

The problem of the consumer's may be the solution.

Sustainable production from the consumers' perspective: The emergence of the "Gaume grassland steer" in Belgium

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Abstract

This paper examines the question of sustainable consumption through the consumer's contribution to the various dimensions of sustainability. The consumer's participation reveals legitimacy conflicts in the process of designing new production systems. The different dimensions of sustainability can be linked to different legitimacy models. When the building of new systems entails a concerted process involving dialogue and deliberation among stakeholders from the agricultural and environmental sectors, various legitimacy principles are mobilized and confront each other through the spokespeople who represent the interests involved. This specific case concerns beef produced from the "Gaume grassland steer," a system that can be characterized as agroecological and territorial. The consumers who were involved contributed, through deliberative processes, to the coexistence of various legitimacy principles and stakeholder cooperation. This capacity could be linked to their multiple and fuzzy identities because their identities were shown to be flexible, changing with the institutional setting, which was sometimes consumer-oriented and sometimes territory-driven. This allowed them to act as mediators between environmentalists and farmers. To do this they had to be able to accept the limits of each legitimacy principle and contest the possibility of imposing only one principle on all the others. In so doing they helped the heterogeneous actors to reach compromises by referring to a kind of patrimonial common good.

A. Introduction

The sociology of consumption has paid special attention to the social dynamics that allows for the growth of consumption and typical consumption patterns in modern societies. The analyses are heavily focused on understanding buying behavior (and secondarily utilization) from the standpoint of social relationships. They thus attached particular importance to factors such as cultural distinctions, identity building and identification, the diversification of lifestyles, and the mobility of goods and messages. They thus take account of a sort of inflationary movement in rich societies from the standpoint of communication. The consumer is less a user than a communicator or, more precisely, a "chooser" who makes choices on the basis of the communication value of her/his consumption. This type of analysis is well suited to a certain type of consumption (*i.e.*, bought goods that have communicational value, such as clothing) seen from the angle of the purchasing choice (which is only one aspect of consumption) and concerning socioeconomic categories that can spend significant portions of their budgets on such goods. However, this type of analysis cannot completely overlook an entire series of consumables that do not belong to this type of communicational consumption, especially such items as household utilities (gas, water, and electricity). Their use affects both the households' budgets and the environmental consequences of their production patterns. The factors that promote their consumption link them in a complex way to the volume of resources consumed according to very different dynamics. These "systems of provision" are "sociotechnical systems (or agency networks) that combine technologies and various forms of organization. It is thus possible to show how the consumer is a user affected by the process of electrification (Hughes, 1983) but is not really implicated as an agent of change in the way

that investors, engineers, managers, and financiers are. Pragmatically speaking, however, it is difficult to say if it is better to act on the “infrastructure” of the production and distribution of these goods or on the lifestyles of their users and the uses that accompany and influence them in return. In the historical development of air conditioning, for example, it is not possible analytically, to dissociate the innovations of the system of provision from lifestyle changes (Shove, 2003).

So the consumer comes through as the victim of social processes that impose consumption standards on her/him and the author of an inflationary consumption process: the norm of the car, which imposes the use of a private passenger car on most people, does not force everyone to dream of riding around town in a powerful SUV. It is thus difficult not to see in the average individual's consumption the effect of collective choices, the effect of social standards, and the effect of her/his own contribution that the communicational dynamic brings to certain choices that individuals make. We are thus dealing here – for a given instance of consumption – with a both structural and historical sequence of collective choices¹, and forms of social standardization and at the same time individual choices that can reinforce these dynamics or slow them down if people resist the inflationary pressure in certain places and points in time.

This is where the matter of the possible action that gives meaning to the notion of sustainable consumption comes in. The idea of sustainable consumption as a political program makes no sense unless we accept the bet that changing consumption practices (and lifestyles) can influence the final consumption of resources. This is what lurks behind the actions of a certain number of NGOs, of a certain number of political programs emanating primarily from international institutions, but also some national programs. We can see in them something new, something that could, in a sense at least, rejoin the idea of the consumerist movements that have developed since the 1960s around the idea of defending consumers' interests and thus – and this is what they have in common – betting on a collective consumers' organization to affect producers' choices and clamor for government intervention to protect consumers' interests. However, in the case of these concerns about sustainability, the interests are not as easily clearly connected to the consumer's satisfaction with the product at the time of purchase or during its use. In other words, while the interests that are defended from a consumerist perspective are indeed interests of a market and civic order (and entail regulation that is dependent on the pressure exerted by collective action, be it private or government or the two combined), the interests that are derived from the concerns with sustainability tend more to be interests in the civic sphere, without obvious direct connections with the consumer's private interests. Or, stated differently, it is only when private and collective interests can be connected satisfactorily that their regulation becomes acceptable and understandable.

This leads to the core subject of this contribution, namely, *allowing for the various interests* that are at stake. How, for example, can the interests of biodiversity – which belong to different space-times – be taken into account, how are they translated, and as a function of which collective actions? My hypothesis is that possibilities and emerging mechanisms for taking environmental, social, and intertemporal dimensions into account in regulating consumption exist.

¹ If we accept this hypothesis, it then becomes urgent to go beyond narrow approaches to consumption and open up to research that will strive to untangle the myriad factors and processes involved in specific types of consumption. Being able to come up with strategies of change is possible only if this condition is met.

For example, we could consider the case of SUVs. The market shares of SUVs have risen spectacularly in Europe and the USA. However, most interesting, from my perspective, is to see the emergence of political debates on the local scale (that of large cities): Confronted with the problems of clogged thoroughfares, air pollution, and road safety, policy-makers are mustering arguments to try to limit, even ban, such vehicles from city streets. That is indeed a form of regulation of consumption that is based on a local translation of various environmental components drawn from various scales. Such actions also “collect” various interests. Such collective action can be suspected of harboring a host of underlying concerns, including a protest against or negative feeling against overly conspicuous or ostentatious consumption. What is important in my view is the formation of a local coalition of converging arguments to envision the regulation of a consumption practice. The question is to determine what it takes into account and how it goes about this. I effectively posit a certain reciprocity or symmetry in what is taken into account as a condition for the transformation of consumption patterns.

The active consumer (“consom’acteur”)

How is the consumer present in consumption?

The purest image of the consumer is that of an agent who takes a minimum amount of things into account, that is to say, who takes only what interests her/him at the very time and space-time of buying something into account. This figure is that of the consumer who does her/his weekly shopping for perishable and everyday goods, such as Kleenexes, in a supermarket. In this type of purchasing the consumer is in a highly reversible situation, for the purchase creates no commitment beyond, say, a week. This reversibility means that s/he can change her/his opinion every week. Her/his relationship with the producer/distributor and at the same time the product is a one-off one that creates no further commitment. This non-commitment paradigm is that of the ideal model of consumption, that is to say, that of non-committal acts. The act of consuming is reversible, unstable, and individual (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2002). It thus entails no collective commitment and no relationship with the production system or other groups, including organized consumers.

