



Internal support for coping with complexities and being an agronomic adviser

WP3 – Improve the methodology
Outcome n°16 a

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SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT

English

To actually reduce pesticides while at the same time improving income and working conditions, agricultural advisers should be able to build innovative systemic responses with farmers.

The observations and analyses made in the eight countries represented in the New Advisers project, showed that it is not sufficient for an adviser to only be an expert and uses the tools adapted to co-construction with farmers or with peers, s/he also needs relational skills and personal resources that we called 'internal support', taking this term from Gestalt therapy.

To develop this internal support which is a lever for coping with reality, experimentation, creativity, interaction with peers and getting feedback about oneself, development processes should all also be available for each adviser through training and management.

In this paper, we propose ways for the development of internal support, applied to the intellectual, methodological and relational dimensions.

French

Pour réellement réduire les pesticides tout en améliorant revenu et conditions de travail des agriculteurs, les conseillers agronomiques doivent être capables de construire avec les agriculteurs des réponses systémiques innovantes.

Les observations et analyses faites dans les 8 pays présents dans le projet New Advisers ont montré qu'il n'est pas suffisant que le conseiller soit un expert et dispose des outils de co-construction avec les agriculteurs ou avec les pairs, il a aussi besoin de compétences relationnelles et des ressources personnelles que nous avons appelées 'support interne', reprenant ainsi un terme issu de la Gestalt thérapie.

Pour développer ce support interne, levier d'ajustement à la réalité du vivant, l'expérimentation, la créativité, les interactions avec les pairs et les retours sur soi, les processus de développement doivent trouver place au niveau de chaque conseiller, dans les dispositifs de formation et de management.

Dans cette note, nous proposons des pistes de développement, appliquées aux dimensions intellectuelles, méthodologiques et relationnelles du support interne.

German

Um den Pestizideinsatz reduzieren und gleichzeitig die Einkommens- und Arbeitsbedingungen des Landwirts zu verbessern, müssen landwirtschaftliche Berater gemeinsam mit den Landwirten innovative systemische Lösungen aufbauen.

Die Beobachtungen und Analysen aus acht am New Advisers Projekt vertreten Ländern zeigen, dass es nicht ausreicht, wenn der Berater Fachwissen und Beratungswerkzeuge zur Ko-Konstruktion mit den Landwirten oder Kollegen mitbringt. Er/sie braucht auch zwischenmenschliche Fähigkeiten und persönliche Ressourcen, die wir 'interner Support' genannt haben, nach einem Begriff aus der Gestalttherapie.

Um diesen internen Support durch Ausprobieren, Kreativität, Interaktion mit Kollegen, auf die Arbeitswirklichkeit anzupassen, Experimentieren, Kreativität, Interaktion mit Gleichaltrigen und Selbstreflektion zu entwickeln, sollte der Entwicklungsprozess bei jeder Berater in Fortbildung und Management integriert werden.

In diesem Papier schlagen wir Wege für die Entwicklung des internen Supports vor, die angepasst an die intellektuellen, methodologischen und Beziehungsebenen sind.

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INTRODUCTION

From our collaborative work on the Leonardo- Transfer of Innovation project *New Advisers* we have drawn is that some fundamental changes are emerging in different places, but at near enough the same time and are taking similar directions.

For various reasons, the search for ways to try and reduce the use of pesticides is interpreted differently from one country to another. This variation on a local, individual and collective (small groups) scale is in practice an issue for agricultural advisers and trainers. Farmers' activities (land or animal based) are shaped by the training or advice they receive.

The focus of our work in this project has been on how advisers and trainers can adopt ways to address the issue of reducing pesticides, and how both individual and collective solutions can be developed. In this document, we want to clarify some significant fundamental elements that have emerged.

1. THE NEED TO GO BEYOND AN 'EXPERT' APPROACH

Agricultural adviser: a job where analysis is deeply connected to action

Agricultural advisers have to accompany farmers or groups of farmers, provide them with information and advice, make recommendations or suggestions and help them make choices and take action. Today, as in the past, these activities take various forms (training, group or individual advice, writing technical notes ...) and they exist in a variety of settings: private or collective advice, activities through publications, experiments, demonstrations... Advisers technically adapt the information, observations and recommendations so that the advice given can adjust to the practical situation and needs of the client. But these activities carried out by the adviser do not come from the primary sector (use of natural resources), nor the secondary sector (processing of raw materials from the primary sector), they are part of the tertiary sector which means that activities related to speech and attitude are particularly significant (information, opinions, recommendations ...) and that the interaction between people is also very important (organising and providing information, accompanying ...).

