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Amap, the French CSA Model : Business as usual or Social Movement?

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Amap, the French CSA Model : Business as usual or Social Movement?

In March 2012, the French AMAP, *Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne*, *Association for Maintaining Small Scale Family Farming* in English, came surprisingly under the political limelight: they were object of a question to the government, asked by two deputies from the opposition. In military language, these questions would be called “friendly fire”. On 13 March, the deputy Gille explained in front of his peers, that the proclaimed governmental support to short supply chains was not effectively being implemented through an appropriate legislation¹; on 20 March, another deputy, Jack Lang, took the topic up in a similar way². The purpose of these interventions were mainly to push for a derogatory tax exemption for the AMAP. The driving forces behind these initiatives are difficult to map. But one could think that the deputies had been invited to act in this way by short supply chains intermediaries claiming to do AMAP, although not strictly following the AMAP Charter.

AMAP is indeed an association (and not a business) that supports the relationship between a consumers' group and a local producer. These two part, the producer and each consumer, are linked through a contract -based direct selling system. The transactions are conducted directly between the producers and the consumers. There is no cash flow through the AMAP. It is therefore quite difficult to understand how the AMAP itself could be subject to taxation.

The Government brought up an answer in a very short span of time, on 17 April. The answer includes first a reminder on associations' fiscal regime. Then comes a general definition:

*“The Associations pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP) have been designed to create a direct link between a producer and some consumers, who commit themselves to buy his production at a fair price allowing the producer to cover his production costs and to generate an income, while remaining accessible to consumers. (...).”*³

But the most surprising and thus interesting part was the following:

¹ Jean-Patrick Gille, “Question au Gouvernement n°130683”, *Journal officiel*, 13 mars 2012, p. 2162.

² Jack Lang, “Question au Gouvernement n°130690”, *Journal officiel*, 20 mars 2012, p. 2353.

³ Ministère de l'Agriculture, alimentation, pêche, ruralité et aménagement du territoire, “Réponse à la question au gouvernement du député Jack Lang, question n°130690”, *Journal Officiel*, 17 avril 2012, p. 2999.

« An AMAP that guarantees to a professional the sale of his production through connecting (even without commission) the members to the producer, contributes to the economic development of the farm. The AMAP activity is thus considered to be profitable and should be subject to commercial taxes. »

This exchange in the Parliament fostered a controversy: are AMAP “business as usual” or associative not-for-profit structures run by self-organised citizens with the objective of serving the general interest?

The national AMAP network, Miromap, reacted with a press release, where the stress was on the notion of general interest and the claim to be a social movement⁴. However, the mere fact that the actors themselves are expressing a will to be considered as a social movement is not enough to validate their claim. In this paper, I try to refer to objective indicators in order to consider the French AMAP as a social movement. By focusing on 4 cardinal reasons that allow us to speak of a social movement, I will depict quite precisely the AMAP model mechanisms:

1. The AMAP are getting stronger in a worldwide context marked by the growth of the local food movement. As any social movement, they cannot be observed separately, without referring to this larger context;
2. The AMAP are one of the Local and Solidarity -Based Partnerships between producers and consumers, one among many others;
3. The AMAP find their origins in the encounter of two social movements, and have given themselves a charter containing 18 fundamental principles;
4. The everyday AMAP management relies on core groups, made up of committed volunteers.

⁴ Le Collectif du Miromap, *Les AMAP ne sont pas un service économique : elles donnent un avenir à l'agriculture paysanne et à nos territoires*, Lyon : Miromap, 26 juin 2012.

1. The AMAP are gaining strength in a worldwide context marked by the growth of the local food movement

The development of the French AMAP model, since the early 2000s (the first AMAP groups were born in 2001), cannot be considered separately from a global context marked by the multiplication of local food initiatives. This is actually a common feature of social movements: as the Finnish Sociologist Tuomas Yli-Anttila has it, the social movements have always been global⁵.

If we decide to take some distance and take a look at the AMAP movement in a larger perspective, we see that the discourse on local food, alternative food systems and alternative food production techniques, is supported by a much larger array of actors than the AMAP alone. In particular, the need for more resilient food systems is increasingly recognized by the international institutions. Olivier de Schutter, then Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to the General Secretary of the United Nations, has constantly enhanced the positive role of family farming and agroecological practices from a sustainable development -based point of view⁶.

What is happening at the level of the United Nations can also be perceived at the level of Local authorities, in the cities, regions and counties. The example of the Food Policy Councils in the United States, which number rose to 193 in 2012 from 111 in 2010⁷, is just one more sign, that new connections are being built between all the actors within the food chains, and that local authorities are also increasingly acting on this chapter.

