



Sustainable Food Consortium

Wednesday 9 December

Cultivate, Forum Synergies & ARC2020

Local Food Reimagining Regional Responses

SPEAKERS



- ▶ Xavier Hamon, Artisan Chef
 - ▶ Director of Université des Sciences et des Pratiques Gastronomiques (Brittany – France): an anthropological approach to thinking and practice of cooking
 - ▶ President of the Chefs' Slow Food Alliance – France
 - ▶ Coordinator – Animator of Sustainable Food Consortium (Brittany – France)
- ▶ Cédric Briand, dairy farmer (heritage Bretonnes Pie Noir cattle)
 - ▶ Co-president of the Nantes Cattle Festival (Fête de la Vache Nantaise)
 - ▶ Co-president of Federation of Breton Breeds (Fédération des Races de Bretagne)
 - ▶ Member of the Sustainable Food Consortium



Background

- Failure of theory of individual responsibility (e.g. Pierre Rabhi's self-sacrificing "hummingbird" movement ("les colibris"))
 - **Multiplication of initiatives at citizen/individual level alone will never be enough to disrupt the dominant system and impose a new model of production**
 - Error of judgment to not expect the agro-industrial system to react
 - **Capitalist system is well able to "market" responses to criticisms**
 - e.g. **La Ruche Qui Dit Oui is a commercial alternative to CSAs**
 - **Eloi is a commercial alternative to Terre de Liens (citizen backed La Foncière to buy farmland)**
 - Pockets of grassland are a natural paradise but no contact with the surrounding area
 - Shift: third place has no local presence, neglects local struggles
 - Alternative groups haven't built the political strength to truly influence the development of the global system
 - **the dominant system continues to progress:**
 - **Agribashing (invented by the French productivist lobby to denounce their opponents)**
 - **Demeter surveillance cell created by the minister of the interior and run by the military** to monitor activists and campaigners against intensive livestock farming and thus to safeguard the dominant model
 - **governance of the global system is still guided by a handful of private actors - without the participation of citizens, no major transparency or accountability to society.**
 - Eloi is colonizing land with the complicity of elected representatives and agro-industry organisations
 - Xavier Niel (son-in-law of Bernard Arnaud, world's third richest man according to Forbes) paid €300 million for a digital integration system for "sustainable" food distribution
 - Return to the feudal system: land grabs, impossible to own tools of production
 - Freedom from labour laws under the pretext of Amazon's liberating transhumanism

Location: Redon Agglomération



- Population 65,000
- 31 villages
- 3 departments
- 2 regions
- Predominantly rural area



Introduction



- ▶ It's a tense situation in France. Once we are aware of that, we can create something new
- ▶ The organisations I referred to are all respectable although I believe they have failed
- ▶ Not taking stock of this would be to deny the everyday reality we experience in our area
- ▶ Our perspectives are humanist and political via action on the ground

Background

► Failure of transition organisations

- Some are more than 30 years old (Slow Food)
- Confédération paysanne (peasant farmers' association, member of Via Campesina), Slow Food, Pierre Rabhi's hummingbird movement (« les colibris »), agro-ecological solidarity association (SOL), etc.
 - Common denominator: the citizen is the key to transition via their behaviour
 - **Failure to see the concerns of the population**
 - No supply chain logistics
 - Cultural barriers to food
 - Work and family concerns
 - Financial concerns
 - Barrier of representation: poor = malnutrition and incapacity to choose what you eat. True if you don't have access to anything else, false if you're given a choice
 - Eating well is still a matter of privilege

► Failure to unite these organisations: Générations futures (anti-pesticide group), Pour Une Autre PAC (CAP reform group) etc.

- No political opposition
- No discussion with citizens
- No regard for the working culture of actors in the transition



Background

- **Romanticism of farming or food is not political opposition to capital**
 - The romantic vision of nature as essentially bountiful and good (Pachamama) obscures the real issues of pay, working conditions, jobs, living conditions, individual objections.
 - **The media depiction of the ideal world of chefs - as heroes of their own story within a small circle - masks the crude realities of the job**
 - physical and psychological violence,
 - widespread code of silence
 - breaches of labour laws
 - unpaid work, no social life or private life
 - **Romantic semantics are an illusion – celebrity chef Olivier Roellinger’s “delicious revolution” and environmentalist Pierre Rabhi’s “happy modesty”**
 - **Romanticism condemns the construction of relations of political strength by evasion**
 - Romanticism only speaks to a small circle that fancies it is scheming against the dominant model while hoping to find itself on the right side one day, without criticizing.