Therefore in practice, a more philosophical issue must be considered: the relationship between the advice itself (with its existing constraints and processes which need to be considered) and the thought process around the advice (the reflection that regulates, directs and redirects the advice on a very short or sometimes very long time scale). In the last fifty years, production in agriculture has undergone significant changes. In most countries, the advisers were the lynchpin for the policies made in the 1960s, and led to the development of the agriculture we know today. But parameters have changed: there are more effective techniques (for example using GPS guidance systems instead of "following one's nose"), some restrictions in terms of the size of farms and the human resources available (owing to the decreasing population in rural areas) and more commonly accessible use of scientific protocols (e.g. kits for soil analysis). Developments such as these have increased the understanding of a variety of techniques within the primary agricultural sector (farmers) as well within the secondary sector (local processing of raw materials). Furthermore, information is also much more accessible with the development of ICT.

Advisers' activities have therefore changed, focussing particularly now on how the advice must adapt, in the light of such restrictions and technical advances.

An “expert” approach is no longer sufficient

How is this change reflected in the approach of the adviser? During the 1960s, being a ‘communicator’ was seen as an adviser’s principal role. At that time, their activities consisted of identifying relevant data and applying (or developing) a model. They therefore adopted an overarching point of view and their role was interpreted as one of an “expert” in activities in the field (conducted by the farmer). According to this method, a scientifically validated truth is believed to be a universal one, and not just true for one given time and place characterised by specific conditions. If this were so, a solution could be provided in all cases: the perceived reality could be divided into homogenous sections, scientific resources associated with rational thought could be identified and then the relevant solutions could be applied. As soon as the environment seemed to be “under control”, the agricultural adviser would have the impression that s/he had done a good job: thanks to him/her, for example if the disease of an infested plot had been identified and sprayed with the appropriate treatment, the reality on the ground justified the advice given, as the disease was cured.

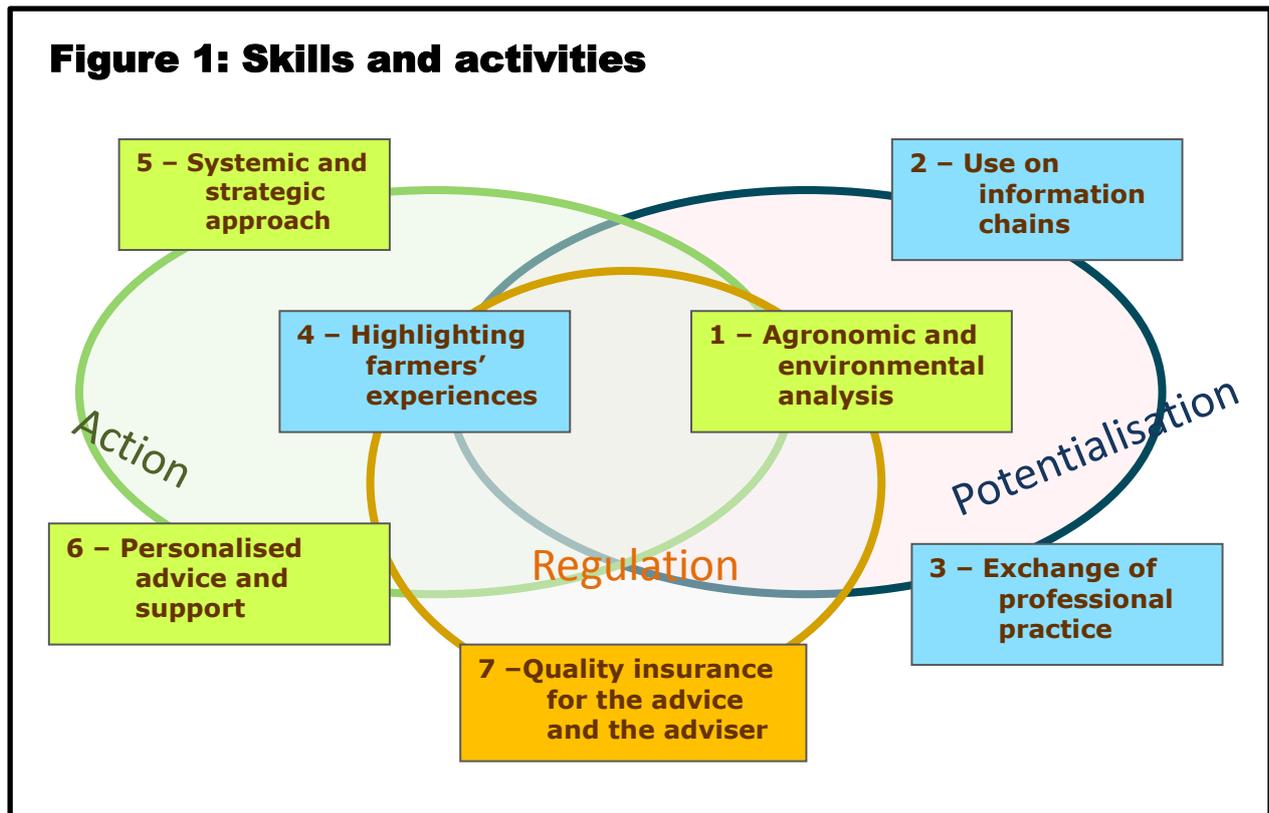
Nevertheless, over time the limitations of this “expert” approach have come to light, even if it has given results from which we still benefit today. Indeed, the situation is never totally “under control” because the information remains incomplete (and, moreover, it is evolving) and because the small elements which are overlooked or neglected by the rational models have gradually caused new types of problems to emerge. Dividing up reality into homogenous sections is not altogether possible (for example, a product used in one place could end up in a nearby stream), and the interactions between these pseudo-homogenous sections disrupt the balance of the overall reality. In other words, reality remains partly unpredictable, for example: recurrent weeding issues cannot be solved by the usual methods of spraying, there are legal restrictions on increasing doses, available energy resources are decreasing, pesticides are found in food products, etc., leading to other problems, e.g. health, pollution or economic.