Another example, in a different context, is the rather innovative work done by a collective combining local authorities and civil society organizations in France. *Terres en ville* offers tutoring and consultancy to municipalities on issues like the preservation of agricultural land, the development of short supply chains or the integration of citizens from all backgrounds into

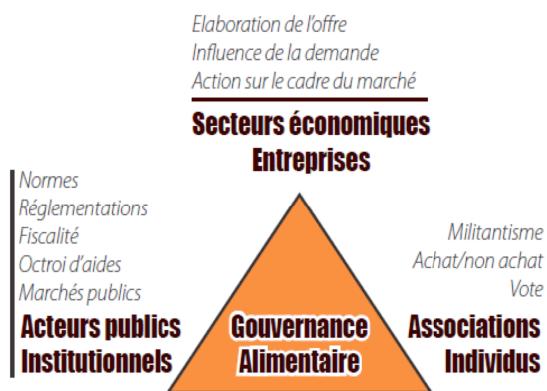
⁵ Tuomas Yli-Anttila, *Politiikan paluu. Globalisaatioon ja julkisuus*, Helsinki: Vastapaino, 2011, pp. 23-32.

⁶ See for example: Olivier de Schutter, *Interim Report by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*, New York: United Nations, General Assembly, 66th Session, p. 18.

⁷ Emily Broad Leib (Dir.), *Good Laws, Good Food: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for our Communities*, Harvard: Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (Community Food Security Coalition), 2012, p. 1.

the local food governance. One key aspect of their action is the Territorial Food Governance Triangle. This scheme gives a simplified view on the different actors that should be taken into account for a shared food governance to be successful at the level of a municipality⁸.

According to this scheme, there are 3 major groups of actors as far as Food Governance is concerned. The first group is made up of associations, individuals, who are militant and are using their buying or non-buying, even boycotting, power. The other tool in their repertoire is the vote. The second group is mainly composed of enterprises and other actors operating in the economic sector. They elaborate the Offer, are reacting to the Demand, and act on the market frames. Finally, the public and institutional actors are issuing norms, rules, acting on fiscality, controlling public grants and public procurement.



This scheme has been largely diffused and has fed local authorities' strivess to implement a specific food strategy at the level of their own territory. Some cities have even done it through a combination with their participatory democracy processes, as in Aubagne, in the Provence region, France⁹. Megalopolises have also been rather active in this field. London, under the impulsion of his mayor, has been conducting a Local Food Strategy since 2006¹⁰. Milan is just getting into a similar process, in the frame of the 2015 Universal Exhibition “*Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life*”. The growth of the local food movements, among which the CSAs, although not happening on the same scale, are probably not absolutely stranger to these institutional processes.

⁸ Terres en Ville, *La gouvernance alimentaire des agglomérations françaises et la relocalisation des productions agricoles*, Grenoble: Terres en Ville, October 2009, p. 3.

⁹ Pays d'Aubagne et de l'Etoile, *Charte des Jardins d'Aubagne pour une agriculture durable*, Aubagne, Communauté d'agglomération du Pays d'Aubagne et de l'Etoile, 2010, 25 p.

¹⁰ London Development Agency, *Healthy and Sustainable Food for London. The Mayor's Food Strategy Summary*, London: London Development Agency, May 2006, 24 p.

2. The creativity of the CSA Movement and the diversity of CSA Models

Urgenci, the international network of Local and Solidarity -based partnerships between producers and consumers, has been monitoring the evolution of Community Supported Agriculture around the world for 3 years. To my knowledge, this is, to this day, the only existing attempt to conduct a comprehensive census on this topic. The first outcomes, although still far from being consolidated, can be read in the 4 following charts:

- Chart 1: Number of CSA in selected countries;
- Chart 2: Sharing the Risk: formalization of the partnership in selected countries;
- Chart 3: Organization of the producers-consumers' Relationship;
- Chart 4: Organization of the Movement.

2.1 *Chart 1: number of CSA*

Although it looks the most simple of all four charts, the first one, on the number of CSA in the main regions of the world, is certainly both the result of the most complex work and the most questionable. For the census, I adopted the definition of Community supported agriculture as presented by the international network Urgenci:

“Community Supported Agriculture is a partnership between a farm and consumers where the risks and rewards of farming are shared”. *This rather minimalist but efficient definition opens up a large range of formal variations. Indeed, although their principles are similar, CSA farms and support groups in the various parts of Europe operate on the basis of various different models. These variations are largely based on the social, agricultural and economic specificities of each country or region where they have developed.*

According to the conclusions from the first international CSA Symposium, the different CSA movements seem however to recognise the following 4 fundamental principles as their common basis: [local and Solidarity -based Partnerships between Producers and Consumers.]

Partnership: CSA is based on a partnership, usually formalised as an individual contract between each consumer and the producer, and characterised by a mutual commitment to supply one another (with money and food) over an extended period of time, beyond any single act of exchange. The contracts, oral or written, last for several months, a season or a year.

Local: CSAs are part of an active approach to relocalising the economy. But local in the CSA movement is not restricted to a geographical meaning. The idea is that local producers should be well integrated into their surrounding areas: their work should benefit the communities which support them.

Solidarity: CSAs are based on solidarity between producers and support groups and involve: Sharing both the risks and the benefits of an healthy production that is adapted to the natural rhythm of the seasons and is respectful of the environment, natural and cultural heritage and health. Paying a sufficient fair price up-front to enable farmers and their families to maintain their farms and live in a dignified manner.

