Hybrid Governance Tensions fuelling Self-reflexivity in Alternative Food Networks: the case of the Brussels GASAP (Solidarity Purchasing Groups for Peasant Agriculture)

Alessandra Manganelli

Department of Architecture, Planning and Development, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

COSMOPOLIS Centre for Urban Research, Department of Geography, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Brussels, Belgium

Corresponding address:

Faculteit Ingenieurswetenschappen, Departement Architectuur.
Kasteelpark Arenberg 51 – Bus 2429
B-3001 Heverlee.
Tel. +32 16 32 13 61

alessandra.manganelli@kuleuven.be

Frank Moulaert

Department of Architecture, Planning and Development, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Corresponding address:

Faculteit Ingenieurswetenschappen, Departement Architectuur.
Kasteelpark Arenberg 51 – Bus 2429
B-3001 Heverlee.
Tel. *+32 16 32 86 79*

frank.moulaert@kuleuven.be

Corresponding author: Alessandra Manganelli

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Abstract

This paper applies the concept of Hybrid Governance to the analysis of the GASAP (*Groupe d'Achats Solidaires de l'Agriculture Paysanne*), a solidarity based producers-consumers network established in Brussels in 2006. The Hybrid Governance concept allows to capture the role of key governance tensions in driving the self-organization, scaling out and self-reflexive dynamics of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). The approach provides a multifaceted and sound socio-political account of the ways AFNs arise, self-organize, associate and build networks in the pursuit of their food allocation objectives, often facing a contradictory socio-institutional environment. Three types of governance tensions, i.e. *organizational, resource, and institutional*, as well as the interactions among them, are analysed throughout the life-course of the GASAP network.

 The analysis identifies three phases in the GASAP's life-course, showing how governance tensions and their interrelations arise and play a critical role in conditioning the overall development of the organization through time. The paper concludes with highlighting prospective values of the hybrid governance approach for the analysis of alternative food networks in general. These values relate to: the role of the hybrid approach in illuminating on key drivers behind the scaling out of AFNs; the hybrid governance as a tool to conceptualise and sustain the self-reflexive capacity of local food initiatives; the ways by which this approach unravels challenges to build cooperative alliances and networks among a diversity of agents in the food arena.

I. Introduction

This paper examines Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) from a governance perspective. By introducing and operationalising the concept of **hybrid governance**, it shows how key governance tensions emerge and materialise as alternative food initiatives arise and develop. In particular, the analysis highlights **organizational, resource and institutional** governance tensions as well as the relations between them. This hybrid governance approach allows to provide a socio-political account of the agency, self-organizing dynamics and value struggles of local food initiatives, as they grow and scale out in diverse ways, interacting with often highly contradictory politico-institutional environments. Such analysis is an important instrument of self-reflexivity, i.e. the ways in which AFNs are ushered to re-examine and re-consider their own governance as well as their position and roles in a particular societal and territorial context (see section 4).

AFNs are active in many localities across the world. By establishing more horizontal and participatory organizational arrangements, cultivating proximity and trust relations between consumers and producers, or taking action to pursue food security or food sovereignty, these initiatives engage to build alternatives to the conventional food chains (Wittman *et al.* 2010, Marsden 2013).

Different AFNs adopt diverse organizational forms (see Karner 2010, Roep and Wiskerke 2012, Forssell and Lankoski 2017). This paper deals with what can be considered as grassroots based AFNs, emerging as bottom-up or civil society initiatives or movements, often with no formal statute or links with official institutional and economic structures. Community Supported Agricultures (CSAs), engaged producer-consumer networks (Rossi and Brunori 2010, van Gameren *et al.* 2015), bottom-up food sovereignty or food transition initiatives (Block *et al.* 2012, De Schutter 2013, Sage 2014, Figueroa 2015) can generally be considered as grassroots based AFNs. They are usually value-based

(Rossi and Brunori 2010), advancing claims for a greater food security and food sovereignty, although also experiencing struggles and revealing contradictions in their ambitions to build community (Pole and Gray 2013), or to attain social justice objectives (Hinrichs 2000, Allen *et al.* 2010, Goodman 2004, Dupuis and Goodman 2005, 2006).

In this paper, the hybrid governance approach is applied to the AFN organization 'GASAP' ('*Solidarity Purchasing Groups for Peasant Agriculture'*) which is active in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) since 2006. The GASAP is a citizens-led CSA movement, linking consumers directly with producers through a solidarity-based alliance (see section 3 for a detailed description).

With the progressive increase in the number of participants, members (producers as well as consumers) and food-basket groups in the GASAP network, governance tensions have intensified.

Scholars have already started to reflect upon development and growth challenges of AFNs (Johnston and Baker 2004, Bekie *et al.* 2012, Mount 2012, Mount *et al*. 2013, Campbell and MacRae 2013). Some point to scalar challenges of AFNs in exercising a wider impact on food and institutional systems (Johnston and Baker 2004, Campbell and MacRae 2013). Bekie *et al*. (2012) and Mount *et al.* (2013) are more focused on organizational dynamics and collaborative processes among food organizations. Other contributions reflect upon values and identity conflicts of growing food initiatives (Brunori and Rossi 2010, Mount 2012).

The hybrid governance approach applied in this paper has found inspiration in these contributions to develop an integrated and socio-politically sensitive perspective, capable of covering multiple aspects of governance and their interactions. These aspects, in synthesis, refer to: the role of motivations, ideologies, values in driving the agency of AFNs; how these interact with the spatial-material development of the initiatives and their

need to secure resources; the building of alliances and relational networks with agents from the socio-institutional arena; the self-reflexivity of AFNs induced by key governance interactions and tensions as the initiatives develop. However, these aspects are too often analysed according to an organizational logic only, thus neglecting the features of institutional dynamics and how they interact with the organizational. This neglect reduces governance to a normative exercise of building modes of collective behaviour, whereas in reality it is a complex process of various organizational and institutional trajectories reflecting competition for and control of resources such as arable land. Analysing governance as a process of hybridization of forms of governance and the tensions this produces, should remedy this neglect.