An adviser has to think in terms of processes and complex interactions. Sometimes several contradictory aspects intermingle. It is not important to find THE most logical solution, but a path, a way forward while considering as many factors as possible. Applying different thought processes used in industry (with a reflection on ‘things’, on ‘objects of thought’, which can be passively manipulated) has reached its limit and it is no longer possible to ignore the heterogeneity and the complex diversity of reality and people’s various different ways of doing things. Advisers still have to use observations of what happens in reality in agriculture as a starting point, and take into account production activities, but they must also now incorporate technical and strategic issues, issues concerning contribution to land management as well as in terms of lifestyle or society’s demands.

Agricultural advisers today: taking account of the complexity of reality

In practice therefore, advisers must bear in mind the whole range of relevant information available which may come from very different areas: local issues, political decisions, professional organisations and of course environmental constraints (eg. water quality), the sometimes conflicting expectations of society (low cost yet high quality production, rapid changes to the economic or political situation) ... Furthermore, the options and personal intentions of the adviser and of the person receiving the advice might also come into play, as well as the justification the choices made in the light of their consequences, which comes only with hindsight. Decision-making, adjusting advice to reality and representing consequences of all actions are therefore becoming more and more important to enable the most sensible possible choices to be made.

A consensus among the various partners was reached from the very beginning of *New Advisers* about the evolution of advisers’ responsibilities to deal with the complexity of reality. Evidence of this agreement can be seen in how the ‘Summary’ of advisers’ activities and skills was established in November 2010 during the preparatory meeting.

Figure 1: Skills and activities

This diagram shows advisers' activities which must include certain skills. All of the items describe complex processes which are contextualised geographically and in terms of time. Reflection and action often go hand in hand, and relevant information comes from both from the external environment and from within the adviser's personal experience, depending on his/her personality and life choices (his/her values, for example). Diversity is therefore not only a matter of soil and climate conditions, it is also a matter of interpersonal relationships. Under these conditions, it is much more difficult to apply the "expert" approach: testing, getting results and then re-applying them.

What guides the adviser in his/her activities? For example, using which criteria will s/he select the information to lead to an analysis (activities 1) or promote a particular farmer's experience (activities 4)? Should the adviser adhere completely to the policy of the organisation s/he works for? In some countries, advisers are grouped in a separate service with its own specific viewpoint, in other countries, advisers' activities happen within a framework outside of advising, which, also has its own perspectives and goals. Sometimes the main aim is a commercial one: the advice given is partially or fully included in the purchase of a product or a service. Sometimes the main aim is related to the public service sector and the mutualisation of methods between farmers, this is often with government and/or professional funding and given a direction which corresponds to national public policy. How does the adviser take account of these parameters given that their advice (information provided, actions suggested or defined) should be useful for the client and appropriate to the individual context?

