Processes of co-evolution, joint reflection, and facilitation in & of learning networks. Reflections from SOLINSA

SOLINSA
Support of Learning and Innovation
Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

Heidrun Moschitz, 29 April 2015, ESEE Congress Wageningen

LINSA: Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

› Networks of producers, consumers, experts, NGOs, SMEs, local administrations as well as official researchers and extensionists, that are engaged in sustainable agriculture and rural development - cooperating, sharing resources and co-producing new knowledge by creating conditions for communication.

› Process oriented: individuals, organisations, institutions learn together and co-produce knowledge that is transformed in innovations
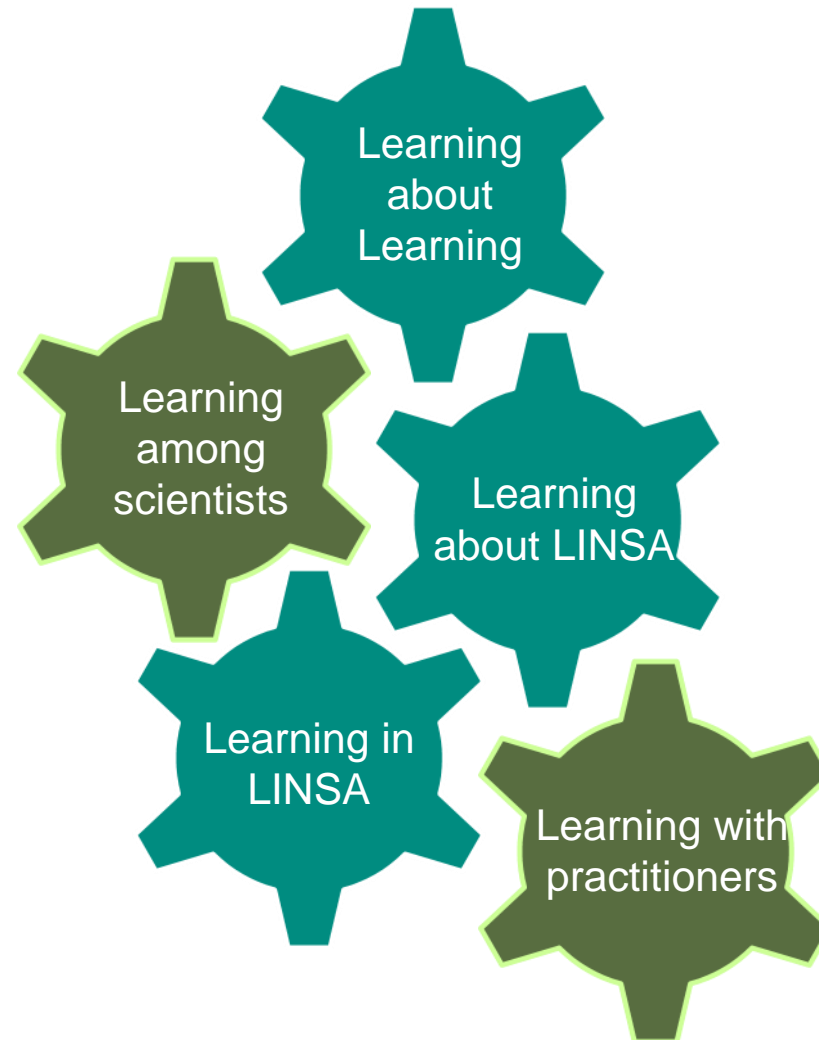
17 LINSA studied over 2,5 years

Objectives of SOLINSA: Support transition towards sustainable agriculture and rural dev.

› Develop a conceptual framework for innovation for sustainable agriculture and rural development

› Identify institutional determinants that enable or constrain existing AKS in supporting effective LINSA in the context of changing knowledge and innovation policies

› Explore LINSA empirically to understand their functioning and support needs

› Improved understanding of barriers to complex learning process and how to remove them

› Develop operational tools for relevant actors to support LINSA: effective and efficient policy instruments

Multiple spaces of learning in SOLINSA

Learning about Learning

Learning among scientists

Learning about LINSA

Learning in LINSA

Learning with practitioners

Three features to enhance transition towards sustainable agriculture through learning & innovation

1) Processes of co-evolution

› Learning in networks is not static, but evolves over time

  › Variation in actors' resources and strategies

  › Outside pressure

› Research and advice needs to consider these dynamics and co-evolve with changes

  › Processes inside LINSA (adapting to system, context etc.): e.g. negotiation about 'sustainability'

  › Processes of researcher (advisor) – LINSA interaction

  › Evolvement of roles in projects: e.g. changing roles of researcher from source of knowledge to enganging in knowledge exchange processes

2) Joint Reflection

› Dynamic Learning processes involve recurrent reflection:

  › What is learned?

  › How does learning occur?

› LINSA is only formed if reflection on practice and learning takes place

  › 2nd order learning: reframing

› Three spaces of joint reflection built into SOLINSA

  › Within LINSA

  › Researcher-LINSA interaction

  › Researcher-researcher interaction

3) Facilitation

› Reflection processes need to be enabled

  › Cannot be steered and predetermined

› Empower actors to negotiate meanings, ways and outcomes of learning etc.

› Places for facilitation in SOLINSA

  › For processes within LINSA and between LINSA and researchers (researchers as facilitators)

  › For reflection at project level: one professional facilitator, and shared facilitation between researchers

Changing perspectives…

› We need changing the attitude and the self-perception of researchers, advisors, farmers, policy makers…

› New concept: transition partners

  › support social learning and the related group dynamic processes through a methodological approach

  › can fulfil different roles and functions:
  facilitators, participatory researchers, boundary persons, experts, intermediary persons, or innovation broker as referred to by the EIP

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SOLINSA Partners

P1   Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland

P2   University of Pisa, Italy

P3   University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

P4   University of West England, United Kingdom

P5   Wageningen University, The Netherlands

P6   Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, Switzerland

P7   Federal Institute for Technology, Switzerland

P8   Baltic Studies Center, Latvia

P9   French Livestock Institute, France

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