Section 2 following this introduction conceptualizes hybrid governance and focuses on the tensions which stem from the interactions among the different governance forms. *Three types of governance tensions* are identified. '*Organizational governance tensions*' are related to the governance of AFNs' as these initiatives develop and require greater organizational efforts to coordinate the network. Thus, contradictions between potentially conflictive values or governance principles may rise, especially between those of solidarity based food security and more efficiency-oriented modes of governing. '*Institutional governance tensions*' occur when processes of institutionalization take place, diversely affecting AFNs' organizations. The ambition of the AFNs to exercise scalar influence on local food policies and export alternative food values, but also the ways these values are discussed, negotiated, protected or opposed by different institutions are at the heart of this type of tension. With organizational and institutional dynamics often focused on the mobilization and control of needed resources, '*resource governance tensions*' represent the third type of governance tensions. Section 2 also explains the

methodological steps in the analysis of the GASAP's governance. It translates the three types of governance tension into categories for empirical investigation (empirical categories).

 Section 3 gives a historical reconstruction of the three stages in the GASAP's governance build-up. For each stage, the three types of governance tension and the interaction between them are analysed. The initial stage in the GASAP history is permeated by organizational responses to the challenges of building a bottom-up network. The analysis also reveals features of resource and institutional tensions that emerged as the GASAP organization matured. The second stage of the GASAP history orbits around its growing relational interaction with Brussels' institutional state and non-state actors. The latest stage in the development of the GASAP shows a greater spatial and material complexity, with intensifying organizational and governance dynamics. Wider governance networks also involving weak relations with actors of the conventional food system are established. Overall, the empirical analysis confirms that the governance tensions and the interactions between them intensify as the GASAP organization scales out and navigates the wider socio-institutional arena of the Brussels' food practices and policies.

The concluding **fourth section** looks back to the governance outcomes of the GASAP's development. It highlights the self-reflexivity of the GASAP, especially on its own governance, following the intensification of organizational and institutional governance tensions over time. The section also points out the gains from the hybrid governance approach for the analysis of AFNs in general. Three points are highlighted, which relate to: a) how the hybrid approach helps to understand the drivers behind different modes of scaling out of alternative food organizations; b) the ways it supports the 'self-reflexivity' of alternative food initiatives and their governance – the way they deal with the contradictions in value systems between organizations and between institutions; c) the

challenges of building up institutional support and cooperative networks among alternative food organizations and other agents of the food and institutional arena.

2. The analytical framework and the research methods.

This section explains the analytical framework (subsection 1) and the research methods used in the empirical research (subsection 2).

Analytical framework: hybrid governance and governance tensions

The governance of AFNs is conceptualised as a hybrid between four governance forms whose interaction produces three types of governance tension: organizational, resource and institutional governance tensions. Jessop and Swyngedouw (2006) make an analytical distinction between four forms of governance: **a)** the *hierarchy of state or corporate systems*; **b)** the *'anarchy' of market* exchange; **c)** the *'heterarchy' of self-organization in networks*; **d)** *solidarity and extra-market* affiliations (*ibid* p.12). Real life governance is very often a hybrid of these forms which interact among each other and explains to a large extent the space-time reproduction of governance systems. *For instance*, solidarity and extra-market modes of governance, which are typical of bottom-up organizations or community groups, are generally characterized by horizontal and participatory forms of decision-making (Moulaert *et al.* 2007, 2010, 2013). However, these forms are often conflictive with the hierarchical logics of state systems, or the corporate logics of market actors, such as institutional barriers or market-based regulatory regimes, built according to the rationale of conventional food systems (Mount 2012). These and other types of interaction generate tensions in the governance of bottom-up organizations, leading for instance to value conflicts, organizational dilemmas, struggles over regulatory regimes, or competition for access and use of resources (Manganelli and Moulaert 2018).

Different strands of governance literatures are combined as theoretical injections to the formulation of the hybrid governance approach. These literatures are: a) theories of social innovation and collective action, (Moulaert *et al.* 2005, 2007, Della Porta and Diani 2006), b) sociological-institutionalist and multi-scalar approaches to governance (Jessop 2002), (Moulaert *et al.* 2005, 2013, Healey 2006, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006), c) relational approaches to governance (Allen 2009, Allen and Cochrane 2010, Jessop 2002, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006). These theoretical strands help to identify and analytically frame the types of governance tensions AFNs face.

Thus, theories of social innovation and collective action cast light on organizational and resource aspects of AFNs. These literatures help to understand the role of needs, ideologies and values in fostering the agency of AFNs. They explain how socially innovative organizations operate in a duality between social efficiency on the one hand and ethics of respect and solidarity on the other (Manganelli and Moulaert 2018). The solidarity values underpinning the building of coalitions with other agents, organizations or institutions in order to respond to material needs are paramount in bottom-up governance (Moulaert *et al.* 2005, 2007, Della Porta and Diani 2006). Thus, a way to conceptualize and summarize the material and governance pressures affecting the food network initiatives, is in terms of a *first type* of governance tensions, i.e. **'organizational (governance) tensions'** or tensions in the modes of governing AFN organizations. Dilemmas stemming from dualities such as horizontal and hierarchical modes of governing, efficiency and participation, volunteer engagement and professionalization, are part of this type of governance tensions.

