The Roles of Local Organisations in Agroecology and Food Sovereignty
Food, Agriculture, Environments and Livelihoods
Local organisations and collective structures

The Medicinal Plant Collective

The Video Collective

The Native Potatoes Collective
Local adaptive management of food-producing environments

- The use of sophisticated environmental indicators to track and respond to change
Box 4.6. Environmental and cultural indicators used by farmers to determine planting times and manage crop cultivars in Burkina Faso

Plants
- Leaf fall of *Tamarindus indica*, *Butyrospermum paradoxum* (karite)
- Flowering of *Sclerocarya birrea* (Nobga), *Lannea microcarpa* (Sagba), *Pterocarpus lucens* (Kumbrsaka)
- Yellowing and leaf fall of *Lannea acida* (Sambnutuga)
- Appearance of *Stylochiton hypogea* (Wule) in the river beds
- Maturity and fruiting of *Lannea microcarpa* (Sagba), *Sclerocarya birrea* (Nogba), *Butyrospermum paradoxum*
- Ripening, drying and souring of fruits of *Lannea microcarpa* (Sagba), *Sclerocarya birrea* (Nogba)

Birds
- Guinea fowls laying eggs
- Some birds (Taaba) building their nests
- Storks returning (migrating back) to the village
- South-north migration of Silokoe and Klimba birds
- Sparrowhawk crying continuously (repeatedly)

Animals
- Lizards shedding skin
- Toads going to the bush from ponds
- Toads croaking incessantly

Rituals
- Predictions of rainmakers
- Traditional lunar calendar
- Spiritual leaders, rituals at planting and harvest time

Stars and Weather
- Appearance of the constellation of the six stars in the west
- Change in the normal trajectory of the sun
- Wind blowing from the east
- Temperatures warming up
- First clouds appearing
- Continuous thundering

Source: Sawadogo, 2001
Local adaptive management of food-producing environments

- The use of diversity to reduce risks and mitigate impacts of natural disasters and long-term environmental change
Nested local organisations and networks
Soil fertility management by local organisations in Telengana region, Andhra Pradesh, India

Dryland farmers have developed cropping practices suited to the harsh climate of semi-arid regions.

Keeping livestock is central to the stability of dryland agriculture.

Farmers with bullocks can time their activities to get the best yields.

Sheep penning: Farmers create microenvironments of high soil fertility.

Farm yard manure is the preferred soil fertility enhancement practice in semi-arid regions.

Vermicompost application is one of the emerging alternatives to chemical fertilisers.

Women farmers mapping the soils in their village and the crops that grow on them.

By mixing crops, the farmers ensure resilience and further enhance soil fertility.

Diverse cropping and diverse fodder.

An example of fertility based crop planning. Here, Niger, a dryland oil seed crop, is grown on low fertile soil.

Women farmers favour a diversity of crops to optimise the use of their land and will mix crops with varying root systems to prevent competition over nutrients and moisture.

There is growing consumer demand for organic food in markets.

Source: Cooke, 2009.
Local organisations and people’s access to land and food

- Locally-developed rules for resource access and use
- Local organisations and access to land
- Local organisations regulating access to food
Local organisations and economic exchange

- Emphasis on market based solutions to meet food and other human needs - no or little thinking outside this box

- Focus on *money* based markets overlooks importance of more plural forms of economic exchange (subsistence based markets, barter, solidarity economy...)

- Local organisations mediate economic exchanges
Federations, networks and organised policy influence
Multi-scale networks of local organisations

- Local and regional coalitions e.g. AFSA
- Producer alliances – e.g. WAMIP
- Federations of indigenous peoples
- La Via Campesina
Shared values and visions

• Self-determination and endogenous development – many worlds possible and desirable

• Rights based approaches e.g. UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples

• Emphasis on alternative policy framework for food and agriculture – “Food Sovereignty”
Federations of local organisations are well placed to promote countervailing power and more democracy. They can:

- create safe spaces and participatory processes in which expert knowledge is put under public scrutiny through appropriate methods for deliberation and inclusion (e.g. citizens’ juries)
- strengthen the voices of the excluded in setting agendas and framing policies and regulatory frameworks for development and environment—at local, national and global levels
- Case study: *Prajateerpu* in South India
Democratizing the Governance of Food Systems - putting peasants and other citizens at the centre of governance

Six pathways for empowering citizens in policy-making & institutional choices:

1. Learning from history to re-invent active forms of citizenship

   e.g. Spanish civil war and peasant’s reclaiming control over land and other resources -

   http://www.diversefoodsystems.org/tfs/tfs5_anarchism.mov
2. Strengthening civil society
- Collaboration between local and external civil society actors
- Building upon synergies between the government and society
- Independent pathways from below

3. Methodologies for citizen participation in policy and institutional choices, including risk assessments
4. Towards greater information democracy

- Autonomous media

- Web based knowledge networks and multimedia
5. Nurturing citizenship

Politics are too important to be left to professionals: they must become the domain of amateurs—of ordinary citizens.

- With training and experience citizens can learn to deliberate, make decisions, and implement their choices responsibly.

- These skills do not arise spontaneously; they have to be consciously nurtured and are the result of careful political education, which includes character formation, personal and social training, and civic schooling—to produce citizens with the competence to act in the public interest.
6. Strengthening local organisations to expand agroecology, food sovereignty and democracy

- Local adaptive management of environment
- People’s access to land and food
- Federations, networks and organized policy influence
• facilitate the horizontal interlinking and federating of citizen spaces as a way of decentralising and democratising the governance of food systems

• support the emergence of large scale coalitions for change committed to agroecology, food sovereignty and well being (‘buen vivir’)
Two big challenges for local organisations
Social inclusion in local organisations

Consciously developing forms of governance and relations that are:

i) genuinely inclusive of gender and difference

ii) democratic, with effective safeguards against the abuse, and concentration of power
Horizontal forms of organized cooperation – why and how?

- Collective action and local adaptive management of ecosystems and natural resources over a wide area
- Organized cooperation for economic exchanges among interdependent communities
- Forms of governance: State-centric? Democratic confederalism? Or?