Background

- Agri-food context in Brittany
 - “Brittany: Land Sacrificed” documentary aired on France 5 TV station
 - Attacks on the professional integrity of the journalists who made the documentary
 - Incursion onto the property of one of journalists and endangering of her animals
 - Insults and intimidation of any opponents of the agro-industry
 - Agro-industry has very significant political and media support
 - Editorial writers
 - Minister of foreign affairs
 - President and vice president of the region
 - Mainstream professional media in the hand of defenders of the industrial model
 - Funding of “Farmers of Brittany” communication tool (“agriculteurs de Bretagne”) to green the agro-industrial model
 - Threats about jobs to avoid transition in regional and local policies
 - Ever widening gap between “anti” and “pro” sides
 - Dialogue is increasingly difficult, prompting fears of “action”



Background

- ▶ **Organizational resources of transition projects**

- ▶ **Too many volunteers**

- ▶ Associations underfinanced

- ▶ Budget envelopes appropriated by large, administration-heavy organisations

- ▶ No long-term support – e.g. for the first five years of a market garden

- ▶ Lack of equipment, which makes working conditions more difficult, or significantly in debt

- ▶ Can't build a house on the farm

- ▶ Large variations in yield are inevitable in the early years

- ▶ Time to regenerate soil in conversion

- ▶ Time to establish a local market

- ▶ Time to adapt to the needs of customers

- ▶ Planting plans are made one year to six months before the harvest

- ▶ Seed work unpaid

- ▶ **Tendering:**

- ▶ **Disconnect between weight of funding (administration) and the reality of the actors (political thinking and action)**

- ▶ **Tools for not making policy decisions.**

- ▶ **Local politicians now manage regional, national or EU funds without the capacity to make policy decisions due to the collapse of funding for villages**



Background

- ▶ **Policy failure**
 - ▶ **Redon €5,000 in support for a population of 65,000 plus 20% of working hours dedicated to food issues**
 - ▶ Brittany region €25 million to upgrade industriel chicken coops compared to €180,000 to run the local heritage breeds federation
- ▶ **Types of local areas (city neighbourhood, rural hamlet, market town, village, municipality, agglomération)**
 - ▶ Land disputes possible between urban and rural areas
 - ▶ **Actors in food producing areas need to stand up for themselves through their capacity to feed cities**
 - ▶ Need for relations of cooperation and not subordination between areas
 - ▶ Residents are not consumers (we can leave that to supermarkets)
 - ▶ **Local dimension (villages, communities of villages) is the last scale capable of speaking to residents, to have them participate in a simulacrum of participative democracy (results of citizens' convention in France were rejected by Macron)**
- ▶ Local areas can have systemic, cross-cutting visions.
 - ▶ **Each local area is specific and has unique assets that are not interchangeable**
 - ▶ Methods of consultancy firms cannot be duplicated from one area to the next.
 - ▶ Methods reassure politicians and endanger local actors
 - ▶ **The local area is the dimension where people still meet**



Background



- Go to local level for direct dialogue, meetings, discussions
- Speak to people rather than organisations
- Share the complexities of people's situations and together find non-violent outcomes
- Biodiversity doesn't interest us if it doesn't preserve our humanity
- Our circle
 - structures, project managers, facilitators, contacts, experts, methods...
 - strategy, Powerpoints, calls to tender, advantage of grants, distortion of the subject...
- Our ambition:
 - mediate, animate, set up, build, invest
 - Production, market gardening, cheesemaking, food processing, cooking, logistics
 - Dialogue, festivals, local areas take the initiative
 - Unite actors: united, residents can wield influence around our shared humanity


Origins of the Consortium

➤ **Nantes Cattle Festival 2018 : Farming and food festival (“Fête de la vache nantaise”)**

- 3 day festival
- Every 4 years
- 1 year of preparation
- 1,500 volunteers (from very different backgrounds, activists and non-activists, various associations)
- One village, population of 800
- 60,000 visitors (from Brittany++, Pays de la Loire++ and all over France)
- One guest region: French Basque country in 2018
- “Peasant University”, a space to discuss food-related topics
- Round tables, professional spaces, multi-disciplinary cooking demonstrations (butchers, market gardeners, chefs, fisherfolk)
- Livestock farmers, chefs, butchers, market gardeners, biologists, fisherfolk, agronomists, journalists
- Embodiment of society's challenges in a place, starting with its inhabitants

Inseparable elements of the transition: climate, environment, social, economy, culture, education, jobs, democracy






Consortium as a Response to Observations & Aspirations 1/2

- **Get past corporatist thinking**
- **Bring together knowledge, skills, initiatives**
- Carry on the work of a people's festival,
 - not wait another 4 years to talk about food
- **Local Food Plan has no concrete application or resources**
 - Put in place by the government (round table talks on food 2018 – 2019)
 - State of play of food: agriculture, food, access, nutrition, logistics, etc.
 - Complex financing from multiple bodies, realised by specialised consulting firms

“It is in confronting the realities of change that the consortium formed and decided to act to transform the territory.”