This consumer non-commitment dynamic is obviously less strong in the case of goods that have value for a longer time, such as household appliances and housing. In such cases, the consumer’s commitment will be stronger and entail more work to compare and evaluate the goods and a stronger link with the supplier, producer, or intermediaries. It may also involve deeper thought about user groups such as the family, neighbors, and other groups that are deemed relevant to the uses to which the product is put. The consumer’s active involvement, that is to say, the *work* that s/he must do in terms of thinking, assessing, in a word, taking various elements into account, is thus one of the conditions for the emergence of responsible consumption. Sustainable consumption then entails taking broader groups into account. How is this done? For consumers’ associations, another path of action is that of public action, of demanding standardization and protection for the weakest members of the system. However, that is not the subject of this paper.

If we come now to the matter of sustainability, it is clear that taking such dimensions as future generations, international fairness, and global environmental threats into account is possible only if consumption becomes politicized. These issues effectively demand consumer “commitment” beyond the reversible and unstable stakes riding on her/his daily behavior.

Does this politicization of consumption stand a chance of affecting the directions that production systems take?

The ambiguity of a “bargaining” consumer

The preceding analyses lead to the development of an ambiguous image of the consumer who is both a victim if the systems of provision organize the relations between producers and distributors and an agent if collective actions promote her/his interests, which are shaped in turn by collective actions. If the consumer can choose, how can we ask the question of how s/he chooses? Here we must ask, if the consumer has an ability to choose, how we can analyze it, how it is expressed, and how it can be mobilized. Most ongoing actions (of eco-friendly consumption) are concerned mainly with the mobilization of this ability to make choices by betting on the call to values. The social sciences that have investigated the issue stress more the variability of consumption patterns and product usage and thus bank more on mobilization through reconstruction of the mediations that can then dictate behavior.

Market sociology (Dubuisson, Cochoy) has investigated the mediation work that leads to the construction of figures of consumers. The exchange between seller and buyer is contingent on the construction of a series of links and representations. The figure of the seller defines that of the consumer and, inversely, the definition of the customer basically determines how the seller must deal with the buyer and, thus, who the seller is (or should be). This work is not limited to the surface of the market transaction. It is part of an effort that precedes and follows the transaction. Upstream, the circulation of product information that the market requires is accompanied by the circulation of information about the demand that is summed up by the construct (or “figure”) of the end user or users and which the entire commodity chain learns to share. Market studies, specifications, and data exchange software help both to produce these figures and to circulate them on the various markets (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2003). Downstream from the transaction, consumer organizations can no longer be reduced to simple mouthpieces for an already constituted supply, either. On the contrary, they help to shape this supply according to criteria that differ from those of the production side of the equation and thus have a third-party prescription role (Hatchuel, 1995). This enables consumers to get more information and assess its validity. The notion of the figure of the consumer thus involves the development, structuring, and representation of both supply and demand. This often leads to the paradox of consumers who are defined by distributors and consumers’ organizations with very little input from the main parties concerned, except when they eventually identify with these “imported” portraits of themselves.

An opposing point of view consists, on the contrary, in considering how the consumer can become not the result of “construction work”, the culmination of a provision system or consumer advocacy association’s work of representing the consumer, but rather a possible starting point in the very construction of new agrifood systems. This type of reasoning is found in part in deliberative policy analysis.

Deliberative policy analysis or reflexive design is applied to situations with great factual uncertainty and normative divergence. The term “reflexive design” refers to the attempts to redefine agricultural standards and technologies by means of confrontations between the various stakeholders in these technologies, *i.e.*, researchers, farmers, processors, distributors, and consumers (Vos *et al.*, 2005). These initiatives revolve around technology choices and their consequences in terms of “sociotechnical trajectories” and long-term scenarios. Program

348, “Future Livestock Production Systems,” carried out in the Netherlands by the Dutch Farm Ministry and a consortium of research institutes, had just this ambition. In this case, however, the reflexive approach ran into trouble linked to the historical sectoral organization of institutions created in the past centuries (Grin, 2004). This was especially the case when it came to ways of representing consumers. Given these difficulties, Louviaux (2008) has described an original attempt by some social scientists to study the situation by setting up iterative deliberative focus groups to handle the issue of pesticides. This researcher has shown, within certain limits, that this type of scheme can get consumers to make use of principles of fairness. These two forms of social experimentation are based on forms of strong legitimacy that could be deemed external to the consumers who are involved in the deliberative process itself, *i.e.*, the authority of the public powers (the Ministry of Agriculture in the first case) and the authority of expertise in sustainable development (the researchers linked to a sustainable development program) in the second case.

The case proposed below is based, on the contrary, on weak legitimacy. It is that of a local project, an innovative new proposal for an agroecological food chain in a field of conflict in which the farmers’ legitimacy is pitted against that of environmentalists. The problem here is one of developing a legitimate action and enabling consumers to contribute to this process. We are going to develop this cases study in two steps: emergence and legitimacy conflicts (B) and the contribution of consumer through a deliberative and territorialized process (C)

B. The emergence of an agri-environmental activity chain comes up against legitimacy conflicts.

The case that informs this issue of the emergence of agroecological food chain is that of “Gaume grassland steers.” The aim of this small cattle-ranching food chain is to contribute, through specific stock-farming practices, to biodiversity management while enabling the cattle breeders to sell the products of their labor on a quality produce market. The dynamics of this activity chain’s emergence was studied from the particular viewpoint of the researchers who proposed that some local players gradually come together around what was initially just a proposal in a research-intervention (Hubert, 2002) project that began in 2004 and is still running. The complexity of this project came up against three uncertainties: uncertainty about biodiversity management (time and spatial scales), uncertainty about the type of product (beef), and uncertainty about the ways of integrating the first two elements. The theoretical hypothesis that the researchers (in sociology and agriculture) mobilized was to posit the territorial construct as the framework for possible convergence of the different unstabilized interests of heterogeneous players. This construct was thus indissociable from the context in which it was generated (Lascoume and Le Bourhis, 1998). The context that was mobilized is one of the rare Belgian territories with a rather dreamed-of and fragile but nevertheless present identity: Gaume. This territory is an area of extensive cattle ranching (on the Belgian scale) that is dominated by hardy breeds and original management options involving multiple breeds². Fifteen percent of the stock-farming operations there were organic in 2002. More recently, large areas of grazing land (50% in some municipalities) have been given Natura 2000 status, which testifies to the rich biodiversity of Gaume’s land. The nature management actions there that involve stock farming nevertheless rest on shaky pillars of legitimacy. The importance of biodiversity management in this rural area was made known and recognized

² These stock-farming practices contrast with the dominant Belgian Blue model, the hegemony of which rests on an extremely close-knit reference framework given to little reversibility (Stassart *et al.*, 2008)

through cooperation in which the cattle breeders were long relegated to the status of service providers, whether in their dealings with forest rangers (managing open spaces as nature reserves through grazing) or their relationship with the Directorate-General for Agriculture (setting up the region's agri-environmental measures). For their part, the farmers as a profession continued to cling to its historical role of feeding the world, disqualifying through images such as that of the "landscape gardener" all the stakes riding on biodiversity management (whether imposed, concerted, or shared) – a question that was raised more brutally when huge areas of farmland came under Natura 2000 in 2003.