A *second type* of governance tension, called **'resource (governance) tension'**, refers to the governance of seeking and securing access to different types of material resources (land, finance, logistics, infrastructures, agricultural produce, etc.), which often

necessitates AFNs to liaise with agencies or institutional bodies that can facilitate and sustain the access to resources. This links to **'institutional (governance) tensions'** which emerge through the building of relational networks between local food initiatives and key food governing agencies and institutions at different scales. Diverse institutions can have a constraining or enabling role for the empowerment of AFNs. Thus, tensions among divergent values, behavioural routines and agendas of actors and institutions involved in the governance of local food systems take place. At the same time, modalities of co-learning and co-construction of values and forms of agency between AFNs and other actors, are also part of the analysis. Sociological-institutionalist and multi-scalar approaches to governance (Jessop 2002, Moulaert *et al.* 2005, 2013, Healey 2006, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006) concur to shed light on the tensions among different behaviours and value systems of a diversity of agents and organizations, such as state or corporate agents *versus* bottom-up groups. And relational approaches to governance (Allen 2009, Allen and Cochrane 2010, Jessop 2002, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006) shine on the building of relations among actors and their socialization dynamics. These relational and scalar aspects of governance cut across the different governance tensions (Manganelli and Moulaert 2018). This conceptualization of organizational governance tensions and their interaction with the institutional tensions also helps to explain the reflexivity aspects of AFNs. This alludes to the ways AFNs may be brought to re-examine and re-consider their modes of governance at the light of their value systems, wider objectives and local/societal missions, also in response to experienced tensions (see sections 3.3 and 4).

Research methods

To analyse the GASAP's development trajectory and to interpret the nature of the governance tensions that have arisen in its development, two methodological steps in

the empirical work were made. The *first step* consists of exploratory field-work analysis with a first round of interviews making use of empirical categories based on the analytical framework. The *second step* consists of complementary analysis and verification with follow-up interviews and confrontation with other data to verify the quality and accuracy of the empirical insights and refine the table of empirical categories.

In the first step, preliminary assumptions on the factors of different types of governance tensions (Table 1 'Factors of Tensions') were made. These assumptions were used to formulate an open questionnaire, in order to carry out a first round of face-to-face interviews with members of the network's coordination team, both historical as well as current members. The questions revolved around the following aspects: **a)** understanding core values, principles and organizational governance practices of the network; **b)** how these practices and organizational principles developed over time, from the organization's establishment to the current stage; **c)** what has been the role of the three types of governance tensions and their interrelation in affecting the GASAP's governance practices as well as its core values through time[1]. In a second methodological step, the interviews were analysed and combined with other methods of data collection, in order to verify **a)** the ways the governance tensions practically manifest and are experienced by the GASAP (Table 1 - Nature of the Tensions); and **b)** which governance outcomes these tensions are producing or are expected to produce in the GASAP's organization and its institutional relations (Table 1 - Outcomes of the Tensions). Thus, in this step the transcriptions of the interviews were compared with each other and confronted with information from key documentation - such as mission statements, yearly reports, key working documents, policy and legal documentation. Participant observations at the GASAP network assemblies and other relevant meetings, working groups as well as food

basket delivery points were also carried out, along with follow-up interviews with some GASAP member as well as interviews to other regional food actors.

 Although most of the assumptions about the governance tensions proved to be relevant, from the second methodological step emerged that the degree and modalities by which the tensions were experienced by the GASAP were not equally manifest for all types of tension. This is particularly true for the organizational governance tensions. These tensions are certainly active in the GASAP, but they have not radically perturbed the GASAP's core values and grass-root organizational approach, which seem to be rather resilient (see section 4). In particular, GASAP core members stressed the importance of protecting and sustaining the nature of the organization as a grass-root driven social movement, in which citizens engage with and care for the support of small-scale peasant growers. Yet, GASAP leaders expressed the concern to valorise, promote, and in some way defend their principles in face of a growing landscape of other AFN organizations scaling out in the BCR. It was also found that *'tensions between the tendency to decentralization/enlargement of the territorial reach and the need to federate the network'* (see table 1) have not radically affected the GASAP network either. Besides, these tensions are perceived by some of the GASAP's leaders as potential future effects of further scaling out of the network.

Table 1 was developed on the basis of the analytical framework to help summarizing the key tensions, their factors as well as the current and expected effects of the governance tensions on the GASAP network and its institutional relations. In step 2, the original version of the Table was fine-tuned with the empirical findings and made more consistent with the version reproduced in this paper.

Table 1. Hybrid Governance Categories

Type of Governance Tensions	Factors of Tension	Nature of Tension in Hybrid Governance terms	Governance Outcomes
ORGANIZATIONAL **Tensions in the governance of the organization of the AFNs stemming from different sources**	Growth in the Movement-Network (increase of actors, social, spatial/material bases, functions) requires other governance structures	Tensions between horizontal-participatory and hierarchical-efficient decision-making arrangements Tensions in values, principles, identity Associating, building coalitions, networks	Increased self-reflexivity on changes and adaptations in decision-making modalities Stronger self-reflection on values and identity
	Dynamics of decentralization and inter-spatiality in the organizational and territorial structure of the project/network Cross-territorial food projects intersecting different jurisdictional subdivisions (constraints/opportunities)	Tensions between the tendency to decentralization/enlargement of the territorial reach and the need to federate the network	
RESOURCE **Tensions in the governance of the access to and use of resources (land, capital, physical infrastructures, skills …)**	Searching access to and control of material resources (logistics, cultivable land, infrastructures, finance, agricultural produce etc)	Tensions between diversity of institutional actors (state, corporate, communities, organizations) as to their control capacities of access and use of resources Interactions between bottom-up food networks and top-down state/corporate systems for negotiating/ claiming access/control of resources Conflicts among visions concerning the fair allocation, access, use, of resources	Moving towards resource diversification Enhanced inter-scalar connections for improved resource acquisition Expected enduring conditions of resource dependence from external agents Strategic leadership, forms of proactive conflict management and cooperation
INSTITUTIONAL **Tensions in the socio-political and socio-professional governance structures embedding the AFN and its governance**	Power struggles between AFNs and state/corporate institutions at different scales Divergent values, behavioural routines, agendas between AFNs and institutional or other agents responsible for or/influencing the food governance.	Hybrid actors and policy networks negotiating supportive policy/institutional spaces AFN constraining vs. enabling institutions Contradictory socio-political transformative forces Relation building towards participatory commoning governance institutions	Increased openness towards collaborative partnerships Shaky progress in compromising with and accommodating divergences in professional practices, behaviours, values in different institutions. Self-reflexivity and co-construction of agendas, goals, values