Consortium as a Response to Observations & Aspirations 2/2

- ▶ **Unite forces on the ground**, energies are dispersed or unknown
- ▶ **Act on the basis of our practices, not ideology** or regulations
 - ▶ Start from our singularities and specificities that may be incompatible with industrial norms and standards
- ▶ **Be part of a dynamic food culture and heritage**
 - ▶ Citizens are part of heritage = Faro Convention (Council of Europe)
 - ▶ Our jobs, heritage, habits, behaviour are changing with changing diets, migration, generations, global warming and biodiversity loss.
 - ▶ We make our culture, it can't be imposed on us by a minister
- ▶ Equip ourselves with the tools we need to take action on food

“It is in confronting the realities of change that the consortium formed and decided to act to transform the territory.”



Consortium Founders

- Pas Bête la fête - Nantes Cattle Festival (Fête de la vache Nantaise)
- L'Université des Sciences et des Pratiques Gastronomiques - USPG
- Federation of Breton Breeds (Fédération des Races de Bretagne)
- Chefs' Slow Food Alliance
- Redon agricultural school (ISSAT)
- Heritage Breeds Conservation Pays de la Loire (CRAPAL, Le Conservatoire des Races animales en Pays de la Loire)
- Redon Agglomération




Challenges: Farming 1/2

- **Support farmers in setting up a resilient model that respects their quality of life:**
 - **Facilitate access to land**
 - Massive numbers of farmers retiring
 - Land monopolized for expansion to the detriment of young small-scale farmers with other models
 - Unequal struggle to acquire land
 - Insecurity due to debts
 - **Train farmers, disseminate good, ethical practices**
 - Need for more training from existing actors
 - Need to rethink training: inter-disciplinary work, tailored to food consumption
 - Funding for training




Challenges: Farming 2/2

- Support farmers in setting up a resilient model that respects their quality of life:
 - **Economic support for farms over time**
 - **High failure rate for non-conventional farms (organic, biodynamic, permaculture)**
 - **Reconversion sometimes difficult, romanticism of farming**
 - **New entrants unfamiliar with local market and territory**
 - **Financial difficulties to access land**
 - “Economic model” fails to examine the difficulties of resilient models - Excel Spreadsheet replaces questions of access to capital, tools of production, and pay
 - Concept of public service in the general interest (seed production)



Challenges: Economic Development in a Rural Area 1/2

- **Background: different, divisive images of transition**
 - **Painful transitions:** the cause is more worthy than the person (self-sacrificing – minimum material conditions unacceptable, insecurity, victimization, heroizing)
 - **Transition presented as a step backwards:** compared to Amish by Emmanuel Macron, presented as return to 1950s by the largest agriculture union in France
 - Digital transition and big data in service to the transition: transhumanist model that has no need for poor people or small farmers, and will emancipate itself by the power of some and the enslavement of the majority
 - **Digital mirage versus cattle and plough**



Challenges: Economic Development in a Rural Area 2/2

➤ Needs identified

- **Relocalize processing tools: vegetable processing, cannery, meat plant, creamery, cheese dairy,**
- **Promote and support research on-farm (cheese dairy) and in the fields (seeds)**
 - Research into indigenous bacteria to build “cheesemaking heritage” in Brittany
 - Seeds, agronomic research = adapt to climate change
- Incentivize quality marks, add to specs in preserving a tenable model of farming
- Support the food supply chain (chefs, cheesemakers, butchers, market gardeners) in valuing the local food, spread the word about local production and processing
- **Enjoy a decent quality of life**
 - **Transition cannot happen by means of sacrificing its actors, we are not supporting heroes or martyrs of the ecological cause**



Challenges: Access to Good, Clean, Fair Food 1/2

- **Enable access for all to “nourishing” food:**
 - Develop a variety of food distribution chains:
 - On-farm sales, grouped purchases, farmers’ shops, local grocers, etc.
 - **Support, raise awareness, value the expertise of citizens**
 - Financial access: who can afford good food
 - **Food dignity:** e.g. donations of junk food refused in France
 - **Cultural access:** based on the community’s history rather than giving orders
 - e.g. 5 fruits and vegetables a day campaign in France = favours the agri-food industry and blames a section of the population = infantilisation
 - **Geographic access:** access as per place of residence and real mobility of residents to procure food



Challenges: Access to Good, Clean, Fair Food 2/2

- **Support for catering in school canteens and businesses:**
 - **Move away from industrial organic sector** favoured by Egalim Act: 50% of products in state-run canteens must be sustainable or bear a provenance or quality mark (including organic products) from 1 January 2022;
 - **Develop local production. Create a food quality authority**
 - **Train, support and value catering staff**
 - Escape a vision of health, safety and nutrition and instead start with the reality for school kitchen staff
 - Support food projects in schools
 - Work with families and teachers