B.1 Different principles of legitimacy are mobilized in concerted action between agricultural and environmental professionals.

The legitimacy problem here concerns the processes whereby members of society develop or recognize principles of a general scope likely to form a matrix, which is then perceived as legitimate, to settle conflicts or give the go-ahead to decisions engaging the common fate (the future of agriculture and biodiversity in a given territory). The matter of legitimacy is at the heart of nature management and the legitimacies of the interests that are associated with the co-construction or co-designing of nature management systems are currently very weak. Relations between agriculture and the environment are characterized by a host of denial and avoidance strategies, which are all the stronger if there is uncertainty about the right action to take (Godard, 1998). The co-existence of a variety of principles of legitimacy within a legitimacy system is thus the first thing at stake (Laufer, 2001).

The initial situation in which agriculture and the environment were pitted against each other came about in the following context: A project under the EU rural development program Leader+ got two local associations to work together in a territorial framework that can be defined as having weak prescriptive force (1). These associations carried many different legitimacy principles that can be described with reference to Boltanski Thévenot's (1987) notion of "world of justification," to wit, a farmers' market connecting the domestic (*i.e.*, home) and market spheres (2) and a local action group and Leader operator introducing a new principle of efficiency or "industrial" to biodiversity management (3), besides the two aforementioned connected principles. A word of explanation:

(1) The action of Europe's Leader+ program (EU Regulation 1698/2005) acts like a weak prescription (Hatchuel, 2002, pp.25-37). Through the projects that it supports, Leader+ tries to set not the aims, tasks, or procedures, but the "objects of work," which are also "objects of knowledge" of rural development. This allows a general orientation and temporary distribution of tasks and areas of expertise, which in this case concern the "bottom up" territorial approach. It aims to promote local development strategies by rural area and to generate multisectoral strategy understanding and design based on interactions between the players and the projects.

(2) The Farmers' Market is legitimate on two scores: as a "market" belonging to "farmers." This weekly market has been a meeting place for a dozen local producers, where they sell their produce to the public, for some thirty years. The public – mostly local families (150-250 people each week) – meet there each week with pleasure in the neighborly eating area that the farmers' stands encircle. It is a world of local affairs, of the singular, interlaced stories of the priest who promotes the local market, producers, and some militant consumers. A whole interpersonal network of belonging to a subregional local identity (Gaume) has developed there. The register is that of the home and domestic affairs.

However, this place is also a market. Over time, some local processors (a butcher, a baker, etc.) joined the farmers. In so doing, they created their work while developing the market and thus benefited from the situational rent that the market offered to organize the rareness of their products. The idea was to transform the farmers' market setting into buying behavior aimed at goods that had become desirable and appropriable. It was also one of protecting this rareness from the threat of competition by limiting access to the goods. The farmers' market thus rested on two pillars of legitimacy: the domestic and market.

(3) The arrival of a Leader+ operator, the non-profit Local Action Group (LAG) in the region made this initial configuration more complex. As we shall see, in initiating actions concerning the relations between farming and the environment, the LAG introduced a third principle of legitimacy founded on the efficiency of industrial conventions.

The script of the stabilization of these three principles concerning biodiversity (1), agricultural diversification (2), and the consumer (3) can be read in the project sheets that operationalized the LAG's "strategic development plan (*Plan de Développement Stratégique 2003-2008*) (Joie, 2002: 58-66)). Project Sheet 3, "Involving local farmers in natural site management," proposed a program of action based on nature that was defined objectively by experts asked to explain to and make the farmers in particular aware of the importance of this task. Their assignment was not free from paradox, for they had to *convince* (in the name of science) the farmers of the *biological merits* of nature management. Despite the stated will to *go out and meet and talk to* people, expertise, forecasting, and monitoring were effectively what was mobilized around tools such as *inventories, zoning, and mapping*: all things that underpin the principle of efficiency of the industrial world. In this sense, the experts became an extension of the regulatory logic of the Walloon Region's agri-environmental measures (ref.). The two other project sheets referred more conventionally to the link between the market and domestic spheres referred to above. Project Sheet 4, (carried by the LAG), "Promoting and selling the products of agricultural diversification," proposed support for the farmers' *diversification* by working for a closer match between *supply and demand*. It tied in with the market principle endorsed by the farmers' market. Project Sheet 6, "Educating the eater" (carried by the farmers' market), linked, albeit more diffusely, a market principle of legitimacy (*economic, agricultural, and trade development*) and a domestic principle of legitimacy (*social link and cultural identity*).

The invitation extended by the Farmers' Market to the researchers to talk about and explore their agroecological food chain proposal arose within this construction in which domestic and market principles were linked and co-existed beside a principle of efficiency. This exchange culminated a few months later in a formalized agreement convention that specify three objectives based on the three legitimacy principles mentioned above. The first objective, *to make a product that would be a spokesman for the territory*, legitimated the Leader+ program's weak prescription, while the next two objectives took up the link between the market and domestic principle carried by the farmers' market and LAG and introduced a principle of efficiency in connection with nature that was carried by the LAG and researchers³. This construction was not stable. In 2004/05, during which the first "think tank" around the idea of raising steers was set up, the assembly was subjected to great tension between the spokespeople of different legitimacies. However, the fact that it was constructed through the market, Leader+ program, project sheets, and cooperation agreement made these tensions tolerable and enabled them to coexist without a fight to the finish.

³ Objective 1: *A local sector development project involving all the players*, carried out by the farmers' market and LAG ; Objective 2: *Stock farming on the pastures of the Semois Valley (Natura 2000, autonomy versus export)*, carried out by the Local Action Group and the University researchers.

B. 2 The observed tensions were linked to clashes between the spokespeople of different principles of legitimacy.

The legitimacy conflicts were tolerable because they were housed within a system of multiple legitimacies. The territorialized translation that the researchers proposed through the idea of the “Gaume grassland steer” agroecological food chain stabilized the legitimacy conflicts inherent in the “agriculture and environment” relationship. This coexistence was not easy because it involved vectors of legitimacy and organizations with different and varied constraints and efficiency criteria. At the same time, however, it was necessary, for it made it possible to explore the various possibilities that each different order of legitimacy proposed. In this way, it kept open the questions that were raised by some people and the principles of legitimacy of other parties would otherwise have closed. Let us look at some examples of these legitimacy games; let us observe their spokespeople and the tensions that they generate.

