

Co-operative Research on Environmental Problems in Europe (CREPE) – 217647

Project final report: Potential impact

Wider impact

Impact: overview

The project fulfilled its aims to gain a wider impact through research and dissemination activities, closely linked with civil society organisations (CSOs). Through cooperation between the academic Coordinator and CSO partners, each built its own capacities for joint research, with mutual learning from the process. So that the analysis would be more relevant to CSO perspectives, CSO networks were involved and extended in the specific studies, especially via workshops. This effort enabled the research process to gain better access to people's local experiences, which subsequently enriched critical perspectives on dominant innovation agendas and prospects for alternative pathways to sustainable agriculture. For studies with an EU-wide scope, the Coordinator helped to relate research questions more closely to EU policy, so that the results would better target that policy and would be more useful for wider CSO interventions. The project also extended stakeholder networks that could continue such activity, while also strengthening CSOs' capacity to intervene in policy fora.

From the partners' common understanding that sustainable development is a contested concept, the project analysed how different accounts diagnose societal problems in ways justifying different solutions and research agendas. The analysis identified dominant assumptions about sustainable development needing more 'efficient' capital-intensive inputs. CSO partners saw these so-called solutions as sustaining resource usage for agro-industrial systems, thus potentially perpetuating sustainability problems in the name of solving them. The research process questioned those dominant agendas, while also highlighting alternative pathways which were being ignored or marginalised. In all those ways, the project opened up policy frameworks to greater challenge and to alternative agendas, as expressed in the project booklet, *What Bioeconomy for Europe?* The overall results helped to stimulate debate on future roles of European agriculture for a 'Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy', while also drawing CSOs more closely into such issues.

More specific aims from the Technical Annex follow:

CSO's capacities: empowering and resourcing CSOs

Personnel budgets allowed CSOs to allocate substantial time for the systematic study that they led. They gained better knowledge about the specific topics, which all had policy relevance, as a basis for partners to intervene in those issues. Some concepts from CSOs (e.g. agrofuels and agroecology) were turned into research agendas, thus strengthening the concepts. The project identified and elaborated synergies across various agri-environmental issues which involve accounts of sustainable development. The research process facilitated mutual learning between non-researchers and researchers; both categories included CSOs. Each study stimulated a wide participation among CSO networks, thus both contributing and gaining knowledge. Through engagement with relevant stakeholders, the studies could better question assumptions which underlie dominant research priorities, elaborate alternative problem-diagnoses and substantiate alternative solutions.

Co-operative research: developing methods for co-operative research

The project structure facilitated research cooperation of many kinds. Through cooperation between the academic Coordinator and CSO partners, each built its own capacities for joint research, with mutual learning from the process. CSO networks were involved and extended in the specific studies, especially via workshops, so that the analysis would be more relevant to their perspectives. The research process gained better access to people's local experiences, as a basis for linking local, European and global levels of agri-environmental issues. These linkages enriched critical perspectives on dominant innovation agendas and prospects for alternative pathways for sustainable agriculture.

CSO partners extended and linked stakeholder networks relevant to their studies as WP leaders. CSO partners played the role of knowledge-mediator, e.g. by identifying barriers to cooperation and finding ways to overcome them, thus extending cooperative knowledge-production. For studies with an EU-wide scope, the Coordinator helped to relate the questions more closely to EU policy; on this basis, the results could better target that policy and was more useful for wider CSO interventions. WP8 analysed these processes, as a basis to draw lessons to inform further efforts at co-operative research.

Engagement between CSOs and experts

The project drew upon experts familiar with relevant research topics, so that the project could build upon their knowledge. This was done partly via the CREPE Advisory Panel, those experts' attendance at consortium meetings, and other experts attending workshops of the individual studies. Moreover, the process extended CSO roles as experts in research, its current priorities and possible alternatives. In these relationships, CSOs set the terms for engagement with experts and topics under study, as a basis for engagement with policymakers.

Europe-wide exchanges

Project meetings were structured to enhance knowledge exchanges and comparisons among CSO partners about their respective studies. As a contested concept, 'sustainable development' was compared across the case studies and geographical contexts, as a basis to identify overlaps and divergences of meaning. After much discussion, most partners decided to give their workshops a national scope, for better involving and extending CSO networks in a specific country, while avoiding language barriers. At the same time, each CSO partner carried out knowledge exchanges within wider Europe-wide and global networks in which English serves as the *lingua franca*. Each stimulated and/or built on Europe-wide networks that can extend common activities beyond this project.

EU policy relevance

Understanding that sustainable development is a contested concept, the project analysed how different accounts diagnose societal problems in ways justifying different solutions and research agendas. The analysis identified dominant assumptions about sustainable development needing more 'efficient' capital-intensive inputs. CSO partners saw these so-called solutions as sustaining resource usage for agro-industrial systems, thus potentially perpetuating sustainability problems in the name of solving them. The research process questioned those dominant agendas, towards highlighting alternative pathways which were being ignored or marginalised. In all those ways, the project opened up policy frameworks to greater challenge and to alternative agendas, as expressed in the project-wide report booklet, *What Bioeconomy for Europe?* This report became a reference point for some submissions to the Commission's consultation on the Bio-Economy. Thus the overall results helped to stimulate debate on future roles of European agriculture for a 'Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy', while also bringing CSOs more closely into such debate.