How does the adviser (and the organisation s/he work for) know that they have given "good" advice (represented in the diagram as "quality insurance for the advice and the adviser" = activities 7)? Are they dependent on the choices which they do not control such as political choices, economic requirements...? In such a complex environment, the behaviour model is not sufficient, personal options and observations are affected by the relationship with the environment where the soil, weather conditions, farming strategies, regulatory constraints, etc. play a role.

Renewing an activity using practices which have always existed: a challenge for the future

But have real advising practices ever really followed a particular model? The French project "Conseillers Demain" (2010/2012) showed that when it comes to the reality of the relationship in the field, agricultural advisers have never worked exclusively using the "expert" approach promoted as it was described fifty years ago. Also, since time immemorial, a rather randomly constructed method has been handed down informally, developed by individuals over time and put into practice empirically based on facilitation skills. This is the co-construction approach, which existed in various forms fifty years ago (debates, study trips, experiments ...) and which has probably always existed.

This way of working together responds to the need to adapt and evolve taking into account the intentions of one another and it comes about when participants test, question, exchange and "build together", agreeing on a way of working and bringing with them diverse views. Are there any advisers today who have not experienced this kind of situation and the strength of its results? With this attitude, the advisers are not "experts", but they still use their skills as an agronomist, not only relating to plants, but also in their relationship with other people: they are not exclusively focused on "plant and/or animal biodiversity" but they also take advantage of the "biodiversity of human behaviour" with an attitude that allows a process of co-construction.

In seeking ways to improve training and include these new aspects of advising in training modules, the *New Advisers* project was designed to transfer various aspects of successfully implemented processes from different partners. So how does the link between the two ways of operating work? That is to say between the "expert" approach and the other which allows for a process of co-construction? *New Advisers* chose to test some training tools which can involve different ways of operating and in which the process of co-construction can be fruitful. Three tools that have already been used by some of the partners in training were suggested for use: "Clear Vision", "Discussion groups" and "Problem-based Learning", where there is a large range of attitudes available so that the adviser/trainer may adjust their approach according to the situation.

2 - HAVING BENEFIT FROM THE RESOURCES WHICH ARE RARELY USED

How can we ensure a significant reduction in the use of pesticides in the practices, and the fields, of European farmers? There seems to be a consensus about the overall and final goals, but not about how to guide the first practical steps on a local level. How can we begin to take this path? What other issues will we find along the way? The most important issues are not always those which arise immediately, unforeseen or even unimaginable elements often arise and they must also be considered. In such a context, the co-construction approach which has always been empirically and intuitively adopted by agricultural advisers seems to be an appropriate one. It is therefore important to understand it more specifically and consciously so that it can then be developed more widely.

Advising/training tools to go beyond an 'Expert' approach

With certain advising/training tools, the facilitator has some flexibility in how they organise their time and how they conduct their work. *New Advisers* has looked particularly into three tools. These tools form a practical framework where people can have an open approach to situations and which allows them to "collectively discuss to find ones' own way" giving everyone the chance to construct and develop their own interpretation of a situation. Everyone can then make choices without relying on his/her automatic thoughts and reactions. Of course, the relevance of a choice can only be measured with hindsight; nevertheless, taking the time to discuss, clarify and assess the consequences of the different options avoids limiting the solutions to 'simplifying' shortcuts. With this method, the individual and collective points of view

are widened. The co-construction approach, which enables “giving advice” stimulates the capacity to make autonomous choices while still giving support.

The three tools tested during the project *New Advisers* were “Clear Vision”, Problem based Learning, Discussion Groups. They allow a facilitator to develop relational aspects (attitude/approach) which means that everyone can participate using their own experience and can give her/his opinion even if they only have a limited view of the overall situation. “Clear Vision” or in French “Y voir Clair” is an outline for a discussion with one person (farmer/adviser or group/ adviser). The adviser’s attitude is as important as the ‘field’ of investigation in question because “Clear Vision” is used to make clear markers which can reorganise a given situation. Problem Based Learning (PBL) is an 11-step training session which brings the participants to form teams and work together to solve a problem-situation. The group advances as each member shares his/her viewpoints and knowledge with the others; this allows all of the participants to discover new concepts in a direct manner, being encouraged by the needs related to the problem. In Discussion Groups, the participants have a common interest which acts as a common through-line which causes them to interact with one another and with the facilitator, to share with each other and learn from their differences.

When a facilitator (adviser or trainer) adopts a co-construction approach, s/he puts part of their energy into supporting the in-depth understanding of the person in front of them, while respecting their personality. This means the facilitator must think about technical aspects, but also about **the dynamics of each of the people and the cohesion in the group**. That is to say, things which seem to “come naturally” for one person can lead to tensions and controversies for another because constraints, needs, habits and interests can be very different. The facilitator therefore has to manage an antagonism or conflict, making sure that nobody feels humiliated or mocked, and that everyone respects the views or intentions of the others. The use of pesticides, from this point of view, is emblematic: no one is indifferent to it.