As the spokesman for efficiency, the Directorate-General for Agriculture official in charge of agri-environmental measures wanted the local debate to “simplify the procedure.” That meant taking the organic specifications and their regulatory scheme as they were as a framework for stock-farming practices, and then using the image of the territory to communicate about good management and natural resource conservation by cattle breeders. Here the industrial order was mobilized, *i.e.*, the search for efficiency by monitoring compliance with production standards and recognition through the granting of the associated financial incentive. The matters of the qualification and marketing of the farmers’ products were secondary. That was a kind of bonus. One cattle rearer – one of the few who finished his cattle in the region and thus controlled the outlet for his meat – served as the spokesman for his fellow cattle rearers and the market world. In his opinion, whatever was decided “*had to make money.*” While he was ready to seize the opportunity, he said, unblinkingly, “*...we know how to produce, we just need to find the right market.*” He tried to rally the think-tank’s members to his cause by arguing that the *idea* of the steer would be believable only once the first steer was sold. He lashed out against the ideology of the landscape gardener to which he might be reduced and denounced the environmental police’s arrogance. That is when the matter of developing a specific asset (biodiversity) and its profitability came to the fore. A technical and economic study was commissioned to shed light on this last aspect (Stilmant, 2006). Curiously, its tempered conclusions did not prevent the same farmer from castrating his young bulls for the first time. Indeed, beyond the unpredictability of prices and lack of product definition, the farmers were interested in raising steers, in castrating their male calves – a practice that had disappeared over the last generation in favor of raising young bulls. Raising steers increased their independence from cattle merchants while restoring sense to a farming option in which value-added was produced in the finishing yards of Flanders and Italy. The *return of the Gaume steer*⁴ was a wager on being the material spokesman (taking the time to raise tastier meat) and symbolic spokesman of an identity (a certain way of raising cattle and a certain *savoir-vivre*). This notion of heritage, that of the Gaume grassland steer, could forge a new link between parties belonging to the same territory, even if this heritage remained fragile, defined by what it was not, and experienced above all as a “dreamland.” The standard (specifications), market (*filière* or commodity chain), and a good that symbolized belonging (the “spokesproduct”) coexisted and vied with each other. Each one claimed the legitimacy of its own world (industrial, market, or domestic). However, the tensions remained tolerable because they were encased in the nested structure of European program – local associations – Leader+ project sheet – cooperation agreement. What is more, there was now a material and

⁴ *Le Soir*, Luxembourg regio, Nov. 30, 2007

symbolic object around which the issues of biodiversity, product qualification, and prospects for local farmers and their respective legitimacies could try to come together.

B.3 Legitimacy conflicts on undecidability of a superior legitimacy principle

The legitimacy conflicts were linked to undecidability about the very principle of superior legitimacy rather than to a lack of elaboration of a principle. The tensions were not the expression of cognitive conflicts, as one might see, for example, in the tensions that are triggered by converting conventional to organic farming operations (Stassart and Jamar, 2008). The clashes over the principles were reflected in deep tensions, tectonic friction. They were the result of attempts to shift the principle of legitimacy, of attempts made by the institutional players located upstream from the action and behind the scenes to bring the local debate within the confines of their register of legitimacy. The local players and institutional upstream players were nevertheless connected through the project sheets or research project through the budget lines (financing) and assessment schemes, which were closely linked to the associated public policies. So, these were not simply friction between players with different interests, but indeed forces that were expressed in the local debate from a distance, notably in line with the public policies instituted at the regional level. So, there was thus a form of confrontation between tectonic forces that resulted from the conflicting relationship or frictions between principles of legitimacy and from the impossibility of one principle to prevail over the others as the higher principle that would serve as the supreme referee. The cracks that developed from these tensions were expressed via the conventional process of disqualifying the value systems linked to the other principles and asserting that one's own value system must hold sway. This involved attempts by the various parties to impose their own definitions of the operation of qualifying relevant objects and subjects. The following objects and subjects of qualification thus emerged, like so many flag-bearers of their respective constituencies:

- Specifications/Inspection/advisor for the industrial world of the nature managers;
- Differentiated product/Market/Commodity or activity chain for the market world of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and its differentiated quality policy and
- Territorial good/Companioning/Interpersonal network for the domestic world that the researchers' research-intervention was trying to set up (Stassart, 2005: 4)

The problem facing the small networks formed of researchers and local development agents from the LAG and farmers' market was that of solving this paradox, *i.e.*, taking everything into account while denying the specific interests linked to each principle of legitimacy. From this point, the possible compromise among these three principles would depend on these players' ability to define locally a common good that would enable them to arbitrate among the principles on legitimate grounds. This ability depended in turn on the scheme's ability to enable the local players to step out of their positions as spokespeople for one of the other exclusive principle of legitimacy.

- Within this scheme, consumers involved in a deliberative process would have to take on multiple identities and these multiple identities were what made it possible to take on and to legitimize the undecidability of a principle of higher legitimacy (C.1).
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- The undecidability of a resource in the construction of a territorial common good, the drafting of the "specifications" for which was the first test (answering the question "what is this product?") (C.2)

C. Consumer through a deliberative process, assume the undecidability that lead to the construction of an agreement or patrimonial good.

The consumers were ambivalent at first. The notion of ambivalence refers to situations in which the player may refer to different, even opposite, principles or values, at least in principle. So, a mother who is very serious about her children's health will feed them with organic foods but accept that she and her husband, while being just as concerned about their own diet, will eat conventional foods. Such behavior marks in a surprising way the fact that consumers differentiate among consumption *situations*. This analysis can be broadened to see how this same mother worries about the fate of her village's stock farmer. Consumers as agents in a network do not have a single, stable and unequivocal identity. They have multiple identities that vary with the context in which they find themselves: customers buying for a production chain, citizens involved in local affairs, advocates of the survival of small farmers, and nature lovers. These identities are usually piled one on the other without a specific identity's gaining the definitive upper hand over the others. This malleability makes it possible to render a problem more complex, depending on the scheme in which it is involved (Louviaux, 2008) and to redefine it by changing its boundaries. The problem's variability actually stems from the lability of the identities that are involved and there will be a strong interdependence between the diversity of product qualifications and the multiplicity of identities mobilized.

The Gaume grassland steer project was, as described earlier, an arena for confrontations between different principles of legitimacy that had to be connected around a common good. There was no higher principle of legitimacy that could arbitrate among the principles on the table and legitimacy was not increased by adding a string of various references willy-nilly. Creating a common good thus entailed an operation of selection and qualification (of relevant objects and empowered social actors) that would culminate in a compromise referring to a plurality of principles of legitimacy (Godard, 1989). This qualification was done in steps via various trials that would make it possible to choose elements of specific representations and the definition of a collective interest, the effectiveness of which founded the collective action that was likely to get the stakeholders' consent. If the trial was successful, it created a link between the actors' identities more than it officialized oppositions between them. The Gaume grassland steer project's emerging dynamics enables us to analyze a possible and variable involvement of the consumers' identities in the design trial. This consisted in defining a general framework for the project (C1) and translating it (C2) in the form of specifications. I shall thus proceed in two steps: (1) What types of device involve what types of identity? and (2) What does that generate in terms of specifications?

