

COMPAIRS

Peer certification for eco-solidarity quality: co-construction of an intellectual commons

ABSTRACT

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are participatory certification systems that aim to guarantee to buyers or users the respect of sustainable production practices recognised through a quality sign or label. This certification is based on the evaluation by peers (producers, artisans, etc.) and their community (buyers, users, distributors, local associations, etc.) who are considered to be in a position to measure the respect of these commitments. GSPs provide a framework for facilitating individual or collective marketing activities of quality products and services, as well as a means of creating a sustainable local network of actors within a territory.

These alternative certification initiatives, which are developing rapidly around the world, are little known in France and remain relatively isolated from each other. The CO3 (emerging) REPAIRS project, through the meetings and participatory workshops organised in 2019, has made it possible to create an initial framework for mutualisation between these different GSPs, social economy (SSE) actors questioning existing guarantee methods, and researchers in the field. This research programme, developed jointly by this new network, should allow for an increase in conceptualisation and a comparison of different GSP models, in order to identify their success factors.

The support of this work programme by research makes sense both because of the participatory research methodology used and because of the very object of the research, the GSPs. These are considered in recent work by CIRAD as a set of rules enabling the collaborative management of common intellectual resources contained in the label: knowledge of ecological and solidarity-based practices and their effects, the credibility of the control system and therefore the reputation of the label, as well as the values of solidarity carried in the organisation in charge of managing the label (Lemeilleur and Allaire, 2018). This approach to GSPs thus allows us to deepen our knowledge of the intellectual commons (Ostrom and Hess, 2007), which is still little studied in the field of eco-solidarity quality.

The theory of the commons approach has proven its relevance in the previous CO3 project and remains a significant asset in addressing the complex and interrelated themes identified by our new network: issues of inclusion and limitation of the user community, support for democracy via communication, collaboration and consultation tools, knowledge articulation, governance and legal structures for managing the commons, the ownership regime, economic viability, internal and external credibility of these guarantee systems, modalities for the renewal of the cognitive resource, solidarity arrangements, change of scale, etc.

To carry out this collaborative research programme, we will rely on a cycle of two days of exchanges per year, including conferences and participatory workshops, built according to the principles of design of the commons proposed by Ostrom (1990). In parallel, we will carry out two transversal research activities on the concerted fabrication of collaborative norms and on the responsibility of the community in the governance of these intellectual commons.

The other essential role of the research project is the visibility of the activities and achievements of the collective research work, which will manifest itself through the establishment of a digital platform and the participation in various academic and non-academic events.

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Flagship project : no

Project leader : Sylvaine Lemeilleur

Project leader's institution : Cirad
Project leader's RU : MOISA

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