3. Reading the GASAP's history through the hybrid governance lens.

The GASAP was established in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) in 2006, in the early phases of a nascent local food movement (Manganelli 2013). The GASAP is an organization founded by citizens and activists, including peasant farmers themselves, concerned about agro-ecological and environmental values of food. The GASAP shows strong similarities with CSA networks elsewhere, such as the Italian GAS - '*Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale*' - (Rossi and Brunori 2010), the French AMAP - "*Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne*" - (Poulot 2014), the Flemish *Voedselteams* (Crivits and Paredis 2013; van Gameren *et al.* 2015), and also the pioneering Japanese *Teikei* system (Kondoh 2015). In their specific context and organizational conditions, these initiatives attempt to build alternative and more horizontal relationships among consumers and producers.

Thus, the GASAP has fostered a solidarity alliance between consumers and small scale peasant producers/farmers, formalized by signing a contract each time new consumers and producers groups are formed within GASAP (see GASAP's charter). Practically, consumers pay producers in advance a certain amount of money in exchange for future food produce. This helps farmers to plan their seasonal production and secure their income. Thus, groups of consumers are linked directly to one or more peasant producers. In this way, GASAP's '*mangeurs*' get to know the reality and the production practices of the producers. Practically, producers distribute food produce on a regular basis at delivery points divided over the Brussels' regional territory, whereas citizens-consumers compose and collect food baskets at each pick up point. Thus, the organization is self-managed by consumers and producers in a direct solidarity alliance, with the ambition of fostering mutual understanding and support among production and consumption interests. Citizens-consumers, linked to the producers, are the actual drivers of the GASAP as a

self-organizing initiative and movement. A core leading team elected to represent and manage the initiative, seeks to ensure the horizontal, grass-roots and self-reliance character of the GASAP organization. In terms of governance forms this means that the GASAP features as a hybrid between strong affective and solidarity forms of governance, combined with the progressive self-organization into a network, also involving some hierarchy of coordination. The coordination team mainly consists of active GASAP members who are elected by the members of the GASAP. This helps to guarantee an alignment with core values and philosophies of the organization.

 Because of the often spontaneous and informal manner by which new GASAP groups are created, not every participant is an actual member of the GASAP network. Membership encompasses practical as well as moral aspects. Practical aspects include the right to vote at the general assembly and, more recently, the payment of membership dues; moral aspects cover embracing the GASAP's values, expressed in its principles, as well as in its political and societal objectives [2].

Alignment with its seed values and its democratic functioning have shaped the GASAP's identity and imaginaries all along the history of the organization. Yet, spatial and material dynamics of the network are also part of the GASAP's development. Since the beginning participants (including the actual members, in the role of consumers and producers) and food baskets' outlets, have gradually increased in numbers and started to spread over a wider area (see figure 1). Nowadays over 90 consumer-producer groups are scattered in the BCR and the neighbouring territory. Each group links 15 to 20 households, sometimes even more, to one or more producers. The number of participating farmers has also increased, from a single producer in 2006 to over 30 producers currently, including vegetable growers, but also small-scale processors (see figures 1 and 2).

The growth of the GASAP goes along with the gradual formation of a coordinating body and the gradual formalization of the GASAP into a non-profit association (2012). Contested relations of resource dependence on state agencies started to emerge already in the early years of the GASAP, following the need to secure financial resources. Yet the GASAP has continued to expand in an informal and organic way in the intermediate and latest stages of its history.

Nowadays the GASAP organization needs to reconsider its logistics of food distribution and, in consequence, its organizational structure. The sequel of the section retraces the development of the GASAP showing how the governance tensions emerge and interact among each other in the early (3.1), intermediate (3.2) and current (3.3) stages of its life-course.

Figure 1. Conceptual map of the BCR representing the development of the GASAP's food baskets delivery points in the early stage (figure on the left) and in the latest stage (figure on the right).

Figure 2. Conceptual map of Belgium representing the location of GASAP's producers in the early stage (figure on the left) and in the latest stage (figure on the right).

3.1. Organizational Dynamics and emerging Governance Tensions in the GASAP's early years (2006-2012)

As an authentically bottom-up organization, with originally no formal links with state or market institutions, the GASAP has been shaped according to alternative values and imaginaries. Important in this genesis is the members' self-perception as being part of a movement, driven by citizens that aspire to feed themselves in a different way and desire to sustain a different type of agriculture[3]. Similar to other Community Supported Agriculture and Food Sovereignty Movements (Aguayo and Latta 2015; Nigh and Cabañas 2015), the GASAP supports small scale, peasant and agroecological agriculture and opposes the mainstream corporate food systems' values.