C1. Variations in identities

I describe below three successive schemes that involve the consumers in different ways. These are the three steps in the construction of a common good, to wit:

- a think-tank or "multistakeholder group" in which the consumers were *represented*. This group was asked to take a stand on the strategic merits of raising steers in a territorial logic. It generated a collaboration contract (the agreement convention) between local partners and researchers and public debate about the project that it described.
- three separate working groups – one of civic consumers or "food citizens," one of cattle breeders, and one of environmentalists – were then set up in very different ways. In this

article I shall consider the consumers' group only, which produced a report bearing the title "*délibération consommateurs*" or "*consumers' deliberations*" (Stassart et Lecomte 2006).

- the three groups were connected in a network around the trial of constructing an agreement (standard book (in the broad sense) for Gaume grassland steers⁵). The consumers redefined themselves here as *consom'acteurs* or consumers as social actors.

For analytical reasons I have dissociated these three phases. The process was actually both more interconnected and more unpredictable (Stassart, 2009). Such phasing nevertheless corresponds to a series of tests, the translation of which can be found in the aforementioned public documents.

C.1.1 Phase I: Representation in the think-tank

In design processes one tends to represent users in a certain way, even if they are not explicitly defined. This makes taking the floor on behalf of consumers open to contestation. More rarely, the consumers can have themselves represented via people who are more familiar with consultation processes than with design processes. The case described here is an exception: A local network speaking on behalf of the consumers, *i.e.*, the farmers' market, took the initiative here.

Identity 1: Represented consumers.

The farmers' market historically resulted from activist purchasing unions in the 1970s. As such, and as a market, it was historically recognized as legitimately representing consumers and got the resources that it needed from the European program Leader + to spark a local community movement around the researchers' "steer raising" proposal. In reality, as was pointed out earlier, the farmers' market was playing on two levels. It entered the picture via the market register: The idea of producing a differentiated, tasty, specifically defined, local product was taken up in the consumer's interest. The local dimension then offered, in the domestic register, prospects for the small farmers and tradesmen in its network, who were disappearing one by one. The farmers' market thus set itself up as a territorialized spokesperson for the consumers. Its resources gave it the ability to represent and mobilize the consumers around a mid-term steer project. The presence of an affected stakeholder (the consumers' representative) legitimized the question of other stakeholders' absence: At the end of this first phase, the think-tank took note of the "environmentalists'" absence. The invitation to the environmentalists was requalified: The environmentalists had to show proof of experience and local roots. This led in the next phase to the consumers' group's being reconfigured into a mixed group of consumers and local naturalists⁶.

C.1.2 Phase II Consumers' deliberations

⁵ Hanus, H., L. Roussel, *et al.* (2008). Cahier des Charges Boeuf des Prairies Gaumaises. Bellefontaine, Cuestas: 25.

⁶ This would influence the composition of the participants chosen for the deliberative process in Phase II considerably, for the farmers' market recruited nine "ordinary" consumers through a variety of means (a beef tasting evening, film-debate around the showing of Darwin's Nightmare, and announcement at the Farmers' Market). At the same time, the researchers identified nine local naturalists in the course of a survey of the members of the local chapter of the national wildlife defense association "Natagora". This all culminated in a list of seventeen candidates: eight local consumers, mostly women concerned with "feeding their families", and nine naturalists, mostly men who were involved locally in nature protection as volunteers.

As the think-tank decided it was time to go from idea to project design, the second phase was launched. Two working groups were set up: a group of cattle breeders to consider the practices and a group of consumers. The latter's brief was to clarify the landmarks that could be used to sketch the project in its different dimensions. The consumers' participation changed and then engaged other forms of identity than that of representation.

This exploratory phase involved a series of five iterative deliberative focus groups organized by a leading figure from the farmers' market and run by a sociologist. This deliberative process⁷ is close, in terms of its intentions, to the pragmatic propositions of the "Civic Agriculture" manifesto (Lyson, 2004). In terms of its objectives, organization, procedures, and analysis, it emphasizes the discursive interactions between participants rather than taking up their individual or collective representations of a given theme (Duchesne and Haegel, 2004, quoted by Louviaux, 2008). The iteration (five meetings with the same group in this case) and time for mulling things over between meetings create a space where the participants' identities and qualifications of goods can progress and change. The participants were thus given the following instruction: To position themselves as both consumers and individuals with their own experiences, knowledge, and constraints, but also as citizens who were trying to pass judgment. This was done in order to stick to two requirements: respect for a diversity of viewpoints and external constraints (among others economic ones) and search for common justifications.

This approach ties in with Habermas's notion (1997) of deliberation as being free from external constraints, that is, while a framework does indeed exist – that of the Gaume grassland steer – all subjects likely to people the Gaume grassland steer's horizon are of equal interest and thus may be tackled. The participants chose three groups of subjects: prices and the food chain organization, the territory, and taste and cattle breeds. Each of these themes was then the subject of a meeting where attended by two experts chosen by the organizers. The experts' contributions, preferably in the form of testimonies "for the prosecution" and "for the defense," were made in line with the following instruction: "Tell us what you know, not what we should do." Their talks were followed by a few questions from the participants to clarify their remarks. Then, the two witnesses left the "court room" and the participants deliberated. What counted was then what the consumers saw as being relevant. The aim of the entire exercise was thus to shake off the prescriptive nature of information to initiate an exploratory and learning approach. This choice removed the whole research design from the Habermas school's constraint, whereby equal agents exchange rational arguments aimed at the common good, so that the choice is guided solely by the strength of the better argument (Cohen, quoted by Habermas, 1997:330). In our research-intervention, on the contrary, we tried to cultivate a diversity of viewpoints rather than consensus. How did our participants' identities change in this process?

Identity 2: Civic consumers or "food citizens"

If we consider the themes "price and organization of the activity chain" and "territory," we see a shift in the problem's boundaries from grappling with the issues on a daily basis to examining the complexity of the production system and then to examining a territory of possible common ties that calls the notion of the "food citizen": "certain rights associated with living in a particular place" (Wilkins, 2006) to mind. The commitment to the food system and its complexity well beyond the simple act of buying opened the participants up to

⁷ The methodological principles of the iterative deliberative focus group, on which I have drawn heavily, were introduced by Melanie Louviaux and are described in Louviaux, 2008.

others and led to discoveries. Their disillusion resulted in more lucidity: the opaqueness of the meat commodity chains and balances of power in which the farmers were caught led the consumers to suggest constructing an alternative scheme that would guarantee fairness. The things that they learned revealed the diversity of options available. While finishing cattle is an important step to produce good meat, the models vary: The Belgian Blue model offers a regular supply whereas the grass steer is seasonal. Beyond discovering the diversity and complexity of the food system, the deliberative effort brought the worlds of the naturalists and consumers closer to each other. So, what might the link between stock farming and biodiversity be? The deliberations changed interest in consumption into interest in society and the world at large: interest in the threatened birds and butterflies, interest in the farmers and their cattle, interest in the inhabitants and their ties. Through these reductions in the distances between and more complex visions of the different worlds, we see how the deliberation process got the participants to oscillate between different types of justification.

