Appendix 3: Shared experiences

**Sharing experience about Charter writing processes:**

Two working groups - led by “experienced” people… discussed 4 main topics:

* 1. How did you define the scope?
  2. How did you define the structure?
  3. What were the main obstacles (drafting synthesis? collecting contributions? ensuring large participation)?
  4. What phasing for the process?
* **GASAP, Brussels** (Nicolas)
* PROCESS: A first Charter was written during 2009-2011 when the network was set up (grassroots groups started CSA back in 2005). They are currently redrafting the GASAP Charter for the next GA at the end of 2015. A first meeting was held three weeks ago, with a core group (10-20 people) trying to define the process. At the end of June, there will be a country residential brainstorming session outside of Brussels with 30-35 people to validate the process, and state the core principles. Then this first document will be sent to every “GASAP referent” (each GASAP group has a referent who transmits information between each CSA and the network), to be discussed ideally in the GASAPs for validation during the GA.
* SCOPE: The purpose of the new charter is to elaborate on what already exists, clarifying statements and letting enough room for diversity so that people can take ownership of their movement.
* OBSTACLES: mainly the consumers’ profile, some don’t care and are just interested in getting their veggies, some want to remain independent; farmers are also very independent. So fostering solidarity among all GASAP stakeholders is not easy.
* **Austrian CSA network** (Stephan)
* PROCESS: The first CSA in Austria started in 2011, in the year when the Nyeleni-europe process took its first big step in Krems. Since then Austrian CSA-farmers have been building a network with consumer activists. The first meetings of CSA-farmers and active consumers in Austria were held during the “CSA for Europe” project (2011-2013). These meetings were used for experience-sharing of existing CSA farms, mainly with farmers and consumers who want to start a new CSA. Since 2013 there have been two CSA meetings a year, in autumn and spring; they take place on different CSA farms. The meetings alternate: one for CSA farmers and one for farmers and consumers. During the Nyeleni-AT forum in April 2014, people involved in the CSA galaxy felt the need to start an “awareness-raising” campaign among consumers. Their main question was “Who are the CSA-members? How to get the members more involved”?. An action-research project was conducted by Stephan Pabst involving active farmers and active consumers. In the Austrian network there are only some regularly active consumer-activists (2-5) and most of the experience sharing is done by farmers (there are 20 farmer-led CSAs in Austria). At the last farmers-meeting in Nov 2014, the drafting process of a Charter was started. From December 2014 to January 2015 questionnaires were sent to CSA members (175 of 10 CSAs responded) about their motivations and engagement and all farmers were asked via phone-survey about their motivations. The results of this investigation were presented in Feb 2015, at the “spring” meeting and a working group on the Austrian CSA “LEITBILD” (vision statement) was created. The working group finalized the 3 columns of CSA by April; they are grounded in food sovereignty!



The current situation (May 2015) is that the “Leitbild” together with a preamble has been sent out by the network-coordination (Solawi-Team) to the farmers: Feed-back from the different CSAs is expected by Aug 31st. The validation of this Leitbild document and discussion of next steps will happen during the next CSA meeting, at the end of November.

* SCOPE: The Leitbild-process should continue the awareness-raising campaign that was started through the research project. The goal is to clarify what CSA is, and what it is not. The existing values and motivations should be clear, but there should be enough space for diversity. Another goal is to strengthen the CSA movement by the involving more consumers in this process.
* OBSTACLES: There are insufficient resources to hold workshops in every CSA, so it is again left to the farmers who are already busy in farming and building a community, to discuss the Leitbild with the members of their CSA.
* **Nekasarea in the Basque Country** (Isa)

**The success of food-communities in the Basque country**

The CSA network in the Spanish Basque Country was developed by EHNE Bizkaia, a strong farmers’ movement rooted in the Via Campesina. The Basque region is a geographically difficult region, consisting of valleys where farmers are marginalized by industrial agriculture. As farms disappeared over the last decade, the challenge was to renew the relationships between the rural and urban areas.

**Challenges of adapting the CSA concept:** Building on the idea of CSA defined by the French AMAP (*Association pour le Maintien d’une Agriculture Paysanne*) the farmers defined what and how they would define fair prices, food sovereignty and a fair salary in a charter. After a year of discussions, a 4-page document was produced in which the way of production was defined. Unfortunately no one was complying with these production norms. The difficulty was to establish the minimum standards with which every farm could comply.