The producer/consumer tandem: is based on direct person-to-person contact and trust, with no intermediaries or hierarchy. ^{“¹¹}

Counting the initiatives pertaining to such a creative and wide movement is not an easy task. There are at least two major obstacles to such a risky enterprise.

First of all, in most countries, there is nobody who could claim to detain any scientific figures. And wherever figures are circulating, they are often contradictory. For example, in the United States, the estimations range from 1,000 according to Elizabeth Henderson, an experienced CSA farmer and the author of the most famous guidebook on CSA, *Sharing the Harvest*¹², to 12,500 farms operating a CSA in 2009 according to the USDA Census. However, the most reasonable account, although conservative, as its author, Steven McFadden himself admits, estimates the number of CSA farms nationwide at around 6,500¹³.

¹¹ Jan Valeska (Ed.), *European Handbook of Community Supported Agriculture*, Aubagne: Urgenci (CSA4Europe), 2014, pp. 6-7.

¹² Elizabeth Henderson, *Sharing the Harvest, Revised and Expanded A Citizen's Guide to Community Supported Agriculture*, White River Junction: Chelsea Green, 2007, 320 p.

¹³ Steven McFadden, “Unraveling the CSA number conundrum”, *The Call of the Land*, 9 janvier 2012, <http://thecalloftheland.wordpress.com/2012/01/09/unraveling-the-csa-number-conundrum/>

Similarly, the French national AMAP network, Miramap, has been publishing careful, even if internally generated, estimations from 2011 that do not match the public institutions' figures. This counting gives a rough estimation of 1,600 groups, 3,000 farms, at least 60,000 families (thus around 180,000 consumers)¹⁴. The same year however, the ADEME, the national Sustainable Development & Energy agency conducted a national poll that stated that up to 6% of the national population had been "*doing Amap*" at some point of their existence¹⁵. This means there would have been up to 4 millions Frenchmen and women who would have experienced Amap during the last 12 years. Even if we integrate people who have joined an Amap group for one or two seasons and then left, this figure seems quite far ahead from the MIRAMAP accounting results. However, similar percentages have been aggregated in some states along the East Coast of the United States, thus making it credible.

In most countries, there is a specific model that clearly dominates the landscape of CSA initiatives, but many others are coexisting. In France, we chose to take only the recognized AMAP groups into account. Yet, the *Jardins de Cocagne (Cockaigne Gardens)*, which are social integration enterprises where long term unemployed people are producing shares for members, would be called CSA in any other country. Moreover, what Germans and Austrians call CSA, farms owned by a joint consumers-producers cooperative, would be only one small fringe of the movement in some other countries¹⁶. And what Italians call *Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale* would not systematically qualify as similar to the AMAP for the French. In fact, there would be a need for yet another type of chart, where the different coexisting models would have their figures mentioned for every country¹⁷.

Whatever limit should be taken into account before interpreting these figures, the interest of such a chart is to show the scale and the trend. The data collected until now tells us there would be at least 6,603 CSA farms and 409,700 CSA consumers in Northern America,

¹⁴ Miramap, *Agissons ensemble pour une Souveraineté alimentaire locale*, Lyon : Miramap (prospectus), 2011, 4 p.

¹⁵ Rémy Oudghiri & Lise Brunet, *Les Français et les pratiques collaboratives. Qui fait quoi ? Et pourquoi ?* Paris : Ipsos/Ademe, pp. 13-35.

¹⁶ On these differences, see Jan Valeska (ed.), *The European Handbook on Community Supported Agriculture*, Aubagne: Urgenci, 2014, 40 p.

¹⁷ This is what has been done by Hungarian researchers for a poster presented at the Organic World Congress 2014: Zoltan Dezsény, Katalin Réthy and Balint Balazs, *Alternative Development on the Organic Sector Horizon. Community Supported Agriculture in Hungary*, Budapest: ÖMKI, 2014.

approximately 5,267 CSA farms and 413,947 CSA consumers in Europe, at least 1,877 such farms supported by 176,650 consumers in Asia (mostly in Japan and China, with a growing movement in Korea and isolated initiatives in Taiwan and Thailand), around 40 family farms and 700 consumers in CSA in Africa (the information is too partial to make any definitive statement, though), and around 20 similar initiatives, supported by more than 1,000 consumers in South America (mainly in Brazil, Chile and Argentina). This census in progress comes up with a figure of 13,779 CSA farms and slightly over one million supporting consumers. Thanks to these figures, and even if they are still rather uncomplete, one may understand that the existence of a strong middle class is a precondition for the CSA movement to expand. This observation is corroborated by researches led in recently emerged economies, like China¹⁸, as well as by the limited development CSA has been experiencing in Central and Eastern European states, like Romania and Czech Republic¹⁹.

¹⁸ Yan Shi, Cunweng Cheng, P. Lei, T. Wen, C. Merrifield, "Chinese Sustainable Agriculture and the Rising Middle Class: Analysis from Participatory Research in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) at Little Donkey Farm", *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, n°9, november 2011, pp. 551-558.