The consumers entered the world of biodiversity management via the tale of the disappearance of three bird species in Gaume. The naturalists⁸ explained how certain species, such as the shrike, nested in hedges and fed off field insects. Consequently, the early mowing practices that were imposed by intensive cattle farming systems interrupted the reproductive cycles of fauna and flora alike. The ecological pyramid collapsed and the insect-eating birds disappeared. A practical connection between stock-farming practices (mowing dates) and biodiversity management became clear to the consumers. This enabled them to understand why the public authorities had adopted incentives in favor of late mowing, setting the first mowing date back from May 1 to June 15. In the consumers' view, this measure seemed more relevant than the "carrying capacity" regulation, which tries to limit the pressure of grazing on the rest of the environment but the real aim of which is not clear: to protect the aquifers or manage biodiversity?

The local naturalists, for their part, were reserved about agriculture's future. The deliberative, non-prescriptive nature of the focus groups enabled them to raise a fundamental implicit question: Do we need agriculture to meet our food needs? The women consumers objected in the name of future generations. They asserted that agriculture had to continue to play its role of feeding the people, but through tighter links between production and consumption. And if that had a price tag, well "it is better to have 100 grams of good meat than a kilo of crap." Some naturalists saw in agriculture a possible form of cultural transmission and anchoring because they drew connections between animal husbandry, gathering food (wild mushrooms), fishing, and gardening. The food-producing function of agriculture nevertheless sparked debate. The growing of corn that is practiced by farmers in the region with intensive cattle operations requires high energy inputs, reduces biodiversity, and can use a lot of water. Couldn't steaks ultimately come out of biotech laboratories instead of slaughterhouses? There remained the question of landscapes and maintaining their openness. Like the case of landowners in the United Kingdom, this task could be taken on by a small minority of landowners. Behind these questions and drawing together of different worlds the participants oscillated between two principles of legitimacy: the domestic one with regard to producing food for future generations, and culture transmission while industrial one when it came to

⁸ The local naturalists were "nature lovers," members, active members, or friends of the local chapter of the national wildlife defense association "Natagora." Most of them were men, and their relationship with animal husbandry for meat production remained ambiguous: They stressed the need to respect the animal's life, but like hunters, they appreciated eating tasty red meat, considered to be a source of strength and energy. Some of them conceded that eating meat was not "ecological" and it would be healthier to eat meat in moderation. They were "ambiguous eaters."

biotechnological achievements and energy efficiency. Exploration was possible because neither principle was more legitimate than the other. These consumers, in all their diversity, became food system keepers and their inclusive reasoning sought out non-exclusive positions. So, as regards the cattle breeders, they were adamant that none of the various types of farmer (conventional, mixed, part-time, or land owner) be excluded. This non-exclusion reasoning would then be tested in a more difficult exercise, that of marking out a territory

Identity 3: Territorialized citizens

Inclusion or exclusion: The matter of the right territory would be difficult to handle outside the deliberative framework, for each stakeholder would then strive to guarantee that its own stake would be as large as possible. This construction is problematic in the case of a common good because it assumes that the interests have been constructed beforehand. This was not our case⁹.

Three possible qualifications of the territory and its limits emerged, based on the justifications put forward (see in annex 1). These were the registers of competing qualification translated into the following names: the “Jurassic” agricultural region (Belgian Lorraine), Gaume (part of Lorraine with a no walloon dialect), and a variant of Gaume, namely, the territory of the Protected Geographical Indication “Paté Gaumais”¹⁰. These names are not pure objects, but we shall contrast them for the purposes of our analysis. What is more, in actual fact, the researchers mobilized an initial name, a fourth one, that of “Boeuf de la Semois” or “Semois steer,” that referred back to a first attempt at territorialization that did not succeed, for various reasons, but nevertheless had the merit of opening up and keeping the question of a territory relevant.

The Jurassic region and its special agricultural and soil profile is one of the fourteen agricultural regions defined by the Belgium Ministry of Agriculture. The term “Jurassic” refers to its geological belonging to the Paris basin and thus opposes it to the Ardennes. This technical-administrative zoning scheme enables the Ministry to levy taxes based on yield forecasts that are differentiated by region. Those who think in sectoral terms would be in favor of keeping such zones. This was the onion of the agricultural staff and some environmentalists. The Jurassic region is Belgian Lorraine, which is a hybrid term closer to people’s identities. However, the same logic is at work: defining a territory with homogeneous agricultural and environmental performances.

The local naturalists, who were involved as volunteers in nature reserve management work in Lorraine, held opinions that were both more nuanced and more categorical. In choosing the name of their local chapter of the national association *Natagora* (www.natagora.be) they became aware of the fact that the qualifier “Lorraine” was merely “the least common denominator.” This name lacked existence and substance in their eyes. However, they made do with it for lack of anything better. What is more, they were convinced that if the idea was

⁹ The National Institute of Names of Origin (INAO) has developed a complex procedure to define the zoning of its names and designations that is based on the institution’s legitimacy and the expertise that is mobilized. In Belgium, the procedure concerning a few Protected Geographic Indications in product names (Ardenne ham, etc.) is handled directly by the central administration and its justifications are have shaky foundations. In our case, the innovation that consisted in combining biodiversity management and the development of a quality product came up against the discriminant criterion of the product’s fame that is imposed by the European Regulation. It is difficult to demand fame for a product that is not yet in existence (Stassart, 2001).

¹⁰ That add one locality and retrieve two others in reference to the border of « Gaume »

to define a “resource” territory like a network of players that would facilitate gradual convergence around a complex project, then “Gaume” was more suitable. This was a turning point in the deliberation, as the participants saw in “Gaume” a mobilizing name, a force that neither Lorraine nor the “Arlon Country” could claim. The proposal was all the more legitimate in that it came from a resident of the area around Arlon, not from Gaume. The region that administrative and linguistic borders define as Gaume has an identity by negation. That is what the farmers say in their way when they assert, “We aren’t Ardennes people, so we are from Gaume.”

