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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

Resilience – Touching a Colourful Sky – Breaking the Mould of Linear Models of Innovation and Creating Innovative Learning Spaces for Social Changes of Resilient Small-Scale Farmers

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Abstract

The world has become a confusing place. Agricultural production continues to grow, and absolute poverty worldwide is decreasing. Yet, hunger is increasing, and mostly so among the rural poor.

We can write a long story about how resilient small-scale farmers are, and how marginalised by the powers that be. But who's listening? While the Centre for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA) was raising this question, a group of students at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL) was engaged in a course about Media Design for Social Change exploring the portrayal of social resilience. The encounter resulted in a beautiful series of poems and paintings that, put together, capture the idea of resilience in an entirely non-linear, intuitive way.

Resilience thinking helps us to avoid the trap of simply rebuilding and repairing the structures of the past, but instead anticipate, adapt, learn and transform human actions and societies for improved wellbeing in the lights of the unprecedented challenges of our interconnected and turbulent world. So far much of conventional models of intervention in agriculture and rural development policy neither gave attention to the ever changing global challenges, uncertainties and complexities of environment under which small scale farmers live nor acknowledges the importance of local knowledge's in rural areas. Rather, it is more dedicated to increase production by transferring hardware technologies. Social resilience could be conceived as a livelihood capital which requires due consideration in vulnerable rural contexts of unsustainability, insecurity, poverty and emic and etic processes of change.

We describe resilience of small-scale farmers from the perspective of communication and rural innovation and explore how complex issues can be unravelled and expressed through poems and other art forms. The paper argues that other innovative trajectories can be utilised to create spaces of learning and communication and thereby encourage or articulate social resilience.

Keywords: Poetry, social change, social resilience, spaces of learning