Referring to governance forms, the nascent GASAP movement evidently falls within both the third and the fourth forms of governance, hybridizing the '*heterarchy*' of the self-organization with "*solidarity and extra market*" types of affiliation (see section 2). As a consequence, modalities of bringing participants together, setting up meetings, making decisions, have mainly grown from horizontal, informal, and personal relations, often connected to friendship or commonality of visions and values concerning the food

system. The forging of alliances and relational networks with other food sovereignty organizations, has been motivated by affinity between ideologies and societal values. Furthermore, from the start and along its life-course, the GASAP has connected with regional, Belgium based as well as international movements for the right to food and the defence of peasant agriculture (see figure 3 'Timeline of the GASAP development' at the end of this section).

Yet, the GASAP movement had to cope with its own socio-spatial specificity and modalities of development. Already in the first years of its existence in the BCR different GASAP food basket groups have sprung from informal relations among citizens and activists living in proximity to each other.

In interaction with these spatial-material dynamics, internal governing bodies have organically emerged, encompassing working groups dealing with the management of consumers' waiting lists, the installation of food basket delivery points, the recruitment of producers, the writing of the GASAP's chart, etc. As a consequence, the frequency of meetings among GASAP's leading actors intensified and:

"New GASAP pick-up groups started to arise like mushrooms, mainly through 'word of mouth' and informal contacts …I also talked a lot about the GASAP in meetings and public gatherings ". (cit. from a GASAP's producer).

"At the beginning there was no pre-conceived strategy of expansion of the food baskets' pick-ups. It was more of a spontaneous process. Requests to enter (the network) became quickly numerous and we

needed to manage them in some ways" (cit. from interview with a

historic GASAP's leader).

These organizational dynamics - giving room to a spontaneous, informal, and in a way *ad hoc* endogenous governance - brought considerable coordination and management challenges. Thus, organizational governance tensions have emerged since the initial phases of the GASAP's development, stirred by the informal and spontaneous scaling out of this young initiative (see 'Timeline of the GASAP development' in figure 3 and Table 1. Organizational governance tensions - factors of tension). Furthermore, other governance tensions began to emerge as the GASAP responded to growth dynamics and management pressures. Connections among the tensions also began to play a role.

Emerging governance tensions and their connections.

Governance tensions already became manifest in the early stage of the GASAP mainly in the form of *organizational* (governance) tensions. As GASAP started to grow and scale out in the BCR, management challenges came to the fore. As a consequence, tensions were experienced between the spontaneous/informal governance and the need for a more structured organization, also requiring greater professionalization. Thus, hybridization of governance forms (see the analytical framework and Table 1 in section 2) - specifically the spontaneity of extra-market affiliations, the hierarchy required by greater professionalization and the management practices of horizontal networks - began to produce organizational and institutional governance tensions. In particular, already in this early stage, some leading members of GASAP began to fear that a greater professionalization would inhibit the organization's spontaneous and informal character (interviews with historic GASAP leaders). However, the need for greater human and material resources to better coordinate the organization became urgent. Thus,

organizational governance tensions pushed the need for access to and control of resources (see Table 1 – 'Resource governance tensions').

The GASAP acquired access to additional resources (mainly funding and human resources) through another local food organization, *Les Début des Haricots* (DDH), which was founded in the BCR in the same year as the GASAP. These two groups – DDH and GASAP – were practically overlapping at their origins, since leading activists of the DDH were also founders of GASAP. Relational proximity and dialogue between the two organizations have persisted through time.

Having fostered sensitization and capacity building for urban agriculture since 2005, the DDH had already developed certain collaborative relationships with state agencies at the regional level, in particular with the Environmental Agency of the Brussels-Capital Region (IBGE), which is under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Ministry [4]. These institutional relations constitute an anchor point for the GASAP, which started to connect to the IBGE through the mediation of the DDH, to negotiate access to financial resources.

> *"...The Ministry in power at that time came from an ecologically sensitive background. Therefore that Ministry was very close and open to this kind of environmental and food related associations. This has allowed some collaborations to happen"* (Cit. from the Cabinet of the Environmental Ministry which was in power those years).

The first funding application for employing a coordinator (2009-2010) signed the beginning of a trajectory of continuing interactions between the GASAP and the IBGE to negotiate and secure the continuity of resources. Yet, also due to the fragility of these semi-institutionalized relations, securing control and continuity of financial resources has

been a constant factor of organizational and resource governance tensions for GASAP all along. Moreover, behind tensions to access funding, more profound institutional governance tensions are readable. Difficulties to guarantee sustained collaborative relationships between an organization like the GASAP and a state agency, stem from differences in socio-political and socio-professional cultures, governance modalities and bureaucratic practices (see table 1 Row 3 – Institutional Governance Tensions).

In a way, conditions of resource dependence interact with and reinforce these institutional governance tensions. And these tensions grew in the subsequent phase of the GASAP's life-course, also due to a change of government in the BCR (see section 3.2).