¹⁹ For Romania, find more information in the following article: Brîndusa Bihrala & Judith Möllers, "Community supported agriculture in Romania. Is it driven by economy or solidarity?", Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies Discussion Paper no. 144, 2014. For Czech Republic, see the following poster Jan Valeska, "Community Supported Agriculture in the Czech Republic", 2nd European Meeting of CSA Movements, Villarceaux: Urgenci, February 2014. Available on 19 October 2014 at: <http://www.urgenci.net/sites/default/files/Poster-KPZ-Francie-01.jpg>

CHART 1: ESTIMATIONS OF CSA AROUND THE WORLD

10/15/14			
	GROUPS	CONSUMERS	FARMS
NORTH AMERICA	7103	409700	7100
CANADA (QUEBEC)	103	9700	100
US	7000	400000	7000
EUROPE	3547	412580	4257
ENGLAND	140	24000	100
EASTERN EUROPE (7 countries)	51	3600	51
France	1600	180000	3000
GERMANY	80	16000	80
ITALY	1000	100000	700
SPAIN (BASQUE COUNTRY)	30	100	30
SWITZERLAND	38	7030	38
AFRICA	9	543	35
ASIA	1515	176650	1877
CHINA	500	75000	500
INDIA	4	600	576
JAPAN	1000	100000	700
KOREA	10	1000	100

2.2 Risk sharing and the formalization of the producers-consumers relationship

Chart 2 was designed to illustrate the various ways to formalize the producers-consumers relationship, based on the principle of risk sharing, in 6 different countries and a region (the Quebec Province in Canada).

	NAME	WRITTEN CONTRACT	TIMING OF PAYMENT	ORGANIC CERTIF.
JAPAN	TEIKEI	NO	Order	YES
US	CSA	YES/NO	Order, 6 months, 1 year	YES
QUEBEC	ASC	YES	6 m	YES
GERMANY	SOLAWI	YES	6 m, 1 y	YES
ITALY	GAS	NO	3 m, semi order	NO
FRANCE	AMAP	YES	6 m, 1 y	NO, PGS
ENGLAND	CSA	YES	6 m, 1 y	NO

Chart 2: Risk sharing and the formalization of the producers-consumers relationship in selected countries and regions.

In particular, one can see that long-term commitment or contract -based direct selling does not equal to a written contract in every country. The existence of a local tradition of written law

might play a role in this respect. The upfront payment seems to be an undisputed common characteristic, but the timing of payment is different everywhere and even, of course, within each country.

The last column gives a key information: is organic certification required or not. One should note that in most countries, there is no recognized structure that would be in a position to legitimately enforce any requirement within the local CSA movement. In fact, the column *organic certification* should be read as an answer to the question “*is there a trend towards requiring organic certification from CSA farms?*”. For example, the yes put in the line for the United States does not mean that American CSA farms, as a rule, are required to seek for organic certification if they don't have it already. It is instead motivated by an array of observations: the first one is that the few constituted CSA networks in the US have decided to consider organic certification as a requirement, as the FairShare Coalition (then *Madison Area CSA Coalition*), in Wisconsin, did, after fierce internal debates²⁰; the second reason is that, on the East Coast, the development of CSAs has been embedded into already constituted organic movements. For example, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) can be considered as taking responsibility of the tasks devoted to a CSA development organization. This is true also of the NOFA (North-East Organic Farming Association)²¹ and, on the other side of the Canadian border, of *Equiterre* in Quebec²². The rate of organic certified farms within the American CSA movement is estimated at around 50%.

2.3 Movement's structuring process

The second set of criteria to characterize CSA models relates to the level organization of the movement. By organization, we mean both the existence of shared principles, formalized in a written form, and the existence of CSA networks.

²⁰ Kiera Mulvey (former CSA Development programme office for FairShare Coalition), “CSA in the US”, presentation during the *CSA around the World* workshop, 13 October 2014, Organic World Congress of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Istanbul.

²¹ Kiera Mulvey, *ibid.*

²² Jocelyn Parot, Claire Rühlmann, Gaétan Vallée, « Portrait d'un mouvement : les fermiers de famille et les agricultures soutenues par la communauté au Québec », *Teikei*, n°30, juillet 2010. <http://www.urgenci.net/sites/default/files/Equiterre.pdf>

Chart 3: Organization of the movement

	CHARTER	NETWORKS	ALLIES
JAPAN	YES	NO	ORGANIC
US	NO, but regulation in CA, 2014	LOCAL ONLY	ORGANIC
QUEBEC	YES	PROVINCIAL	ORGANIC
GERMANY	NO	NATIONAL	ORGANIC
ITALY	NO	NATIONAL MEETINGS, LOCAL ONLY (DES)	SSE, ORGANIC
FRANCE	YES	NAT, REG, LOCAL	FS
ENGLAND	YES (since 2014)	NAT	ORGANIC

The shared principles of the Japanese *Teikei* model are included into a fundamental text called *The Ten principles of Teikei*²³. Similarly, the AMAP movement in France came up with a Charter in 2003, that was revised during a participatory, 2-year-long process. The new AMAP charter was adopted in December 2013²⁴. The same year, 2013, the British CSA movement agreed on a UK CSA Charter²⁵. In the US, there is no charter, but a detailed regulation was approved early 2014 in the state of California²⁶.

