

The visual puzzle: a communication tool to understand the usefulness, contributions and needs of actors in a multi-actor platform

Problem

Heterogeneous actors often do not realise the importance of working together to change a system, as it is perceived to be time consuming and/or difficult to understand each other.

Solution

An interactive and visual puzzle exercise to share and understand the needs, expectations and benefits of the different actors interacting in a group, based on a Reflexive Interactive Design approach.

Outcome

Insights into the changing roles and needs of actors for better coordination of a group's activities, so that coordinators can provide relevant support for tangible results.

Practical recommendation

Step 1: A large piece of paperboard is cut into several puzzle pieces of different shapes. Each actor in the group gets a piece of the puzzle. All actors formulate their **1) Usefulness**, **2) Contributions**, and **3) Needs** in relation to the project on three sticky notes. Each participant pastes their three notes on their puzzle pieces. Information written on the notes are shared with each other orally. Afterwards the puzzle pieces are put together on a table to have a good overview, and to identify linkages and connections between the actors as shown in Picture 1. An example of the results from a DiverIMPACTS multi-actor group can be found in Table 1.

Step 2: One year later, actors look at their three notes from the previous year and reflect on **a) what has happened**, **b) how have they been able to contribute**, **c) if they still have the same needs**, and **d) any unexpected things that have happened**. Step 2 is performed as an interview activity between actors in groups of two. Finally, in the plenum, the answers are shared with the entire group.

Applicability box

Theme: Learning, Actors, Assessment

Geographical coverage: Worldwide

Application time: Step 1: from the beginning (1st year) of a collaboration process. Step 2: follow up after about 1 year

Required time: preparation: 1-4 hours x 2 times

Period of impact: 1-3 years

Equipment: **Step 1:** A1 white paperboard, pens, scissors to cut the board into a puzzle, flipchart and papers/notes with the three questions and a line for writing names; one colour for each category of actors (e.g. farmers, researchers, advisors) may be advantageous. **Step 2:** A prepared table with answers of questions from step 1, for each person. Flip chart and pens for taking notes during the sharing session.



Picture 1: Participants putting together the puzzle pieces in Step 1 (Photo: Anita Gunnarsson, REAS/HHS Sweden)

Table 1: Example from a multi-actor group in DiverIMPACTS, case study 19,3 working for increase of local legumes

	Question 1: Usefulness of the group to the actor	Question 2: Contribute to the group with	Question 3: Needs/What is needed?
Farmer (Step 1)	To understand other partners in the value chain. To access the market for selling my grain legumes with added value, in order to get the needed price/good returns.	Test different legume production methods for high yield stability. Work with nature (ecological interactions, e.g. intercropping) to use less resources such a fertiliser.	Time for attending workshops and trials. Knowledge and information about highly relevant legume crops to produce and sell. Trust that the project is about increasing Swedish production of protein (feed and food) rather than reducing meat production by focusing on food only.
-"-, Step 2 (one year later)	a) (What happened) I have gained more knowledge on production parts. However, there is not yet enough added value for my grain legumes. b) (How contributed) According to plan: I have continued with testing various legumes and methods. c) (Still the same needs?) I have got trust that this work is not about decreasing Swedish meat production. d) (Unexpected things that happened) Realised the potential of the delicious taste of grain legumes and other plant-based foods and have realised the potential of lupin in food. I have been inspired by chefs and restaurants to appreciate the taste of grain legumes		
Food consultant (Step 1)	Good timing for working with environmental issues.	Giving courses/education. Recipe development. Spread information via articles and commentaries and social media. Connect growers, wholesalers and chefs.	Funding.
-"-, Step 2 (one year later)	a) My feeling about the timing has been confirmed. b & c) The funding from regional authority has helped in contributing to and fulfilling our aims. d) More difficult than expected to work with the food stores. Surprisingly severe lack of knowledge/information about legumes at the food store, and even more surprising, amongst the chefs.		
NGO activist (Step 1)	To strengthen work towards sustainable food systems. To increase knowledge and improve growing methods.	Working both as influencer and to empower consumers. Can contribute to spreading the knowledge/information to consumers.	More time. Possibility to use others in the group as sounding boards. That other members in the group are doing their part when connected to tasks that we can engage in.
-"-, Step 2 (one year later)	a) Gained more knowledge and understanding about legumes; b) Involved/organised in various workshops d) Now aware of the pedagogic challenges in communicating about lupin as food, since most members of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation considered lupin is an invasive species that is problematic. Therefore, we continuously must inform others that there are different lupin species and varieties.		
Farm advisor (Step 1)	To get contacts and exchange experiences between different types of participants (in the value chain).	Arranging field days and courses on legume growing and processing.	Time to work on this.
-"-, Step 2 (one year later)	a) Had exchange visits and new contacts, even more than expected (e.g. contacts with consumers); b) Have contributed to executing field trips, courses etc. c) Despite time still being the most limiting factor, we have to focus and give extra effort to achieve the vision. d) Broadbean beetle has become a large problem		
Researcher, agriculture (Step 1)	To share ideas for research questions. Exchange experiences about production and use of grain legumes.	Scientific Information (knowledge and experiences) about grain legume production. Provide input and ideas to discussion and farmers.	Time required to take part in the activities. To give this project a priority in my occupation.
-"-, Step 2 (one year later)	a) Formulated new ideas for research. b) Have sent in research proposals. Have not yet had time to contribute much by informing about results from research. c) Lack of time has increased. However, growing grain legume production is a hot research topic. d) Surprised about how quickly things change - e.g. new legume food companies that are popping up, and how long it takes to solve some challenges such as lack of the sorting, cleaning and peeling facilities.		

Further information

Further readings

- Pretty, J. N., *et al.* (1995). "A Trainers Guide for Participatory Learning and Action. A trainers guide." IIED Participatory Methodology Series. Published by the International Institute for environment and development, London, UK.: 267 pp.
- Eksvärd, K. (2003). "Tillsammans kan vi lära och förändra - deltagardriven forskning för svenskt lantbruk." Centrum för uthålligt lantbruk, SLU. ISBN: 91-576-6554-0: 116 p.
- Power tools for participatory learnings and action
- Introduction to participatory learning and action (PLA) training course handbook
- Questions for step 1

About this practice abstract and DiverIMPACTS

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Permalink: <https://zenodo.org/record/5834172>

This practice abstract was elaborated in the DiverIMPACTS project, based on the EIP AGRI practice abstract format.

DiverIMPACTS: The project is running from June 2017 to May 2022. The overall goal of DiverIMPACTS - Diversification through Rotation, Intercropping, Multiple Cropping, Promoted with Actors and value-Chains towards Sustainability - is to achieve the full potential of diversification of cropping systems for improved productivity, delivery of ecosystem services and resource-efficient and sustainable value chains.

Project website: www.diverimpacts.net

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The project DiverIMPACTS - "Diversification through Rotation, Intercropping, Multiple Cropping, Promoted with Actors and value-Chains towards Sustainability" is supported by the European Union's HORIZON 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement no 727482 and by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) under contract number 17.00092. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the EC and the Swiss government. Neither the European Commission/SERI nor any person acting behalf of the Commission/SERI is responsible for the use which might be made of the information provided in this practice abstract.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727482 (DiverIMPACTS)



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