3.2. GASAP stage 2: reinforced interactions among governance tensions (2012-2014).

Although governance dynamics and tensions already began to emerge in the first phase, they became more tangible and started reinforcing each other in the (intermediate) stage 2. In this phase, the GASAP organization continued growing in numbers of participants and members including over 60 consumers-producer groups in 2012 (GASAP Activity Report 2012). This was partially a consequence of the greater visibility of the GASAP as a Brussels' based CSA network. Self-promotion and the engagement of GASAP actors in local food debates, events and public conversations contributed to this visibility (see also van Gameren *et al*. 2015). The creation of new GASAP groups continues to occur in a spontaneous and bottom-up way, through citizens' self-organization, proximity-personal relations and by word-of-mouth. Around the years 2012-2013, producers [5] were mainly located outside the administrative boundaries of the BCR. Along with their growth dynamics and spatial outreach, other material and organizational changes began to occur in the GASAP. New demands by consumers for more variety in products beyond fruits

and vegetables spurred these changes. A few consumer groups within the GASAP self-organized accordingly, linking with more producers and developing more capacious types of food-basket. These growth and diversification factors had an impact on the GASAP's organization. The need to better organize the distribution logistics, in a way that responds to new demands from the consumers and guarantees greater efficiency, climbed on the GASAP's preference ladder. However, building up the capacity to meet these demands conflicted with the scarcity and inadequacy of resources - mainly financial, human and logistical resources - experienced by the GASAP (among others, see activity reports 2012 and 2013).

These new interactions among resource and organizational governance dynamics and tensions stirred new institutional governance interactions (see also figure 3 'timeline scheme'). Some leading members of GASAP began to search for new supportive policy spaces complying with the Brussel's sustainable food agenda. Opportunities were negotiated and discovered also through already established relationships and knowledge networks including key institutional food actors [6]. In 2010 these actors co-promoted a new inter-governmental programme to stimulate employment in the BCR, while guaranteeing green and sustainable development[7]. An axis on sustainable food development was integrated into the programme in 2013. This axis provided new funding opportunities for food actors and organizations such as the GASAP. A project proposal on logistics presented by the GASAP was selected and embedded in that programme.

However, these new institutional interactions do not seem to have improved governance relations, e.g. through enhanced participatory and collaborative dynamics and mutual learnings, nor to have brought solutions to the logistical problems. One core reason for these missed opportunities relates to changes in the Brussels' political environment. Following the elections, a change in the BCR Regional Ministry of the Environment -

also responsible for food policies - occurred in 2014. The new BCR political coalition adopted a more rational and pragmatic attitude towards food and ecologically oriented bottom-up initiatives. The project proposed by the GASAP was stopped after one year, due to new orientations in the allocation of funding and in the delivery of programmes and policies. Together with other food and environmental initiatives, the GASAP started to experience greater restrictions in core funding, and had to face more strict rules of compliance imposed by funding schemes:

> *"The new Cabinet established different funding criteria… we lost 1/3 of our funding. It is not easy to fit into their criteria. They support more and more projects that create employment in Brussels; we do not create employment in Brussels, but in the countryside."* (Quote from a GASAP's leader)

These sharpened hierarchical governance modalities affected the resource base of the GASAP network, generating tensions in the relationships between the organization, its networks and public institutions. The increased uncertainty in accessing and securing funding came along with a growing distance between agendas and values of the GASAP and the BCR governmental institutions (institutional governance tensions).

Furthermore, mismatches in the territorial organization, due to the increasingly trans-territorial character of the GASAP (see section 3.3), have also become a potential factor of tensions (see table 1 – organizational governance tensions).

3.3 The recent stage (2014-nowadays). Enhanced governance tensions bringing new opportunities and ambivalences.

The above analysis shows both the emergence of governance tensions and the ways by which these tensions began to interact among each other. As the GASAP developed materially and spatially, also becoming more embedded in the BCR's food policies and public practices, these tensions and their interactions seem to have amplified.

The years 2014-2015 marked a threshold in the GASAPs history, as a greater diversity of actors, organizations and state agencies became part of the GASAPs' governance The highlighted factors of tension - in particular the growth in the organization, the search for additional resources and the conflicts in value systems with state agencies - have played a part in pushing the GASAP towards the establishment of new governance networks.

The building of new governance relations by the GASAP has gone into two main directions. First, the GASAP attempted to negotiate for support and resources with the Walloon Government, which was in process of elaborating new policies on Agriculture and Sustainable Development [8]. The trans-territorial character of the GASAP is regarded by some of the GASAP's leaders as an opportunity to scale out in Wallonia and to play a strategic role for the rural development of that neighbouring Region. Secondly, the GASAP began to establish new project-based partnerships with a diversity of actors in the BCR. The opportunity was offered by a call for projects on Sustainable Food launched in October 2014 by the Regional Agency for Research and Innovation - INNOVIRIS[9]. This call promotes 'Living Lab' projects to bring together a diversity of actors - in particular research agents, NGOs, public and private actors - into joint partnerships to improve local food systems. GASAP actors seized this new opportunity to implement priorities on the GASAP's agenda. The selection procedure came to a close in 2015, and the GASAP won two Living Lab Projects. One of them concerns the identification of efficient solutions for food logistics, a pressing issue for the GASAP. The other aims to determine multi-dimensional criteria for evaluating the sustainability of different kinds

of alternative food chains. For the GASAP this was a step towards the elaboration of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), meant to improve the relations between producers and consumers. This had been a priority for GASAP for a long time. Both projects involve different types of actors: research agents, alternative food organizations, some being social enterprises, but also corporate agents, such as *Delhaize*, one of the main supermarket chains in Belgium, and *Sodexo*, a big enterprise responsible for institutional food procurement.

These new governance networks seem to play an ambivalent role in the GASAP's organization. On the one hand, more stable and longer-term funding, greater expertise and human capital are considered instrumental to implement part of the organization's agenda. On the other hand, tensions occur in the cooperation with actors coming from different organizational practices and cultures, with different objectives, (strategic) time-horizons and behavioural modes:

> *'Needs, goals and timeframes of the associative world are very different from the ones of the corporate. By working in these partnerships you realize how challenging it is to implement a fruitful collaboration and to put into action the aspired objectives of everyone in the given timeframe'*
> (cit. from a 'Co-create' project's responsible within the GASAP).