²³Amemiya Hiroko (dir.), *Du Teikei aux AMAP. Le renouveau de la vente directe de produits fermiers locaux*, Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes (coll. Economie et société), 2011, 352 p.

²⁴ MIRAMAP, Charte des AMAP, *Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne. Fruit d'une réflexion participative inter-régionale*, Lyon: MIRAMAP, March 2014, 4 p. Available on 19 October 2014 at the following link: http://miramap.org/IMG/pdf/charte_des_amap_mars_2014-2.pdf

²⁵ Community Supported Agriculture Network UK, *Charter. Working Draft Summer 2013*, Bristol: CSANUK, 2013, 2 p.

²⁶ “For purposes of this article, the following definitions apply: (a) “Community supported agriculture program” or “CSA program” means a program under which a registered California direct marketing producer, or a group of registered California direct marketing producers, grow food for a group of California consumer shareholders or subscribers who pledge or contract to buy a portion of the future crop, animal production, or both, of a registered California direct marketing producer or a group of registered California direct marketing producers. (b) “Single-farm community supported agriculture program” means a program in which all delivered farm products originate from and are produced at the farm of one registered California direct marketing producer,

There are two types of CSA networks: autonomous CSA networks on the one hand, set exclusively to support CSA in a given geographical area; organic farming organizations operating a CSA development program on the other hand. France is the only country with specific CSA networks at all administrative levels: local, regional and national. There is no national network in the US, but 7 different local networks, including 2 exclusively CSA-focused networks, FairShare Coalition in Wisconsin, and Portland Area CSA Coalition (PACSAC) in Oregon. The Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA) has been operating *de facto* as a Teikei network for several decades already.

2.4 *Organization of producers-consumers relationship*

Chart 4 is an attempt to characterize the producers-consumers relationship in each of the scrutinized models. A common rule emerging from this chart is that CSA requires a strong commitment, since it relies heavily on voluntary consumers with a not-for-profit interest. The debates that motivated the new regulation on CSA in the state of California erupted because of the multiplication of non-farm based “CSA” operations. The same phenomenon has been observed in France since 2011, and the creation of box scheme model called *La Ruche qui oui*, which has been presented in the French media as a more flexible form of doing CSA. In these businesses, flexibility is presented as an asset, in comparison to the rigidity of the traditional CSA model. In fact, as they recognize themselves, these companies cannot be recognized as part of the CSA movement by other CSAs, because their business model is not based on consumers' commitment but solely on a slight shortening of the food chain²⁷.

There are different levels of commitment: some models require the subscribers to join helping

and no more than a de minimus amount of delivered farm products originate at the farms of other registered California direct marketing producers. (c) “Multifarm community-supported agriculture program” means a program in which all delivered farm products originate from and are produced at one or more farms of a group of registered California direct marketing producers who declare their association as a group at the time of their annual certification or by amending the annual certification during the year. (d) “Farm” means a farm operated by a registered California direct marketing producer or a group of registered California direct marketing producers”. California State Assembly, “Article 6: Community supported agriculture”, Assembly Bill no. 224, Chapter 404, paragraph 47060, 28 September 2013.

²⁷ Benjamin Guilbault, “Attention... Pourquoi les AMAP disent NON à la Ruche qui dit oui”, *AMAP Bio Devant Courbevoie*, 23 June 2014 <http://www.amapbiodevant.fr/blog/actualites/reseau/attention-une-amap-na-rien-a-voir-avec-les-principes-de-ruches/>; La Ruche qui dit oui, “La Ruche qui dit non à la calomnie des AMAP”, *La Ruche qui dit oui*, 26 June 2014 <http://blog.laruchequiditoui.fr/la-ruche-qui-dit-non-a-la-calomnie-des-amap/>

days on the farm and put an emphasis on joint producers-consumers decisions, others are quite flexible regarding the requirements so that the majority of consumers are often just subscribers, even if there is always a core group to keep communication with the producer flowing.

Chart 4: Organization of producers-consumers relationship

	SETTING THE FAIR	ADDS TO THE ASSOCIATIVE LIFE	ACTIVITIES ON
JAPAN	PRICE PRODS	SHARE NO	NOT ESSENTIAL THE FARM Helping days
US	PRODS	NO	IMPORTANT Helping days, self harvest
QUEBEC	PROD+NETWORK	YES (50% in Win, 25% in Sum)	NETWORK MORE IMPORTANT SELDOM
GERMAN Y ITALY	COLLECTIVE DECISION Negotiations PROD- CONS	NO	IMPORTANT 2 MEETINGS/ MONTH YES, even prices agreed on the farm NO
FRANCE	PRODS+NETWORK	NO	VERY IMPORTANT Yes. Some open days.
ENGLAN D	PRODS+NETWORK	NO	NOT ESSENTIAL SOME

3. The AMAP -model in France, history and principles

As Miramap spokesperson Leo Coutellec had it during a radio show in September 2014, the AMAP have now established themselves: “*after more than 10 years of existence, it is impossible to reduce the AMAP to a mere fashion. It is rather a deep wave, that is part of a structural transformation of our societies*”²⁸.

