to the inclusion of the least endowed actors.

Practical Implications

Organizations interested in working with FOs to develop more relevant and responsible digital advisory services are advised to pay attention to several points:

- Choice of FO: not all FOs have the willingness, capabilities and organizational culture to participate effectively in a service co-design process
- Choice of user representatives: the profiles of potential users of a digital advisory service are diverse. It is important to take this diversity into account and to identify actors who are able to represent the expectations and constraints of all these potential users.
- Collaborative environment: short-term development projects, with predetermined and inflexible activities, do not constitute a collaborative environment that is conducive to the involvement of FOs in the design and development of digital services. Attention should also be paid to developing animation and decision-making methodologies that allow the least endowed actors to enforce their interests.

Theoretical Implications

Crossing social science studies on digital advisory services with studies in socio-anthropology of development makes it possible to question the reasons for including FOs in the development of services and to identify a list of factors contributing to explain the failure of projects aiming to include FOs in the development of digital services that are more relevant to users and responsible.

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