

Democracy Workshop

“How can local people make Democracy work?”

Saarema (Estonia) – August 10th, 2013

This workshop, organised in the frame of the international activities of Kodukant XI Estonian Rural Parliament, was co-moderated by Mikk Sarv and Philippe Barret (Forum Synergies) . 20 persons participated.

■ INTRODUCTION

■ *What is it about ?*

As Democracy is a broad concept, we chose to focus on the following topics:

- Participation / civic engagement (in sustainable development of rural areas): i.e. how people involve themselves in processes; how to facilitate participation
- Dialogue / cooperation (for projects) : how to facilitate constructive communication between actors and stakeholders
- Conflict mediation (between stakeholders)



The relations between citizens and authorities



How do local communities organize themselves to solve their problems

■ *Why do we choose to work on these topics?*

Two reasons:

- How can we influence / communicate with our governments to get a “good” application of the new CAP?
- Forum Synergies proposal to support/organize exchanges on participative democracy.

■ *How will we work together during the workshop?*

1st step: from your experience in/vision of this field, choose 5 key-words (or groups of words) - What is important to make democracy work (especially for the implementation of RD regulation) – **(5+5=5 method)**

2nd step: suggest issues, methods, tools.. you would like to share in the next 2 years + commitments / proposals. **(World café method)**

■ **ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS**

■ **1. What is important to make democracy work**

Process of 5+5 =5 (1h30):

- 1) Take 10 min to reflect and choose 5 key-words on what is important to make democracy work (especially for the implementation of RD regulation) – go out and take inspiration from nature!!
- 2) Speak with your neighbour and choose 5 key-words from the 10 key-words : you have 10 min to agree on 5 key-words
- 3) Choose 5 key-words from the 15 words of your table: you have 25 min for this “negotiation process”.
- 4) Restitution in plenary session: Explaining how has been the process, how you managed to find the words and presenting the 5 words (giving complementary information to other groups if needed)

Results

Group 1	Tolerance, listening space Inclusiveness Knowledge and information Process (appropriate)
Group 2	Curiosity (respect, understanding, trust) Focus (be focused, make choice on what you want to achieve) Patience and humour (in difficult situation, a bit of humour make people at ease and get to a resolution more quickly) Organized movement Find right moment (when change is possible) = momentum
Group 3	Sharing stories / experiences (common memories) Oriented towards goals or solutions Create trust Respect needs for...(time, humour etc..) Search balance (between people, needs, goals)
Group 4	Sharing -. Thinking from “my” towards “our” Pine tree needle (Economical) freedom : freedom to act Ant (cooperation) Diversity and sensitivity

■ **2. Suggest issues, methods, tools.. you would like to share in the next 2 years**

Process of world café (1h30)

- 1) There are 4 tables with 4 topics
- 2) Every table will stay with the same topic but you will go to another table if you want after 20 min of exchange.
- 3) One personne will stay at the same table and will be the link between groups, summarising what has been discussed before to newcomers. This secretary will write the main comments, agreements that have been produced by the participants.

Results

A/ Practical suggestions for civic engagement and DIALOGUE with Governments on the New CAP

- identify partners in governments and invite them to discover rural realities
- find common ground within the civic engagement (like civil servants, teachers, organisers: be sure that that people have a grasp of the realities and a same way of looking at things)
- this process is vital to proceed necessary dialogue
- identify partners among recipients of European assistance
- use greater effort to disseminate knowledge of regulations at rural level – understandable
- beware of timetable
- act early

B/ How to inspire your community, officials, governments? How to keep the spirit high? What is my personal commitment I take with me back home for the next 2 years?

- to show officials what community has done
- to involve local officials and governments to community work
- social media through facebook, local's friends
- telling good things and stories instead of bad
- study tours
- focused learning through practical application (innovation)
- governments could make clear that place where local are living is good
- to find sparkling people outside our community
- build up and use contacts between colleagues in different areas
- what does policy means?

Commitments

- ask questions (so people start thinking, giving ideas)
- create a space for dialogue
- translations between governments, community and officials
- organise Scottish rural parliament / European rural parliament
- activities for all the community to talk, think, act what will people together
- to find common spirit in non-formal way
- to give officials shared ideas, solutions, to offer substantial source
- awards for done work
- to ask officials if they need help, what or how we can help or do
- to organise a project to learn best practice in organising rural parliaments
- small achievements can carry on local spirit
- burning spirits should be valued, supported with other skills.

C/ Issues related with democracy you would like to deepen, work on in the future

Example of issues inspired from the 1st activity: *which knowledge do we want (only formal or also local, empirical one ; how to deal with unorganised groups, how to search balance when groups do not have the same “weight”.*

- process of governance (starts at local level): out of representatives, how people share ideas, are active and implement actions by themselves.
- to develop methods “to shorten” the distance between “grass-roots” and “Brussels” (f.e ERP, Nat RP)
- participative democracy to representative democracy: how to improve the links / trust
- involvement and feedback from European and national level
- respect the different cultures (heritages) and being cooperative (linked to majority/minority)
- how to bring democracy to youth (how to make youth participate)
- learning democratic processes in crisis time (democratic process needs time)

D/ Experiences, methods and tools (for democracy) you would like to share in the future with other European groups.

- rural parliaments as different events in different context (European, Latvian, Estonian)
- works shadow day : decision-makers open their professional life for s.o from NGO for 1 day to share. Proposal to have a “village day for MEPs” to go on the ground.
- awards (National+local) (Village of the Year, Hero of the village, written stories)
- photo messages /video – phone interviews with smartphones
- cross sectorial coalitions
- methods for democratic processes like Open space workshop
- talk about success stories
- active visits: visitors analyse strengths / weaknesses on local reality and develop proposals for next steps.
- international exchanges of organisations
- County elections “stand behind your candidate” as example of process for decision making. (Estonia)
- local radios with farming news (Ireland)
- Internet platform of best practices, problems and solutions (Holland)
- open calls for ideas on internet

■ CONCLUSION

We will use these results to develop Forum Synergies activities on the democracy topic next year and will try to build up proposals inspired by your ideas.