²⁸ Guillaume Emer, “Les locavores, consommer local”, *France Inter*, Service public, 16 September 2014.

3.1 Origins: a combination of social movements

A persisting legend gives all the credit of the foundation of the first AMAP to one single man and his family²⁹: Daniel, the farmer, had seen a CSA pick up while visiting family in New York. He took notes about the CSA model, and when he came back to France, immediately presented it to “consumers” who were conquered. They decided to launch a similar initiative and were very successful in spreading the world. Though it is a true story, this account is marked with severe oblivion. In particular, it hides the nature of the original partnership: the farmer shared the idea with an Attac -group in the context of the campaign against *Malbouffe*, the French word for *Trash Food*. This campaign culminated when José Bové and several fellows dismantled a McDonald's in Southern France in 1999³⁰. That was less than 2 years before the first AMAP distributions took place, 10 May 2001³¹.

The birth of the AMAP movement, and its exponential growth during the years 2001-2008, should be understood as the confluence between two movements: the *agriculture paysanne* (peasant agriculture) movement on the farmers' side, and the critical consumption movement on the consumers' side.

Agriculture paysanne, the concept AMAP refers to, would literally translate into *peasant agriculture*. As in English, the word *paysan* used to be extremely pejorative, a synonym for *dirty, without manners, uneducated, uncultivated...* But a movement of small-scale family farmers, in the 90s, decided to use it to qualify the type of agriculture they were claiming to do, an agriculture that respect the environment, the local culture, the landscape and the social conditions of all farm workers. In fact, the key element enclosed in the concept of *agriculture paysanne* is the autonomy of the farmer within the food production and distribution channels. Instead of being just one link in the chain, specialized in just one type of production (monoculture), the *paysan* is someone who has control over his model of production from the seeds until the marketing scheme³². Since 1998, when the term *Agriculture paysanne* was

²⁹ See for example Elizabeth Henderson, « A Global Meeting of Local Food », *Urgenci blog*, May 2010.

³⁰ Jean-Pierre Poulain, « Affirmation des particularismes individuels et évolution des modèles alimentaires », in Claude Fischler (dir.), *Les Alimentations particulières. Mangerons-nous encore ensemble demain ?*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2013, p. 249.

³¹ Interview with Benoît, 55 years, organic certified vegetable grower, one of the first AMAP farmers, farm visit, Arles: 8 May 2009, duration: 2 hours.

³² Fédération des Associations pour le développement de l'emploi agricole et rural (FADEAR), *Charte de*

registered as a brand, it has been widely used in France by the opposition farmers' union called *Confédération paysanne*. It has also been traveling and has even been popularized in other countries in the frame of *La Via Campesina*, the international federation of family farmers' unions, by all the actors of the so-called Food Sovereignty Movement. Food Sovereignty the “*right for people to decide how the food they consume is produced and distributed*”, combines very well with the objective of regaining autonomy in a context of food and agriculture crisis.

Both the concept of Food Sovereignty, as defined above, and *agriculture paysanne* underline the need to question the relationship between the farmer and the society. *Paysan* comes indeed from *pays*, country, in this case the area where the farmer is from, and the territory his activity is impacting. It is no surprise, then, that the farmers who committed themselves to these two slogans got involved into social movements that had a much larger focus than farming only.

The second stream that gave birth to the AMAP movement is the responsible consumption movement. Attac members played an important role in giving a core group of militants to the first AMAP groups. Attac was founded in 1998 in France as a movement advocating the implementation of a Tobin tax on financial transactions, and quickly became a major anti-capitalist organization. Within a couple of years, its membership figures became even bigger than some secondary political parties³³. Led by intellectuals and academics, it bore a radical critique of consumerism and called for “*consomm'acteurs*” (consum'actors) actions, through boycotting and choosing ethical products. Attac members gave the first AMAP groups a militant structure and echoes in the media. Yet, Attac couldn't claim the exclusive paternity of the AMAP. Indeed, there were many more reasons driving the consumers towards the first AMAP pick up points. I will point out the 2 most visible reasons here. One of them was the consciousness that farming was going through dramatical times in France, with a reduction of the number of farms from around one million in the 80s to less than 600,000 in the early

l'agriculture paysanne, Rambouillet: FADEAR, 1998. <http://www.agriculturepaysanne.org/la-charte-de-l-agriculture-paysanne> (visited 19 October 2014). Also Laurent Valdiguié, “Michel Serres: le paysan nouveau est admirable, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 22 février 2009. <http://www.lejdd.fr/Societe/Actualite/Michel-Serres-Le-paysan-nouveau-est-admirable-78188> (last visit 19 October 2014)

³³ Sylvia Zappi, “Attac en perte d'influence chez les altermondialistes”, *Le Monde*, 16 June 2006.

2000s. Another significant reason was, as in any country where the movement grew strong, the distrust towards the agrifood industries following the Mad Cow Disease and several other food safety issues³⁴. The environmentalist component of the movement should of course not be neglected.

