

Minutes of the restricted Core group for preparation of the final conference in Gerona 2009.

Paris, EHESS, Room 505.

Friday, June, 20th.

Present : Gérard Béaur, Annie Antoine, Rosa Congost, Anne-Lise Head-König, Peter Moser.

Excused : Richard Hoyle.

Discussion of issues in relation to the final conference of the Action, to be held in Girona in 2009. The following 4 main points were discussed: 1. Audience; 2. Topics; 3. Organisation; 4. Invitations

1) Audience

The members of the MC as well as some of the participants from the earlier workshops should be invited to attend the conference along with politicians, trade unionists, perhaps farmers and certainly journalists. The importance of inviting members of the press was stressed and some possible newspapers were identified, viz.: *Die Zeit*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Les Echos*, *La Tribune*, *Ouest France*, *El Pais*. Some of these will be contacted by Peter Moser, others by Annie Antoine. Paul Brassley and Richard Hoyle, Giuliana Biagioli and Danilo Gasparini will also be invited to contact the English and Italian newspapers; similarly Peter Poszgai. All members of the MC will be required to make suggestions and to get in touch with the newspapers, within the recognized limit that we should invite some 10 or so journalists.

2) Topics

Richard Hoyle's and Peter Moser's proposals (cf. below) were discussed and welcomed.

The group states that we have to cope with two main aims which are not systematically compatible.

a) identify the actual problems of European rural societies and economies, then offer some historical experience to highlight debates

b) take into account the results which have been obtained by our 12 meetings.

The following priorities for final discussion were noted:

- we will not reproduce the same structure as the structure with our 4 working groups but on the contrary try to propose some points which will intersect our previous works.
- we shall abandon any recourse to national perspectives in order to work at a pan-European level, but with an historical approach.
- at the same time, the focus will be rural rather than simply and directly agricultural, reflecting the changed make-up of the rural population and life in the countryside.

With such assumptions in mind, Gérard Béaur proposed four general themes for consideration at the next MC:

a. Natural resources, sustainability, and environmental factors.

A pollution and fertilizers

B change in the landscape, the problem of fallow

C links with energy problems and real shortage of food at the international level

D the question of spaces for alternative products and of shortage of land

b. Farms and labour

A the future of the peasantry and the availability of farms

B landowners and farmers

C others forms of farming

D problems of training and rural employment

c. Markets and demand

A the changing role of consumers and of consumption

B performance, productivity, and intensification; alternative models of development

C international competition and specialisation

D political decisions of states regarding the protection of agriculture

d. The place of rural society in the global society

A role of agricultural production or gardeners

A' what kind of farmers ?

B Agricultural Policy

C the non-farming rural population

D standard of living and the countryside

3) Organisation

The planned Conference will be 2 days long, probably from Thursday afternoon to Saturday morning or with a welcome and general introduction on Thursday evening and the conference itself on Friday and Saturday. There will be 4 sessions more or less tied to the 4 main topics. Each session will include a presentation by members of a panel of members of the action (45 mn) then remarks of the invited personalities (45 mn) then a general debate about the topic (45 mn).

The schedule could be :

9.30 – 10.15 presentation of topic 1

10.15 – 11 comments

11.30-13.30 discussion

13.30 – 16. 30 lunch

16.30 – 17.15 presentation of topic 2

17.15 – 18 comments

18.30 – 20.30 discussion

21. Dinner.

Each presentation will be elaborated by a group composed of at least one member of each working-group; such groups should not be too numerous in terms of membership.

Some suggestions for group composition were made.

1) Erik Thoen, A. Antoine, P. Brassley, P. Moser, R.Hoyle, E. Tello.

2) Gérard Béaur, Jürgen Schlumbohm, Erich Landsteiner, Giulina Biagioli, Peter Poszgai, Anne-Lise Head-K, A Tretvik, Rui Santos

3) Vicente Pinilla, Patrick Svensson, Anton Schuurman, Mats Morell, Jose Vicente Serrao, Paul Servais, E. Langthaler.

4) Markus Cerman, Jaroslaw Dumanowski, Nadine Vivier, Bas Van Bavel, Socrates Petmezas, Phillip Schofield, Rosa Congost, X. Varley.