Dissemination activities

General dissemination activities

Dissemination was on-going throughout the CREPE project. For WPs 1-6, each study held its own workshop for several purposes, including dissemination of preliminary results and extension of CSO networks to be involved in the study. (See the 1st periodic report for details.) Workshop reports were also disseminated afterwards. All reports from individual studies and their workshops were posted on the CREPE website. Journal papers were widely circulated to relevant CSO and policy networks.

The project-wide final report was widely announced via email lists, and the booklet version was distributed at relevant events; see WP10 below. More specific aspects follow.

WP1: Agrofuels

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

WP1 results were presented at the CREPE workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Brussels, 9 June 2010.

WP1 report was announced on *TNI News*, a fortnightly e-newsletter, circulated to 6000 subscribers with global distribution, with a bi-lingual edition in Latin America.

From WP1 a text on biofuel targets was featured by the OU's Media Relations Unit, especially for the UK's Climate Week in March 2011.

Publications:

Franco, J., Levidow, L., Fig, D., Goldfarb, L., Hönicke, M., and Mendonça, M.L. (2010) 'Assumptions in the European Union biofuels policy: Frictions with experiences in Germany, Brazil and Mozambique', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 37(4): 661–698 [Biofuels special issue],

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g927244768>

Levidow, L. and Paul, H. (2010) 'Global agrofuel crops as contested sustainability, Part I: Sustaining what development?', *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 21(2): 64-86.

Levidow, L. and Paul, H. (2011) 'Global agrofuel crops as contested sustainability, Part I: Eco-efficient techno-fixes?', *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 22(2): 27-51.

The *Journal of Peasant Studies* paper was advertised on both the CREPE and TNI websites, especially for the free download offered by the publisher; the PDF was widely circulated.

Talks were presented at:

NGOs' conference on 'Competing Views and Strategies on Global Land Grabbing', 12

October 2010, Rome, held in parallel with the FAO World Committee on Food Security.

'Global Land Grabbing' conference, 6-8 April 2011, Univ of Sussex.

'Interpretive Policy Analysis' conference, Cardiff, 23-26 June 2011.

WP2: Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Italy

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

Article was published in *Urban Agriculture*, posted on the CREPE website and widely circulated as a PDF via email.

Pinto, B. Pasqualotto, A. and Levidow, L. (2010) 'Community supported urban agriculture: The Orti Solidali project in Rome', *Urban Agriculture magazine* 24, September,

<http://www.ruaf.org/sites/default/files/UA%20Magazine%2024%20sept2010web%2058-60.pdf>

WP3: Water scarcity in Spain

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

WP3 report was circulated to staff in the Water Framework Directive unit of DG Environment.

FEC advised Marks & Spencers supermarket chain and World Wildlife Fund on their joint report, *Good Water Stewardship: Guidance for Agricultural Suppliers*, which thanks FEC for its help:

http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/documents/publications/2010/Good_Water_Stewardship

Conference papers:

Santiago Ripoll, 'Governing scarce water – What should retailers do? A deliberative approach to water stewardship', Presentation for the CAMPDEN BRI training session on water footprinting, Chipping Campden, 11 November 2009.

Maria J. Beltran, Esther Velazquez, Cristina Madrid, 'An assessment of Almeria's virtual water flows by agricultural products exported to United Kingdom and its implications for the water management', 11th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics 22 – 25 August 2010, Oldenburg and Bremen, Germany

Maria J. Beltran, Esther Velazquez, Cristina Madrid, 'Repensando los conceptos de agua virtual y huella hídrica. Una propuesta desde el doble binomio producción-consumo & agua-energía', 'Jornadas de Economía Crítica', Zaragoza, 11 Feb 2010.

Published paper

Esther Velazquez, Cristina Madrid, Maria J. Beltran (2011) 'Rethinking the concepts of virtual water and water footprint in relation to the production-consumption binomial and the water-energy nexus', *Water Resources Management* 25: 743–761.

WP4: Local food networks

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

Results were presented at the CREPE workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Brussels, 9 June 2010.

Results were reported at the major conference held in Rennes on 27 April 2010 – *Secondes assises de la vente directe, Circuits Courts & Territoires* – which was attended by over 100 people. This was the culmination of several smaller workshops involving local authorities, which were adopting policies favourable to shorter food chains.

Publication:

Gilles Maréchal and A. Spanu (2010) Les circuits courts favorisent-ils l'adoption de pratiques agricoles plus respectueuses de l'environnement?, *Le courrier de l'environnement de l'INRA* 59: 33-45, octobre 2010.

WP5: CSO interventions into research

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

Results were presented to the amateur naturalists' CSO, the National Flora and Fauna Fieldwork Foundation (VOFF), at their annual meeting in Nijmegen on 27 November 2010.

WP6: ERA agri-research priorities

Workshop report was posted on the CREPE website and was circulated to participants.