Other organizational governance tensions relate to the increased degree of professionalization required by the projects. Conflicts have emerged between volunteer participation, an essential driver of the GASAP organization, and professional agency, as well as between participatory-horizontal versus hierarchical-efficient decision-making practices (see Table 1. organizational governance tensions – factors of tensions). Thus,

some of the organizational tensions felt already in the first stage of the GASAP's life-course (see paragraph 3.1) have now become more articulate, urging the coordination team to find ways to implement a shared agenda in an efficient and yet participatory way, also involving an increased number of citizens-consumers and producers. As a result, the GASAP has revived its reflections on how participatory modes of governance can co-exist with the need for professionalization and more efficient decision-making.
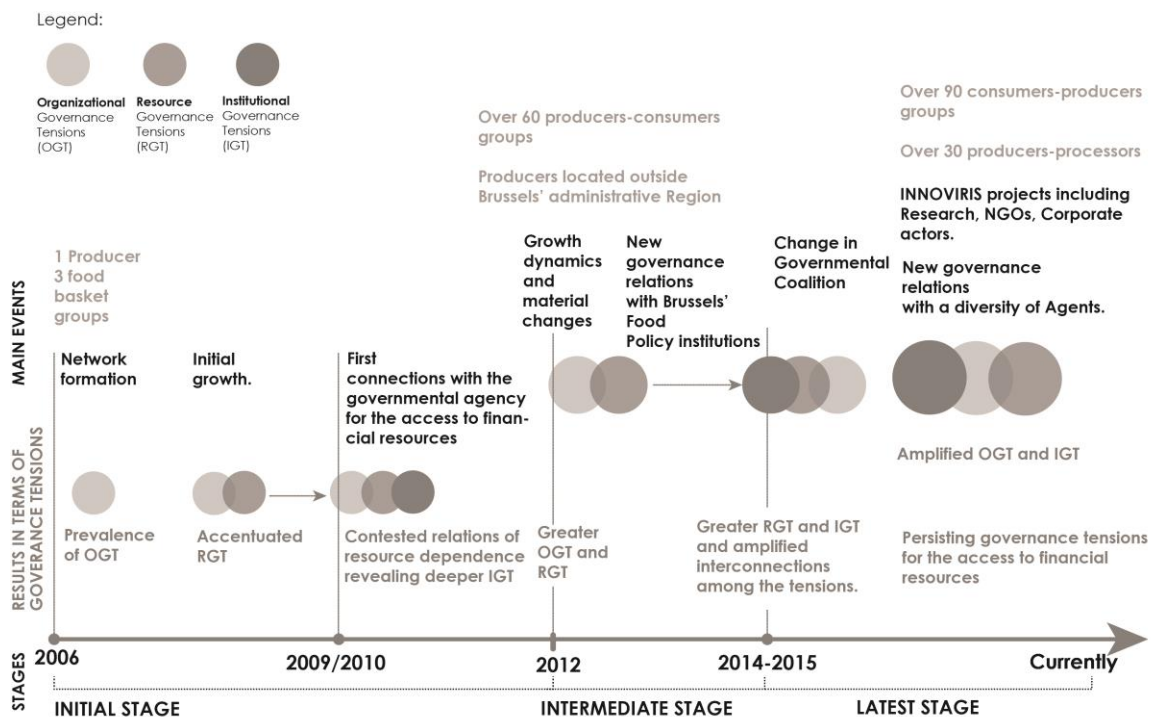
Figure 3. Timeline of the GASAP development.

4. Reconsidering Governance Tensions in the GASAP. Key lessons and orientations.

The concluding observations come in three steps. First, we summarize briefly how the hybrid governance approach applied in this paper has allowed to identify the tensions which arise in the governance of the GASAP and how they have reinforced each other. Second, we show how the self-reflections made by the GASAP on its governance dynamics have helped to keep it a truly bottom-up organization, with short chain delivery and local food security provided by a solidarity-based local organization. Third, we

highlight the potential of the hybrid governance approach for the analysis of AFNs in general.

The hybrid governance analysis of the GASAP has revealed how governance tensions arise and begin to reinforce each other as the organization scales out, becoming more embedded in the socio-institutional landscape of the BCR. In the beginning organizational governance tensions are prevalent. These tensions relate to motivations, values, ethical stances, long term societal ambitions and democratic modes of organization in setting up an alternative food delivery network, but also to the 'everydayness' of coordinating a bottom-up organization which at some point starts to scale out spontaneously across the BCR. Then, as the organization develops, needs for resources become stronger, putting pressures on the organizational governance of the GASAP. Thus, the need to secure resources (especially arable land for growers), to improve the network's logistics, to federate and coordinate its consumers-producers network, create pressures on the GASAP, intensifying organizational as well as resource governance tensions. New relational networks are built by the GASAP, in response to these perceived tensions. The building of these networks is institutionally mediated (new institutions created, new arrangements with state institutions, …) and institutional governance tensions become more prominent. The need to build resilient and durable connections with key agents for accessing resources and to develop joint projects and collaborative relations in order to achieve more ambitious objectives, urges some changes in the GASAP's organizational governance.

 Overall, the analysis also reveals how core values continue to play a strong role in the way GASAP leaders view the future of the movement. The awareness still predominates of being a citizens-led movement, which defends and supports a certain '*model*' of agriculture, as part of a wider network of actors such as CSAs movements seeking food

sovereignty (see the introduction and the beginning of section 3). This awareness is nourished by a self-reflexivity of the GASAP on its own modes of organization and governing principles (see third column first row of Table 1). It has contributed to reassert its basic values and priorities and to reset its ambitions accordingly. The defence of peasant agriculture and the fostering of horizontal and solidarity consumer-producer networks stand as unquestionable pillars of the GASAP organization. Thus, the GASAP governance fosters knowledge proximity, transparency, communication and horizontal decision-making strategies among the GASAP members, consumers as well as producers. But as the GASAP develops, so does the need to reconcile tensions between changes in the organizational governance (e.g. increased professionalization, more efficient decision-making modalities, stronger collaborative networks with other agents and so on) and the safeguarding of a truly bottom-up organization, based on democratic and horizontal decision-making arrangements.