Additionally, when a facilitator adopts the co-construction approach s/he must be aware of him/herself and his/her own feelings, they can allow him/her to monitor a situation via his/her perception of the infra-verbal communication, while remaining attentive to the logic of what is being said. The facilitator must be convinced of the relevance of this method so that s/he will put energy into understanding the intricacies of the approach and so that s/he will agree to take the time to try and integrate it in her/his work. The fact that this co-construction approach is already more or less spontaneously used in an informal and intuitive manner by advisers and trainers therefore becomes an asset. By discussing spontaneous practices, they become aware of a way of doing and being, and therefore can refine them. The change is rooted in what already exists and begins to make sense.

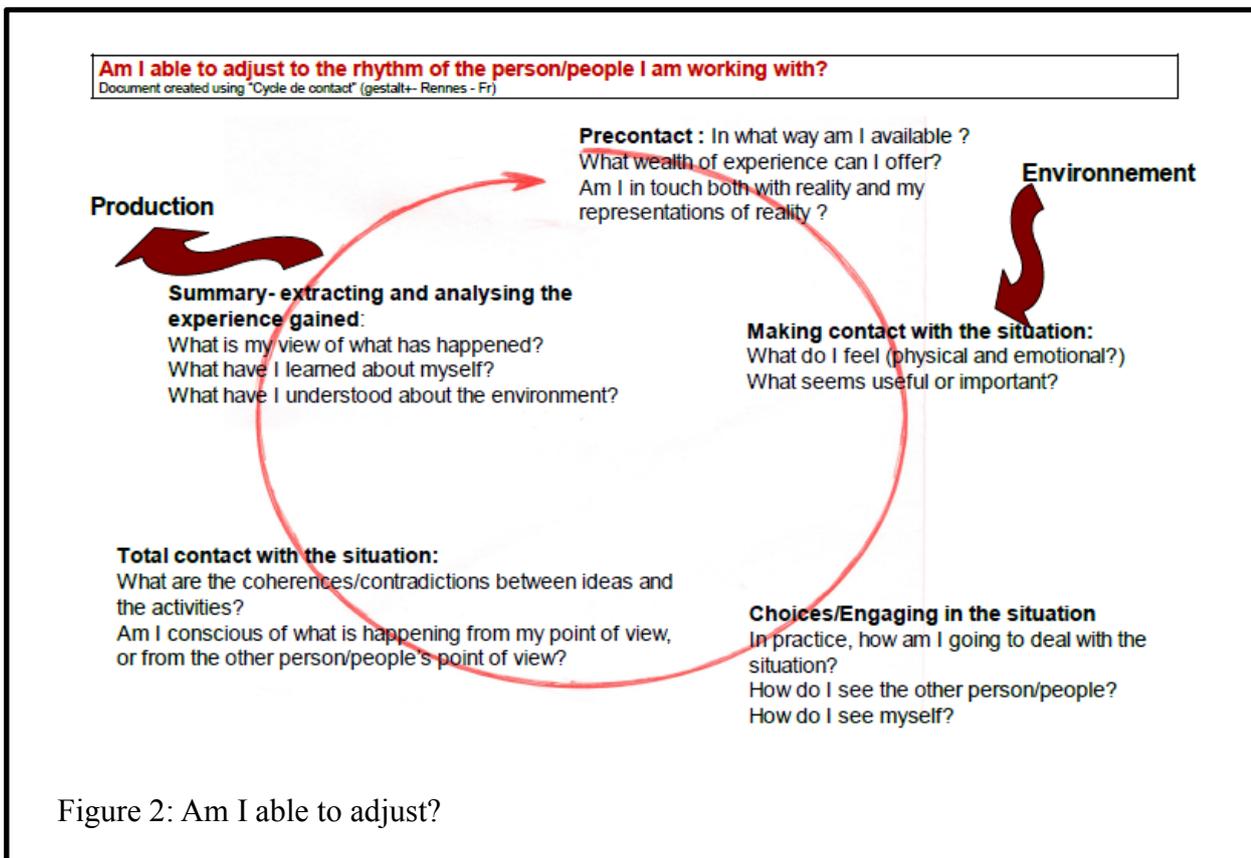
“Giving advice”: points of alert to ensure its use