The position of the consumers’ group was less cut and dry, however, for they did not want a “defensive territory.” On the contrary, they clamored for sociocultural porosity with Arlon Country, with which Gaume forms Belgian Lorraine, and an opening up beyond the southern border to include French territory. This insistence on opening up the border referred back to the risk of the third register of justification, that of the PGI Pâté gaumais,” for Gaume ran the risk of being reduced to a marketing tool, that of an image of quality linked to a product’s origin to convince the outside world. This ambiguous relationship with the territory would aim first of all to produce rareness and exclude competition before building quality. The designation of origin label would be a sort of Trojan horse for market thinking, mobilizing tradition so that merchandising could take over. This exclusive Gaume clinging to its biodiversity wealth, did not satisfy the consumers. Without wanting to make a final decision, these consumers and naturalists, who were mindful of the future of the larger society, strove to act as citizens thinking in terms of building over time, in terms of a project. They then gradually rallied to the idea of a territorial definition that would make it possible to create convergence. In such a framework, Gaume and its “incised identity” – reached by what was left when you carved what it wasn’t away – seemed to be the way to go, provided that it was not synonymous with retreating behind one’s walls or a rent of situation. “Complexification” and “territorialization” finally culminated in the exploration of a series of irreversibility engraved (Ruttan, 1997, Dosi 1982) in the Belgian commodity and activity chains.

C 1.3 Exploration of three irreversible components of the conventional course

Cattle breeding: The shift from young bulls to steers cuts three connections on the Belgian beef market through the switch from the “single-stomach” grain-fed young bull to a free-ranging grass steer, the differentiation of a slow-growing product, and the restoration of the breeders’ independence. The change is brought about by the crisscrossing interplay of several justifications: those of performance, the market, and “going back to traditional practices.

The product: In going from lean and tender meat to firm and tasty meat, the industrial notion of good Belgian beef is overridden. The idea is to go beyond the Belgian industrial world’s response to the anxiety of an allegedly worried eater in which tenderness (hedonism) and leanness (health) had become the ultimate translations of “perfect meat.” A deliberative taste test made it possible to test this about-face, the key to which was the degree to which the eater was equipped (with knowledge and references) to deal with the situation

Nature management: Restoring the sundered ties between production and the environment, a strongly irreversible dissociation that became the norm in the course of the long sociopolitical history of agricultural policies and biodiversity management (Poux et al. 2006)

At the end of the day, the discussion leaders wrote up the conclusions that came out of the deliberations about the different worlds, territory, and exploration of irreversible choices and

developments in the form of a report to be handed over to the breeders' group. Faithful to the deliberative nature of their work, the nine consumers chose to add a subtitle to the title "consumers-naturalists deliberation," to wit, "We wanted to tell you what we learned and not what you should do" (Stassart and Lecomte, 2006). They very cleverly proposed to the discussion leaders the instruction that the latter had given to the experts who testified during the deliberative process. This confirmed the deliberative and undecidable nature of their work. The outcomes of their deliberations were by definition open and non-prescriptive. They contested in particular any right that they might be granted to decide and claimed, on the contrary, the undecidable nature of their positions and illegitimacy of imposing their own choices on the breeders. The oscillatory nature of their work showed, on the contrary, that none of the three principles of legitimacy could prevail and be used to arbitrate between the other two. However, this did not prevent the consumers from speaking their minds about the relevance of some elements, to their minds at least, *e.g.*, the link between biodiversity and stock farming that existed through mowing practices, the Gaume territory, and the reversibility of certain lock-in points.

In addition, the territorial dimension introduced a time dimension into the project that then led the consumers with the two other parties (rearers group and environmentalist professional group) to what might be considered a virtual compromise, since it was no more than a written framework set down in their paper. Yet at the same time it acted like a factor of rapprochement between sources of legitimacy that normally excluded each other. So, we saw a rapprochement through the project dynamics and the emergence of an agreement (the specifications in the broad sense) that gradually became a principle of local legitimacy that was fuelled by the legitimacy of the orders that had been created, combining them while taking care that they would not cancel each other out.

C.2 Agreement as a compromise between principles and legitimacy

The consumers' contribution can be analyzed by going back to the start of the preceding part, *i.e.*, the variations in the consumers' identities, and then analyzing what this starting point contributes to the construction of the agreement, *i.e.*, the Gaume grassland steer specifications in the broad sense.

C 2.1 Consumer activists (consom'acteurs)

In going from a represented group (think-tank, Phase 1) to citizens rooted in a specific territory (deliberations, Phase 2), the consumers' trajectory led them to project themselves in the achievement of "something" in the future. This "achieving something" was important to them. While the authors of the Phase 2 report wanted to reflect the development of their commitment to meaningful consumption through the inclusion of the notion of "food citizens," this notion effectively remained unstable and too complex. Indeed, the term "CCN" for *citoyens-consommateurs-naturalistes*, which could be translated loosely as "food and nature citizens," was also used. In Phase 3, during the drafting of the specifications of the standards book, the consumers collectively refused the term "citizens" (weren't the breeders also citizens?) to propose calling themselves *consom'acteurs*, *i.e.*, "consum'actors" or "consumer activists." This term reflected their will to get involved in the action, and was taken up very officially in the drafting of the Gaume grassland steer specifications. This choice thus translated a pro-active position of the consumers' group, which wanted to meet the principle people concerned, *i.e.*, the breeders, support them and learn about their practices.

The effect was to rebalance the pre-eminence of the economic and occupational considerations in the Phase 3 compromise negotiations, that is to say, the dominance of the industrial and market world's norms and standards. The Gaume grassland steer was effectively a patrimonial-based spokesproduct attempt to combine market activities (the commodity chain) and experts' demands ("the environmentalists' demands"). The difficulty here was similar to the one encountered in the area of landscape management that articulate market value (tourism) with domestic value (heritage transmission).

This rebalancing and support for the breeders were reflected in a change in the Phase 3 negotiating formats and content. Until then the negotiations over the steer specifications had been limited to working in three separate groups according to an administrative format (the iterative logic of working group meeting and meeting reports). This new realization led to a symbolic shift of venue, with the three groups going out into the field (a steer pasture) and meeting there together for the first time, at the breeders' request. The consumers were not just onlookers at this meeting. They suggested setting the specifications' priorities around the cattle breeding operation rather than around environmental prescriptions. Finally, they expressed putting a certain distance between themselves (including some local naturalists) and environmental expertise, which they wanted to be "accountable." This proposal to shift the frameworks with respect to expertise helped to re-localize in part the environmental constraints to which the breeding practices were subject. Its second effect was to see some experts in the environmental group redefine their positions and put themselves forward more as local players wishing to support rather than set constraints on the project. This went as far as replacing their university titles by "local naturalist" when it came time to sign the final draft of the standard book.

C.2.2 An agreement that spawns an organization

A patrimonial good that supports the good of the community can receive content only if it emerges as a question inside a defined perimeter or scope. This perimeter defines both actors and objects. I have shown how, in narrowing the distances between various worlds, defining a project territory, and exploring points of irreversibility, the consumers in our research-intervention set this perimeter.