> *"In terms of our own governance, I think we are in a crucial moment. As the GASAP grew and the number of employees has increased, we need to understand how to coordinate the two spheres (employees and volunteers), balancing these two different rhythms. There is a whole reflection and discussion on our internal governance that we are in process of carrying out."* (citing A GASAP Coordinator).

As the interactivity between organizational and institutional governance tensions increases, self-reflexivity dynamics also intensify, pushing the GASAP organization to mediate between governance tensions and the ambitions of maintaining a solidarity and bottom-up self-organization within democratic networks.

To conclude, we briefly reflect on the value of the hybrid governance approach for the analysis of AFNs in general.

First, through a socio-politically grounded analysis, the hybrid governance approach helps to understand the **drivers behind different modes of scaling out** of alternative food organizations. What leads self-organizing actors to associate, build networks and connect to different agencies and institutions? In what ways material resources factors play a role in the life course of a food organization, also reinforcing the need to build collaborative networks? What role is played by the interrelations among key tensions in urging a bottom-up food network to opt for hybrid governance forms of self-governing and scaling out?

Second, and related to that, the hybrid approach can support the **'self-reflexivity' of alternative food initiatives and their governance**. The approach can be supportive to AFNs to reflect on, learn from, and adapt their modes of governance to a wider landscape of alternative or established food actors and institutions. Self-reflexivity instructed through a hybrid governance approach can also cast light on the unquestionable governing and organizational pillars, without which the very nature of an initiative or network would be overturned. By adopting a self-reflexive attitude supported by a hybrid governance analysis AFNs become better equipped to respond to tensions deriving from their own socio-spatial development and socio-institutional embedment.

Finally, pointing to the interactivity between organizational and institutional governance tensions, the hybrid approach calls for a deeper reflection upon **forms of support to and networking of alternative food organizations with other agents**. On the one hand, AFN organizations often need support to secure resources (e.g. access to arable land for producers, greater funding, human resources) and require cooperative networks of diverse agents to implement their missions. But on the other hand, tensions

can emerge among agents and institutions with different organizational culture, behavioural practices and diverse conceptions of food security and sovereignty. The hybrid governance approach can inspire diverse actors and institutions to find areas of convergence and mutual learning leading towards the co-construction and implementation of collective and locally relevant food security objectives.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Key questions in the interviews were:
-What are your foundational values, missions and organizational principles?
-What changes in your modes of governance have been generated by/are expected to be provoked by the growth of the network and the increase of participants/members overtime? (To be assessed in the different stages).
-In particular, do you perceive tensions between modes of horizontal/participatory governance, volunteer commitment, and types of more hierarchical decision making, as for instance produced by the greater requirements for professionalization in the network? How do you experience these or other tensions and what are your organizational governance strategies to cope with them?
-What are your key resource-material needs and ways to access resources? In what ways have you connected with different agents to access resources as well as to build alliances and joint partnerships? (To be assessed in the different stages).
-Have you aspired to/actively engaged in collaborating with a diversity of agents overtime, and for what purposes? What challenges and tensions you experience in the building of durable collaborative networks with other food actors as well as with institutional agents?
-Looking at the GASAP network today, do you perceive that your core values and principles have radically changed over time or are still vivid nowadays? In case, what threats do you perceive and what are your organizational strategies to cope with those?

[2] See among others the GASAP's Charter and the GASAP's Statute (http://gasap.be/le-reseau-des-gasap/, accessed on 7 May 2017). It is also worth mentioning that the distinction between members and no-members as well as between types of membership (e.g. actual members versus nominal members), is also foreseen in the legal framework to which an organization like the GASAP today belongs. This legal framework refers essentially to the Belgian regulations on the 'asbl' (No-profit associations). See for instance: http://www.assoc.be/ [accessed 25 May 2017] .

[3] See on that the GASAP's chart and mission statements, partly also available in the GASAP's website http://gasap.be/, [accessed 4 May 2017].

[4]At that time, in a landscape of nascent movements and emerging institutional interest on urban gardening and local agriculture, the IBGE (“*Institut Bruxellois pour la Gestion de l'Environnement*”) was the main Regional institutional agency responsible for ecologically and food oriented initiatives.

[5]In 2012 the GASAP counted over 20 producers. They are mainly organic horticultural producers, but they also encompass few small processors [GASAP Activity Report 2012].

[6]A key leading institutional actor is still represented by sub-sections of the abovementioned IBGE.

[7]The 'Alliance Emploi-Environnement', started in 2010, is led by the Ministries of Environment, Economy and the 'president-ministry' of the BCR. See the 'Report 2014' for more information: http://www.environnement.brussels/sites/default/files/user_files/rap_aee-alim_rapport2014_fr.pdf [accessed on 19 April 2017].

[8]See among others, this link : http://www.wallonie.be/fr/strategie-wallonne-de- developpement-durable [accessed on 4 May 2017].

[9]See http://www.innoviris.be/en [accessed 4 May 2017] for an overview of the Research Institution and http://www.goodfood.brussels/fr/contributions/action-co-create-co-creer-pour-des-systemes-dalimentation-durable-en-region-de [accessed 4 May 2017] for the specific call.

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