The participation of each member will be requested and a number changes will no doubt occur in the composition of this group. The aim of the presentation is to display the importance of the topic and the role of history as key of explanation. Each group will include a discussant. Discussion with policy-makers and other non-historians is anticipated.

4) A general circular will be drawn up for the invitations. All decisions shall be taken by the MC in Zaragoza and request made thereafter to identified members to participate in one of the 4 groups.

Annex

Richard Hoyle' s Contribution

In order to start (or fuel) a debate: I offer the following suggestions where the history that we know about might be of some interest to the policy makers and even inform debate.

Rival uses of landscapes:

The historically the countryside has a dual use for agriculture and recreation.

- How far will agricultural uses have to compromise with public or private recreational uses in the future?
- How far will industrial scale agriculture have to compromise with the demands of organised conservation groups?
- How far are notions of private ownership compatible with notions of public access for recreation (which I gather has been an issue in Ireland recently).

Survival of the owner-occupied farm

- Will the owner-occupied farm and the inherited farm survive far into the twenty-first century? Will it possible for people without a inherited land to become owner occupiers? Is owner-occupation therefore a chronologically-limited phenomenon?
- What alternative forms of agricultural ownership might emerge?
- To what degree are owner-occupiers vulnerable to be bought out by urban capital?
- How far are new estates being formed in Europe under liberal tax regimes? Who are the new owners of land?
- Indeed, to what degree will farm subsidies delay or hasten this process?

Demand

- What will the impact of changing diet amongst European populations be on future agricultural production [There has been some work done at Reading on these issues]

Sustainability

- In the light of global warming, is the process of winning land from the sea at an end? Can the gains of the last half millennium be maintained?
- Will water resources suffice to maintain the level of crop production in areas of Mediterranean Europe? What impact will rising energy costs have on north European glasshouse growers? How will transport costs impinge on African supplies of agricultural foodstuffs
- Will ideas of sustainable organic production ever be anything other than marginal elements in twenty-first century production?

Labour

- To what degree will agriculture diminish as a significant employer of labour in the EC Accession countries?
- To what extent will international labour flows continue, from east to west and south to north (North Africans in Spain, Portuguese in the UK) particularly for the picking and packaging of horticultural and orchard crops?

Peter Moser's contribution

The final conference should link the question of the future of the rural society and the importance of the rural space for modern societies with the original proposal of the COST Action A 35. It should start, therefore,

1. by taking up the main point(s) of the original proposal of the Action formulated by Gerad Béaur which stated that “the Action intends to produce the basic data needed for the better understanding of current changes in the rural world and to define the choices available to decision makers. The Action also intends to provide the historical knowledge which will allow us to re-think the future of European peasantries, faced with problems with which historians have learned to deal by examining societies in the past: under-employment and multiple occupations, migrations and rural depopulation, the distortion of competition by the marketplace or by the policies established by political authorities, the problems of resource allocation, distribution and redistribution of heritages and holdings.”
2. illustrate the ways, in which these intentions have been taken up and discussed by the 4 working groups by giving an overview of the topics, the geographical distribution and the methods of research which were used in the 12 workshops
3. give an overview of the body of knowledge this procedure of the Action has been producing in relation to the original purposes of the action
4. Deepen old and open up new fields of research in relation of the importance and the potential of the rural space for (post)modern societies. The first point to analyse and discuss would, therefore, be the potential and limits of the *use* of *renewable biotic* resources by the rural population in increasingly urban dominated societies which are more and more depending on the *consumption* of limited, *non-renewable mineral* resources. This would be a relevant starting point to discuss topics such as:
 - Production-potential and consumption-patterns in the countryside
 - The modern interaction of urban and rural spaces
 - the importance of the property systems for the access to and exclusion from the *use* and *consumption* of natural resources
 - market-orders that create, safeguard or destroy biodiversity
 - the construction and de-construction of cultivated landscapes

In short: Point 1 should provide the background for the presentation and discussion of the results from the 12 workshops and point 4 should enlarge the existing perspectives and open up new potentials of looking at the rural space and rural societies.