3.2 Fundamental principles of the AMAP Movement

Faced with the exponential expansion of the AMAP model, the pioneers decided to write up a Charter of the AMAP just a couple of years after starting the first partnership. They also chose to register the name as a brand at the National Institute of Intellectual Property, because they felt threatened by attempts to hijack the model.

The result was a 18 points -Charter, that included references to high quality, to the respect of the social and environmental norms, but didn't, for example, explicitly mention the organic certification³⁵. This charter is very light concerning the practices on the farm, and does not contain any technical requirement. It is more to be read as a kind of Guideline for the Fair Partnership between Consumers and Producers. It provides orientations and general principles, but has nothing to do with strict rules as the organic agriculture standards for example.

The Charter has just been revised during a long, two year comprehensive consultative process that ended in December 2013. The mobilisation on the field was quite encouraging, and workshops took place basically everywhere in France. 27 local and regional AMAP networks participated through a general questionnaire focusing on potential modifications. Moreover, 57 isolated AMAP (which were not network members) had replied during the first year of the process³⁶. There are important differences regarding the representativity of these contributions. On the one hand, some networks are giving quite representative answers. For

³⁴ Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier and Claire Lamine, "Faire le marché autrement. L'abonnement à un panier de fruits et légumes comme forme d'engagement politique des consommateurs", *Sciences de la société*, 62, 2004, pp. 145-168.

³⁵ The 2003, unrevised, version of the AMAP Charter is available at this address (last visit 19 October 2014) http://miramap.org/IMG/pdf/CHARTE_AMAP.pdf.

³⁶ Mouvement Interrégional des AMAP, *Ensemble des réponses aux questionnaires, chantier charte*, Lyon : Miramap, juillet 2013 (excel file).

example, just in the Département of Isère, 30 AMAP had been consulted during 4 inter-amap meetings held in different geographical sectors. Similarly, in Picardie, up to 17 different AMAP had been taking part to 3 debates organised during the winter 2012-2013, before the questionnaire was disseminated in the whole network and was then synthetised. Yet, other networks can hardly claim for the same representativity. This is a report from Bretagne about the Charter rewriting process: “*After sollicitation of the 49 Amap in two départements – just one feedback. Organisation of an inter-amap meeting, with people representing 6 Amap from the Rennes area, including 2 producers. Proposals were sent to the Amaps on the territory for information and comments*”³⁷. Any claim for representativity can always be challenged. However, in our case, the efforts deployed to revise the Charter during a long, participatory process clearly indicates a collective will to position itself as a movement of citizens and not just an operation of fresh organic boxes.

4. AMAP in France, day-to-day Management

The major aspiration to be a social movement is reflected in a whole set of practices implemented everyday by stakeholders to “do Amap” (“*faire de l’Amap*” as the Amapians themselves are used to say).

4.1 Splitting the roles within the core group

If we compile CSA kits and internal organizational CSA documents in the UK and in France³⁸, it seems the following tasks have been commonly identified as key aspects of collectively running an AMAP or a CSA: pick up point management (cleaning, opening...etc..); diversification; communication, especially between the consumers and the farm; member recruitment; contracts and checks' collection; event planning.

A crucial role is the *Distribution Point Referee*, who has 3 tasks to face: she leads researches for a distribution point; she checks the distribution point is kept clean; she ensures a good

³⁷ Mouvement Interrégional des AMAP, *ibid.*, case C8 (document excel).

³⁸ Soil Association, *A Share in the Harvest. An action manual for Community supported Agriculture*, Bristol: Soil Association (Making Local Food Work), 2011, 47 p.; Alliance PEC Rhône-Alpes, *Kit de fonctionnement en AMAP*, Lyon: Alliance PEC Rhône-Alpes, 2006, 5 p.; AMAP des Lapereaux des Thermopyles, *Fiches de rôle*, Paris: AMAP Lapereaux des Thermopyles, 2008, 18 p.

relation with the welcoming structure. *Diversification*, meaning the establishment of partnerships with other producers (meat producers, cheesemakers, dairy farmers...) is a task that should be devoted to one or two persons. *Communication* should be understood in two ways. First, it is the work of a Farm Group, which is in charge of following and understanding the evolution of the farm, updating the group and supporting (if needed) the farmer in explaining his own farm dynamics to the consumers, through regular farm visits for example. This last point should not be neglected, too sporadic communication about the conditions on the farm is a major reason for partnership failures. The Farm Group might also monitor satisfaction surveys between seasons in order to ensure consumers feel their voice is heard.

Yet, communication is also about enhancing the fun of doing CSA, through recipe-sharing, short newsletters, websites/blogs. These communication efforts are then targeted both at current and potential members, thus contributing to member recruitment. Here are typical items you would see in your CSA Newsletter: news from the farm and its production methods; changes in produce distribution; members' recipe suggestions; what to do with surplus produce – jams and pickles; forthcoming events; promotion of community activities – walks and fundraising; features on topical food and countryside issues.

Below is an example of a newsletter from an AMAP in Paris³⁹.

L'Actu de Xavier !