Consciously installing relationship modalities which allow participants to be able to “give advice” means asking them to find her/his own style of facilitation by taking account of what is non-verbally expressed. In order for this to happen, there is no other alternative but to look at the “engine room” of the relationship. Does everyone feel safe enough to risk speaking, to they dare pronounce their own point of view when could be challenged, nuanced, redirected? Is everyone sufficiently convinced of the value of her/his own experience? Is s/he in a quandary preventing him/her from finding a satisfactory solution? Is it possible to “lose” time breaking down a situation in order to identify alternatives to those which come immediately to mind? In retrospect we see that often details or small elements emerge from debates which involve various points of view, these details can lead to an outcome which was initially unpredictable. All of this means controlling and guiding the situation at the same time as letting things take their course.

Furthermore, a co-construction approach is not necessarily in the moment very spectacular. A shift in approach was therefore made in *New Advisers* by the project partners. After having decided which tools to use and having written the user-guides for these advising/training tools, a roadmap was developed so that the three tools could be tested in different situations,

different climates, different professional cultures, different institutional organisations. The original idea was that this would give enough data so that a statistical analysis could be made.

But for various practical reasons (lack of time or time constraints, unpredictable weather conditions, etc.), half way through the project (February 2013) fewer tests than expected had been carried out. Too little time was left to carry out enough further tests to draw valid conclusions. Those present at the third project seminar addressed this reality (incorrect predictions) by collecting the first results from the agreed way of working (the recipients appreciated the way we work, but for the facilitator the use of the specific attitude/approach seemed difficult or uncomfortable). This led to a re-organisation of the observation methodology to include more qualitative questions on what makes the advising/training more productive. This reorganisation was only able to take place in the group of partners because of **the cohesion and mutual trust that existed between them.**



This episode only confirms the elements validated elsewhere on the co-construction approach: there is no fixed rule to refer to as the installation of the 'safe space' can be set up but it is not automatic. This safe space can only be developed if the participants are motivated to join it. The quality of the link is often constructed from one or more tiny aspects (triggers which are sometimes miniscule), which seem to be echoed while remaining specific to each person. We also know that some particular care can be taken in order to help ensure that the whole process is "woven" tightly enough together (see above Figure 2: "Am I able to adjust?").

This allows the adviser to become a facilitator-moderator, and also often means that everyone feels safe enough to accept and take on-board other people's points of view; they can understand another point of view enough to accept it, without the pressure from outside activating unsuitable defence mechanisms...

The attitude or approach to facilitation is therefore central. How can the facilitator feel safe, feel legitimate and at the same time be aware of her/his limits, let others speak while keeping his position, adjust and self-adjust? The more s/he is aware of her/his own way of operating as

well as those of others in facilitation situations, the more s/he can enhance his/her possibilities and do her/his best for the others given the complexity of the situation. Over time, s/he builds his/her own way of leading a co-construction approach. One of the challenges today is ***to do this more consciously***.

Effects on the quality of work: the issue of development

This is not only about relationship techniques. From our wealth of experience, we are now aware of one thing: engaging in a co-construction approach leads us to look at our professional activity in general and in concrete terms. What mental, emotional, social, philosophical attitudes silently underpin and organise our professional activities? Seeking to co-construct brings back to the surface all of these deeper issues making them appear through points of view expressed or understood, decisions to be made...

In this way, while reducing internal tensions, the co-construction approach allows everyone to express their own complexity and find support to be able to move forward. For example, everyone gets that feeling of “oneself doing a good job” from his/her interpretations of the dimensions of the professional activity, that the actual activities contribute to its deconstruction/reconstruction. However, due to the increasing complexity of the situations they face, everyone feels more frequently caught in situations where they doubt their credibility, personal coherence, their interpretations of what is “good” or “fair” in terms of the various constraints and imperatives that exist. In practice, for example what should one say to a farmer who is usually very motivated by the feeling of being a pioneer and says that mechanical weed control for him feels like “going backwards”, he does not want to feel humiliated in front of his neighbours? The co-construction approach seems to act as a frame which lets enough of a feeling of security develop so that an individual and collective decision can be built in accordance to both facilitator and farmer’s personalities.

Let us now look at the job of agricultural adviser or trainer in the various agricultural ‘fields’. Issues relating to the internal tensions of the individual (pathogens linked to accumulation and duration) become “psychosocial risks” for a profession. However, studies on work and the workplace) has now amply demonstrated that the meaning of work (and so the prevention of these risks) is linked, among other things, to the satisfaction felt from the quality of a “job well done”, in terms of the production and relationships. The co-construction approach, giving enough space and time for the underlying professional activities to emerge, therefore becomes a means of improving this quality. This comes to loosen the tyranny of a purely economic management of a situation (looking at a “performance” with the financial aspect as the sole indicator) in order to also include the quality of the human experience, the quality of existing together. Therefore the co-construction approach contributes to taking care of the “professional tool” that both adviser/trainer and farmer represent.