Within this perimeter and in going from deliberation to action (support for the breeders' project), the consumers helped to get recognition of the breeders' legitimacy in the face of the environmentalists' demands. Inversely, they legitimated the environmentalists by showing how, within the consumers' group, naturalists could territorialize themselves as active consumers or "consumer activists." The consumers' actions produced effects in two phases: Formally, they reconfigured the polarized relationship between environmentalists and breeders into a triangular relationship of environmentalists-breeders-consumers that avoided head-on confrontation. Safe from such confrontations, they got what the deliberations described – the inability to decide about the principles of legitimacy – to co-exist somewhat paradoxically. The path to compromise was then plotted by the ambiguous notion of "territorial patrimoine." Something of Gaume had to be made visible, protected, and transmitted. This was the rearers practices for some parties, particularly rich biodiversity for others, and a certain way of life or *savoir-vivre* for still others. The territory was the common pedestal on which these players' identities were erected, even if it was backed up by the paradox that this territory was more a dream than actually organized, more something to build than an existing structure to protect.

The bargaining that took place in building an agreement on the standard book over the Gaume grassland steer concerned the definitions of behaviors and attitudes that would take elements of territorial or patrimonial interest into account. Two stakes were riding on these negotiations, to wit, revelation of a common interest and the formation of commitments as to its management.

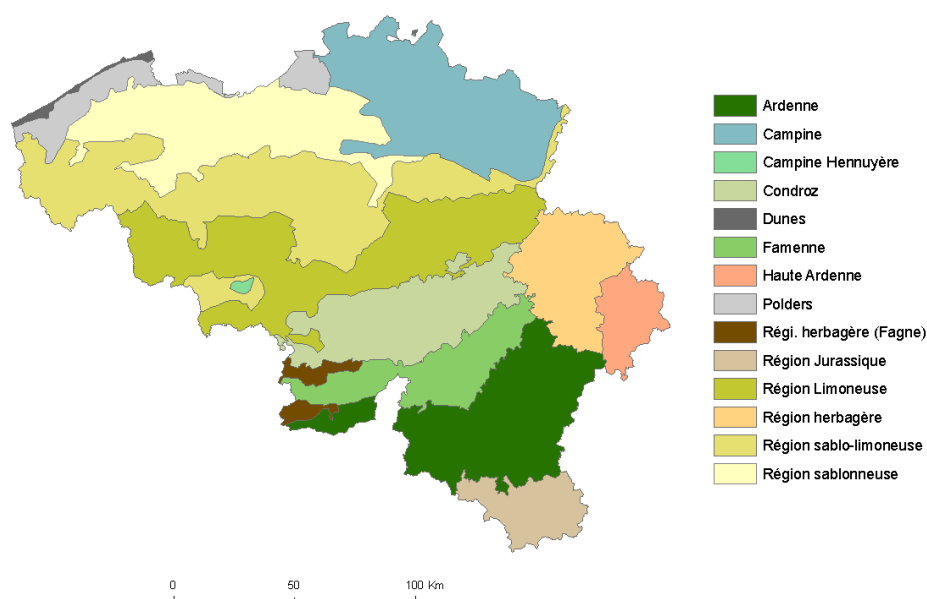
- 1) The specifications of the standard book were written for the lay public. They took a form halfway between a charter and technical specifications and all interested citizens were invited to read them. The organization was as follows: The agreement was forged around four principles (written down on four pages) relating to four different scales of action: cattle breeding, the farm, the territory, and the commodity chain. These principles were then fleshed out in a series of eight technical annexes or proofs that were translated into prescriptions (17 pages). This enabled the ordinary consumer to follow the path from the technical prescriptions back up to the principles of the shared interests and so to rest future negotiation or technical change on the roots principles.
- 2) The patrimonial backbone that these four principles constituted made it possible to acknowledge the impossibility of choosing from among the different principles of legitimacy. In first approach we can describe the articulation as follow: Principles 1 (grazing herds) and 3 (territory) belonged to traditional breeding practices and the existence of local interpersonal cooperation networks, *i.e.*, the familiar domestic world. Principle 2 (the farm), on the contrary, belonged to the environmental scheme (“plan d’action”) negotiated with a certified advisor. It mobilized the notions of budgets and gradual increases in environmental performance and belong to the industrial world. Principle 4 (the differentiation product), for its part, belonged to market conventions.
- 3) The specifications instituted a reflexive organization, that of the steering committee that brought together the three interest groups on the local level and to which the experts were accountable. The group in charge of the specifications’ development and progress took charge, in turn, of the legitimacy principles’ undecidability. So, it took up the questions surrounding feed corn that had been left on the back burner, *i.e.*, the place of corn in the steer-raising system that referred back to the inability to decide among the market register (finishing ration for good meat), industrial register (organic or not?), and domestic register (non-exclusion of traditional rearers). Finally, the steering committee took on the radical uncertainty concerning the product’s qualification by accepting to validate the fact that the fourth principle, that of the commodity chain, should have the status of being “under construction” rather than prescriptive.

The specifications as a patrimonial good were presented as a means to fend off market reductionism and the efficiency of “anything goes.” Finally, we could single out a series of statements predicated on the idea of avoiding irreversible choices and preparing for future options, but that is not the purpose of this article. Still, the consumers’ inability to decide helped to make this a basic concern.

Conclusions

- The case of the Gaume grassland steer seemed to have a more general scope because it placed the struggles between principles of legitimacy at the heart of these initiatives' emergence. I hypothesize that such situations of legitimacy clashes are fairly common in emerging alternative agrifood systems (AMAP, CSA, etc), which as a rule appear to be rather underdeveloped on the cognitive level.
- Next, it proposed an interpretation of the local or territorial as mediating the multiplicity of legitimacy orders and their translation in the form of a good that could be called "patrimonial." Finally, it produced an epistemic flexibility and the emergence of a patrimonial good that enabled the project to move forward (see how the breeders, consumers, and environmentalists spoke about it).
- From the theoretical standpoint of sustainable consumption, the consumer does not exist. We have shown that "situational consumers" exist. Consumers are first of all ambivalent because, depending on the situation, they refer to different, even opposing, principles or values. Our group was situational on two accounts: with regard to the territory, where it was inserted in a system of (weak) clashes between competing legitimacy principles, and with regard to the emerging project, because it was in a phased research-intervention scheme.
- Within a deliberative scheme, the consumers' variable, malleable identities developed the ability to take the many dimensions of the production system into account. This enabled them to think about the integrating dimension of sustainable development rather than search for a higher principle that would enable them to choose among the various principles involved.

Qualification 1: A technico-administrative definition of the “Jurassic” region



Qualification 2: A market-oriented justification: the *PGI (Protected Geographical Indication)* http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/qual/en/1179_en.htm



Qualification 3: A cultural definition: La Gaume



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