Antoinette a interviewé Xavier jeudi 8 mars à Porte-de-Vannes. Voici les nouvelles qu'elle a récoltées. Sachez que Xavier est en forme. Il est très content de la météo qui est bonne.

Activités du moment

- Xavier est à fond dans les semis. Primeurs pour les premiers paniers : fèves, petits pois, épinards, carottes, navets, betteraves, poireaux, oignons.
- Dans les serres, les carottes et les épinards commencent à monter ; Plantations d'une deuxième souche de poireaux pour l'année prochaine et que nous pourrons manger jusqu'à la fin de l'hiver prochain.
- Le montage des serres est pratiquement terminé. Des travaux avant la fin du mois. Lorsqu'elles seront couvertes, il faudra mettre du compost à l'intérieur pour les tomates de cet été.
- Plantation dans les jours qui viennent de patates nouvelles. Ce sera une première pour les paniers et les primeurs.

Planification du travail

En juin prochain, Xavier projette d'embaucher une personne pour la saison : 6 mois. Ceci afin de pallier au plus grand nombre de paniers à fournir.

Déjà, Xavier, du fait qu'ils sont maintenant deux à travailler, est plus organisé pour appréhender la nouvelle saison.

Extrait du tableau des récoltes de 2012 (Jocelyn)

Une trentaine d'égumes (sur plus de 70 espèces au total) récoltés dans les prochains mois.

Spécie	mai	juin	juillet	août
Chou rave				
Chou pointu				
Chou fleur				
Laitue				
Mesculin				
Rosquette				
Nasturtium				
Epinard serre				
Epinard ext.				
Pois				
Cerfeuil				
Concombre				
Chouquette				
Aneth				
Thym				
Menthe				
Estragon				
Pomme				
Pois				
Betterave				
Carotte botte				
R鑦e				
Pomme de terre prcoce				
Poireau botte				
Courgette ext.				
Courgette serre				
Chou chou				
Melon				
Pastèque				
Tomate moderne				
Poivron				
Aubergine				
Basilic				
Haricot à rames				
Mais doux				
Blette				
Fraise				

³⁹ Elisabeth Saboural, "L'actu de Xavier!", *La feuille de chou des Lapereaux des Thermopyles*, 18 mars 2012.

4.2 Importance of events and face-to-face interactions

Besides this information channel, a well-functioning CSA also requires members to take an active part into regular events. Here are some of the most popular CSA groups' activities, picked from the Soil Association's CSA manual⁴⁰: open days, festivals, celebrations, harvest supper, plant and cake swap, wild food walks, local food picnics and roving meals, Apple Day and variations, children's vegetable activities, special plantings, festival days and processions, old ways with food, wine making. These activities are instrumental in creating conviviality and group solidarity. Even if only an active minority of CSA subscribers, often called the Core Group (*le noyau* in French), are taking part on a regular basis, they are very important in drawing a difference with non-CSA models and in feeding the process of collective choice -building process⁴¹.

Conclusion

The data collected for this article is far from being comprehensive, and further research should be done to characterize the different CSA movements with more precision. However, a couple of lessons can already be drawn from this census in progress. The first lesson is that the French AMAP movement is defining itself as part of a larger, worldwide movement, and that many CSA initiatives around the world in other countries are also defining themselves in a similar way.

The second lesson is that CSA means different things even inside a single country. In such a small movement as the Hungarian CSA movement, with only 10 projects running in 2013, there is a need to draw a distinction between “*share model*” and “*box scheme model*”⁴². Lesson 2: the movement is creative and diverse.

The third lesson is that even if the movement is highly creative and diverse, there are

⁴⁰ Soil Association, *op. Cit.*, section 10, p. 46.

⁴¹ Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, “De la souveraineté du consommateur à la gouvernance des consommateurs. L'espace du choix dans la consommation”, in Vincent Biechlin (ed.), *Repenser l'acte de consommation pour le bien-être de tous. Réflexions sur la responsabilité individuelle des consommateurs*, Strasbourg: Editions du Conseil de l'Europe, 2008, p. 48.

⁴² Zoltan Dezsény, *Emergence of Community Supported Agriculture in Hungary: A Case Study of Sustainable Rural Enterprises*, Davis: University of California Davis (Master's Thesis), 2013, pp. 62-63.

attempts to set boundaries and keep clear from purely business driven model. The case of the very detailed regulation passed in 2014 in the state of California, backed by local CSA farmers and a CSA network called the Community Alliance for Family Farmers, is very interesting⁴³. It shows that there is an urging feeling to act in order to prevent “*non-farm based aggregated box schemes*” from calling themselves CSA. The ongoing debate on the Internet platform -based box scheme called *La Ruche qui dit oui*, in France, and the tensions with the AMAP movement, are another sign of the same phenomenon. Lesson 3: there is a current excluding process to keep non-farm based box schemes clear away from using the CSA name and image.

Finally, this article gives an insight of the French way of doing CSA, and demonstrates that it is, even in its everyday way of operating, mostly an attempt by self-organized citizens to re-explore the producers-consumers tandem, and to reinvent an economic model for the common good.

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⁴³ California State Assembly, *op. Cit.*, 2014.

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