Professions in change

Working and clarifying what underpins the activities of professionals reorganises, as a result, the relationships that they have with others. It also affects the organisation of groups of professional activities where people share ways of doing things, points of view, significations, etc. Without really being aware of it, most often, people are actually caught in the social modes that shape them. The social modes they are used to fix certain aspects for them, but they also have some autonomy with regards to certain aspects. Taking the time to discuss the work we do, what underlying aspects exist, the co-construction approach contributes therefore to the internal coherence of a profession and to its evolution.

Stabilities and differences (Y. Clot 2008) exist, in fact, in various aspects of professional life: in the coherence maintained with oneself, in ones relationships with colleagues and the people higher in the professional hierarchy. They also play a part in the link with ones’ own representation of the activity within a collective memory. With the idea that all kinds of professional situations may give rise to a process of co-construction, a process of collective evolution of all professions becomes apparent, emerging not only from a formal definition, but

also from real practice experienced in everyday life. Is this movement relevant in the long term for the advising and training profession? It is perhaps too early to give an answer...

By revisiting the place that each person takes in the decision-making process, ***the co-construction approach therefore puts people at the centre of the process of the evolution of social groups***, which leads us to imagine that it could probably be transferred to deal with problems other than the reduction of the use of pesticides, such as that of an evolution of these professions. We can therefore imagine all sorts of adjustments and self-education that can be developed out of normal situations by taking a creative perspective on all sorts of situations. By taking account of the existence of a certain brain plasticity which humans have all of their lives (which is validated by neuroscience research), there is therefore no longer any age limit for those who want to get involved!

3 – FROM SKILLS TO INTERNAL SUPPORT

A rupture between ways of practicing and thinking

The objective of actively reducing pesticide use marks a rupture between the usual ways of practicing and thinking in agriculture. Up until now, the increase in the advantages and the sanitary quality of pesticides has been linked to chemistry and genetics, and within this logic, science provides direct solutions. This has created a form of dependence to this external support. A part of the rupture therefore comes from breaking away from such dependence; the practices and the way of thinking we are used to. Agriculture is complex because it has to deal with reality. Reducing pesticides makes it less artificial but the thought and action processes become all the more complex. In practice, farmers, advisers and trainers need to be more pro-active: finding ways to be more respectful of the environment while at the same time responding to local constraints, and also a reflection on one's own practices.

In fact, the future remains unclear: dealing with technical constraints hinders the process without hinting to which way is best and a way which seems the best one at one moment could later turn out to be disastrous. This requires people to be aware of the mass of different information, including the signs which may predict a situation change. In reality, a person who reacts to and reflects on their own action now becomes central. This calls into consideration the organisation of advice and training: using experience, how is action and an operative thought combined for such a person?

In the current context, any changes become a collective risk as change concerns both farmer and adviser/trainer. They may feel more apprehensive than enthusiastic with regards to such a risk because, as well as practical issues, there is also danger to their own legitimacy. Even if a metamorphosis is ideal in the long term, economic issues, traditional values and common social norms can allow the status quo to remain as it is in the short term.

“Skills”: insufficient markers for coping with reality

Usually, when a person has acquired a skill (cause), he/she is capable of carrying out a particular action (consequence): the skills form a range of adapted knowledge, savoir-faire and attitudes which are used in a specific context. All of this needs to be clarified, but the skills defined such as this suppose that the environment stays stable and that an outside observer aims at an observable result within a sufficiently short enough delay. The skills when defined in this way do not entirely correspond to the approach that we are in need of today: one that is well adapted to agriculture and material production, they lose their relevance when it is one particular person reacting/reflecting upon a given context:

1. the context is constantly evolving;
2. the adviser/trainer is therefore a person who feels more or less safe in a given context and so exploits his/her own potential depending on how familiar they are with the topic, the attitudes of the person/people in front of them, etc.;
3. the finality is defined by the negative (decreasing use of...).

Indeed, in order for a person (farmer, adviser, trainer...) to start transforming their usual ways of doing things, it is essential that this person is able to imagine what it would be like to change it, to feel safe enough to do it and that this new way makes sense for him/her. The information and support that must be taken into account can be found both outside and inside of oneself. The notion of "internal support" (used by Joseph C. Zinker in the creative processes approach in a different context to training) seems to help the person clarify what is currently asked for of advisers and trainers.