Results were presented at the CREPE workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Brussels, 9 June 2010.

Results were presented at the CREPE workshop on Research with CSOs, London, 29 Sept 2010.

Results are being used for capacity-building activities within FSC in spring 2011.

Results have been disseminated and extended in the FSC's new research project *Repere* ("Co-construction of knowledge and decisions: the example of participatory plant breeding"), e.g. in the 8-9 February 2011 seminar with scientists and peasants involved in participatory plant breeding projects.

Integrated results from both projects will be disseminated via a *Repere* project booklet for scientists.

WP7: Innovation narratives

Results contributed to briefing document for the CREPE workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Brussels, 9 June 2010, as well as to the overall project report.

CREPE Coordinator was invited to participate in the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) CWG on Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation Systems (AKIS); extra text was suggested and was incorporated into its own documents.

Presentations at several academic conferences, e.g.

System Innovations for Sustainable Agriculture, 16-18 June 2010, Lelystad

EASST, 7 September 2010, Trento

Pathways to Sustainability, 23 September 2010, Univ. of Sussex

European Sustainable Food Planning, 29 October 2010, Brighton

Sustainability Transitions, June 2011, Lund

Publications:

Birch, K., Levidow, L. and Papaioannou, T. (2010) Sustainable capital? The neoliberalization of nature and knowledge in the European “Knowledge-Based Bio-economy”, *Sustainability* 2(9): 2898-2918; <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/2/9/2898/pdf> [Political Economy special issue].

Levidow, L. (2011, forthcoming) Contending European agendas for agricultural innovation, in Marc Barbier and Boelie Elzen, eds, *System Innovations for Sustainable Agriculture*, based on conference of the same title.

Draft papers awaiting outcome from a journal:

‘The Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy as an R&D agenda: Contending paradigms of European progress’, submitted to *Science, Technology and Human Values*

‘Which societal challenges for EU research?’, submitted to *Environmental Science and Policy*

WP8: CR aspects

FAAN: Draft material was exchanged with the Facilitating Alternative Agro-Food Networks (FAAN) project, likewise funded as a CR project by the SiS Programme. This project had an analogous study of cooperative research aspects.

Conference & workshop papers

‘Cooperative research on environmental aspects of agriculture’, presented at seminar on New Ways of Doing Research, 18-19 November 2010, Brussels; Annex published in the report, pp.28-29.

‘Cooperative processes for research on sustainable development’, presented at CREPE workshop on ‘Research with CSOs’, London, 29 Sept 2010.

‘CSO-academic research partnerships: Experiences of the CREPE project’, presented at conference on ‘Making the Invisible Visible’, Brighton University, 16-17 December 2010, organised by the ESDinds project of the FP7 SiS programme.

‘The emerging philosophy of cooperative research with particular reference to environmental problems in Europe (CREPE)’, presented at Knowledge sharing for co-inquiry: A workshop to explore participation, engagement and co-operative research in the context of the EU FP7's latest call under its Science in Society programme. Invited presentation, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, September 2009.

Draft paper awaiting outcome from a journal:

‘Academic-CSO cooperation in researching unsustainable development’, submitted to the journal *Local Environment*

WP9: website

All workshop reports of WP studies were posted in December 2009. All final reports of WP studies were posted in December 2010. Final project-wide report was posted there in February 2011.

WP 10: Project-wide final report

Draft was widely circulated for comment – e.g., to the hundred global advisors of Technology Platform Organics, to members of the Standing Committee on Agricultural

Research (SCAR) AKIS CWG and to the SCAR 3rd foresight panel. In this way, the conclusions were being widely disseminated before finalising the text, and many useful comments were received by the Coordinator. After the final version was posted on the CREPE website in late February 2011, an announcement was circulated to our database of over a hundred contacts (in the European Commission, industry, CSOs, national research agencies, etc.). The website statistics shows a sharp rise in visits to the site at that time. The report nearly coincided with publication of the report from the SCAR 3rd foresight panel and so gained attention from the debate around the latter.

Presentations

SCAR AKIS Collaborative Working Group, Dublin, 3 Feb 2011.

Technology Platform Organics conference on the Bioeconomy, European Parliament, Brussels, 21 June 2011

Project-wide final report was shortened for a booklet, *What Bioeconomy for Europe?*, for printing 2500 copies in April 2011. Large quantities were sent for free distribution to numerous conferences, as well as smaller quantities sent to key individuals for further distribution among their networks.

WP 11: two workshops

Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, June 2010, Brussels

Participants included: industry, CSOs, research managers (national and Commission DGs), other experts, etc. Staff attending from the DG Research FAFB programme said that the analysis would be helpful for planning their future work programmes.

Workshop Report was circulated to all 20 participants and was posted on the CREPE website.

Workshop on Research with CSOs, September 2010, London

Included all other relevant projects in the CR area funded by the SiS programme.

Workshop Report was circulated to all participants. A summary with the URL was circulated to several hundred subscribers of email lists, e.g. the *Living Knowledge* newsletter based in Netherlands, the Loka Institute based in the USA, and the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research (GACER) based in Canada.