Challenges: Build Community & put our Experiences into Words

- **Need to construct a “we”, to build community, to come together and exchange points of view**
- **Create spaces for debate. Debates only happen in the media or on social media, not locally any more**
 - **Build a network around a celebratory, welcoming space**
 - **Re-establish ties between actors via a multi-purpose shared space**
 - **Promote cooperation between people and food initiatives**
- **Space to talk, and to transform resentment into sublimation**



Challenges: Build Community & put our Experiences into Words

➤ Resentment

- Resentment: *"It's a disease typical of democracy; far less of an authoritarian state. Our relationship to equality is a absolute determinant. Adorno even spoke of repressive egalitarianism, that is, in sum, that our way of feeling equal is to go and check. And that is when, obviously, inequalities explode. And therefore, yes, you have a stronger feeling of resentment today."* Cynthia Fleury Psychoanalyst Philosopher [Overcoming Resentment to Save Democracy with Cynthia Fleury \(franceculture.fr\)](#)
- Resentment: "How not to give into this enemy that sprouts from the deluge of hatred especially on social media? This bitterness that lets us wallow in the role of victim instead of taking action, and think that it's always someone else's fault..."
"Resentment is a rumination. We must be able to accept it in order to then put it behind us it as a bad time." [Cynthia Fleury: The Poison of Resentment - Extract from "La grande librairie en streaming" | France TV](#)



Challenges: Build Community & put our Experiences into Words

➤ Sublimation

- To overcome bitterness and resentment we must open to the universal, access the sublime sublimation, go beyond our inherited identity. The third chapter of the book is called “The Sea”, a metaphor for an open world that allows the imagination and creativity to unfold. [Cynthia Fleury, *Here Lies The Bitter: Healing Resentment*, Gallimard, 2020](#)

Imagination and creativity can never come out of methods, criteria or bureaucracy, but from liberation, emancipation and affirmation of the residents of a place. Redon Sustainable Food Consortium



Objective of the Consortium

- ▶ **Build a Food Transition Hub where each member of the food community brings their knowledge and skills**
- ▶ **Role of the Food Transition Hub: To bring together initiatives, energy and people**
 - ▶ Bring together land access actors and citizens to let the population speak for itself
 - ▶ Facilitate the emergence of human-scale food transition tools
 - ▶ Put together a calendar of food events
 - ▶ Animate and run a democratic space for gatherings, festivals and fine food
 - ▶ Create a shared space for food processing, local grocer, food distribution
 - ▶ Create professional chef training and cooking workshops for the general public
 - ▶ Support innovation and research
 - ▶ “Do It Together” idea incubator



Finances

- ▶ **Study phase: Feasibility study over 12 months starting February 2021**
 - ▶ Budget €69,000 (excluding costs of consortium activities)
 - ▶ Short €7,000 from own funds
- ▶ **Operational phase: consortium to launch concrete operations from February 2021**
 - ▶ Events management: 1 full-time employee
 - ▶ Network animation: 1 full-time employee
 - ▶ Training development : 1 full-time employee
 - ▶ Annual budget €140,000
 - ▶ No funding to date



Background



- This presentation required one day of work since, as in the kitchen, field or cheese dairy we like a job well done, the rights words to be understood as much as possible and to speak to the audience who wants to hear from us according to their interests
- This is part of the political message but also part of the problem. This is all time volunteered which is taken out of paid working hours and personal time



Contacts

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Links

Nantes Cattle Festival ("Fête de la Vache Nantaise")

- ▶ [Fête de la Vache Nantaise 2018 - 7-9 September 2018 in Plessé](#)
- ▶ [La fête de la Vache Nantaise - YouTube](#)

Faro Convention, Council of Europe,

- ▶ [Convention de Faro sur la valeur du patrimoine culturel pour la société \(Convention de Faro, 2005\) \(coe.int\)](#)
- ▶ Chefs' Slow Food Alliance [Alliance des Cuisiniers Slow Food - BON, PROPRE ET JUSTE \(alliance-des-cuisiniers.fr\)](#)
- ▶ Uspg [Accueil | Université des sciences et des pratiques gastronomiques \(uspg.bzh\)](#)
- ▶ Federation of Breton Breeds [Fédération des Races de Bretagne \(races-de-bretagne.fr\)](#)
- ▶ Crapal : [L'ASSOCIATION - CRAPAL - Site officiel](#)
- ▶ ISSAT : [ISSAT Pays de Vilaine» Lycée Professionnel / Apprentissage / Etudes Supérieures et Formation continue](#)
- ▶ Nicolas Bricas [Le tout local est-il un piège ? \(Nicolas Bricas\) \(chaireunesco-adm.com\)](#)
- ▶ Xavier Niel https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2020/11/30/xavier-niel-et-matthieu-pigasse-s-invitent-sur-le-marche-des-biens-de-consommation_6061647_3234.html