**Farmers’ abilities meet consumers’ needs:** In a collective process, that involved peasants working together, a way of working was defined and the results were written down in protocols. The consumers also took part, but it was made clear that delivery of packed boxes was not an option. Instead the solution consisted of making a list of products that the consumers wanted; farmers could fill this in with what they were capable of producing. The list also includes products that are not available yet, but where there was a consumer request. This helps farmers who want to start up - especially the young ones - to align their production with the current needs. As the products are all delivered to one place once a week or every two weeks, this is a perfect alternative to one-stop shopping. Consumers and farmers define one-year contracts together. All consumers can choose the kinds of products they want, and also those they would like to have that are not yet produced.

**Building food communities through training and education:** Once this model was booming, further clarification about the rules of production became necessary. A lot of time was spent by the farmers’ network to try to change the rules, but this process was not very fruitful. But one of the results of this process was that consumers and farmers proposed to implement the Participative Guarantee System (PGS) within the network. So the following strategy was found: Every farmer and consumer who wants to join the network has to attend a certain number of training sessions. In the first training sessions, when the farmer’s network tries to build consumer groups, the focus is on food sovereignty and the political background. This also works as a filter, because consumers who are willing to commit to this idea are more likely to respect their contracts.

A lot of training is offered throughout the year. Some training sessions are especially for farmers, mainly for communication, and others for consumers. The network-building process contains three rounds. In the first round, a group of consumers meets a network coordinator for the first training on the political background. In the second round consumers and farmers meet together with the network coordinator. After this, the consumers are invited to visit the farms.

Two important concepts should be understood by the participants to be able to understand what they are doing. One issue to be clarified is the difference between exchange and reciprocity. The other issue is that food is considered as a common good, which is cared for by the community that is about to be built. A goal is that the community that is built in this way is part of the Spanish solidarity economy network (REAS), which is a part of the European coordination of the network for social and solidarity economy (RIPESS).

**Food communities – an attractive alternative towards food sovereignty:** As most of the consumers are from urban areas, one major issue is access for the people from the valleys to an agreed distribution point where the food products can be collected. Of course baskets and box-schemes would be easier than building a community between farmers and consumers. But the farmers network was able to find a way of implementing an attractive alternative food system based on food sovereignty, without making peoples’ lives a constant assembly.

* **The AMAP charter, France** (Didier)

The first charter was written in south of France, Provence region – May 2003. The process described here is a **Charter Rewriting process**.

The rewriting process had to be bottom up; not just for some of the people: The Charter is a common good for all movement participants.

There were 4 steps:

1/ Initiation,

2/ Workshops,

3/ Writing the first draft of the charter,

4/ Development and validation of the charter by the General Assembly.

A National Writing Committee was composed of representatives from the regional networks. A Steering Committee served as the executive board, and was in charge of taking decisions.

It is important to note that a full-time facilitator was paid to organise writing workshops in various territories!

At the end of phase 2, twenty people from the National Writing Committee came together in a group for a weekend to summarise the draft: they selected the “agreed” points and identified proposals that were outstanding or specific to other AMAPs (for example, an AMAP group that wanted to include bakers/ processors in the charter).

**STRUCTURE OF THE CHARTER**

Shared values and references to external concepts (Organic agriculture, *agriculture paysanne*) were put in the preamble of the charter.

Producers and Consumers' Commitments were the topic for parts 2 and 3.

Part 4 was thought as an opening for further developments and leaves an opening that allows future revision of the Charter.

**FINALIZATION PROCESS**

After the National writing committee met for a weekend to select proposals, a first draft of the revised charter was then sent to all territories.

Answers were collected as draft amendments (385 amendments were collected) and classified by the Steering Committee.

There was also a second document to justify and clarify decisions on choosing or dismissing certain words from the second draft.

Representatives from 19 different territories gathered and worked for 2 days in December 2014.

There was no formal voting system used to reach consensus, just a raising of yes or no papers,.

The cost of the process: one full time member of staff, 60.000 euros for 2 years.

**MAIN OBSTACLE**: human resources, lack of activists and committed people, as often in our networks.

* **GAS, Italy** (Virgina)

GAS are part of the solidarity economy movement, which started a writing process of their shared values, and the building of a new governance model two years ago. It is a long debate between representatives to have a common movement!

The next step is the national meeting INES ([Incontro Nazionale di Economia Solidale](http://www.socioeco.org/actu240.html)) that will take place on June 19-21 in Trieste, to state the operating principles of the SE movement. Stefania from Tavola RES (coordination platform) will be the focal point for CSA/GAS.

The Common Ground process is also a good opportunity for the Italian Network to rethink what a GAS is. Their next meeting is also planned for October during the KUMINDA fair.