Internal support, corresponds, in fact, to internal resources, ie. knowledge of one's self and the way it operates, one's body awareness, one's system of values. Internal support, which contributes to the creation of self-confidence, internal coherence, and personal integrity, allows a person to face difficult situations and get past them. Feeling involved in various situations, even stressful ones, is a good indicator of internal support because it opens up possibilities. It qualifies "how" an activity could be realised but does not qualify its performance.

Spontaneous adaptation to reality and informal internal support

In a rather informal manner, internal support is more or less linked to "transversal skills" in the stable environment of the activities of an organisation working on technical production. In the context of relations with the reality, IALB, partner in *New Advisers*, also turned towards the development of internal support. They were faced with the question of the evolution of the agricultural advising profession and the development of a certification system called CECRA which is under construction (Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas), "*the consultant must be able to evaluate the personality and the situation of the client correctly in order to meet him respectfully and to accompany him emphatically for the duration of the consulting process*" (in CECRA - Requirement for consultants - consultants customer relationship). In the *New Advisers* project, we created an example of how internal support can be developed by using body language (see outcome 16 - c)

Therefore, in the *New Advisers* project, we can only recommend a similar form of development of internal support for advisers and trainers. We know that the various "elements" of this internal support develop so well that they are intentionally thought about in various contexts and this leads to a reflexive process in collaboration with others. It is a way to support and redirect the movement of one's self and others.

- a. the foundations of one's own action (what inspires me in this activity?)
- b. one's own usual ways of operating (in connection to one's personality)
- c. one's own intentions in the given context and situation
- d. what is considered, from one's own point of view, as unacceptable or something to develop

Indeed, in a complex context, there is rarely only one path to choose, but there are several possible ways between which one must strategically choose one's own path and be able to argue why this option was taken.

Internal support: a personal coping mechanism with reality

Internal support often develops spontaneously and informally in a situation. It will therefore be important to be aware of what is happening in terms of real activities in order to refine and employ the operability of the existing internal support.

Some aspects of internal support are *intellectual*, even they arise from experience:

1. developing the ability to synthesise in order to gather information from a situation and combine it with one's own wealth of experience and knowledge
2. dealing with complex problems taking account of the real conditions and the person in the given situation
3. developing analytical skills to facilitate reasoned decision-making

Other aspects of internal support are *methodological*:

- seeking to gain relevance in the working methods implemented
- taking the time to explore the complexity of situations when it is necessary, in terms of

- differences, contradictions, synergies, recursive loops, uncertainty/risk/choices ...
- using the available IT resources while remaining aware of the way computers establish fixed models
- developing the independence to be able to work and take initiatives while being sufficiently responsible and aware of the possible consequences
- exercising critical judgment, especially with regard to ethics
- implementing a synthesis of thinking & reacting

Lastly, other aspects of internal support are *relational* aspects (personal and social) behaviour, attitudes

- updating one's own potential to monitor and anticipate changes
- communicating appropriately and with sufficient emotional stability, through verbal and non-verbal channels
- providing the basis for good contact refining one's sensitivity and empathy in respect for others
- cooperating as best as one can with others in a process of co-construction
- respecting each other enough so as to not to push the other person into making a decision (making them responsible)
- be sufficiently aware of one's own relational processes so that they can be discussed

Although this list is not exhaustive, these elements of internal support seem likely to make most realisations of "skills" possible as they were highlighted several times by advisers and trainers in a questionnaire (meeting in Paris - May 2013). Within this dynamic of internal support, we can integrate Life-Long Learning and it seems appropriate to continue the reflection on it.

CONCLUSION

The diversity of situations between countries has probably made it more difficult to transfer experience tools, but it allowed us to question farm advisory and training, their necessary evolution in a complex environment and the relationship between tools, skills and people. Successive surveys, testimonials and work carried out during the seminars confirmed that efficient and innovative advice cannot be limited to expertise. Beyond the skills and abilities that the New Advisers project helps to define, we have identified a particular and personal resource that we called the 'internal support', which expresses itself in the intellectual, methodological, relational dimensions (relationship to others and oneself).

We have emphasized the usefulness of developing in every adviser and trainer own internal support, through experimentation and questioning between peers, creativity and awareness of references and mechanisms at work.

The final results and recommendations of the project will follow up this work by proposing the operational modalities to reveal and develop the internal support of each adviser and trainer in agronomy.

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