

EU GO- EUROPEAN URBAN GARDENS OTESHA

IDENTIFICATION OF A GOOD EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE OR TOOL

Name of the community garden			Possible short title for the practice		
PHOENICURUS			"GROWING TOGETHER" – HOW TO COMBINE SMALL-SCALE ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTION AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION		
Type of tool			Contact person	Name and role	GISELA MIR-VIADER; ORGANIC HORTICULTURALIST
Activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Training		Phone	+34 66 33 59 493
Methodology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Document		E-mail	hort.phoenicurus@gmail.com
Other (specify):				Other contacts	
It can be addressed to...			It deals with the following topics...		
All	<input type="checkbox"/>	School	Intercultural dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intergenerational dialogue
Children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Institution	Gender Equality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fight against poverty
Youngsters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social service	Sustainable Consumption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education to sustainable development
Adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Job service	Sustainable Urbanisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Socio-professional training
Women	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Migrants service	Health promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social cohesion
Elderly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neighbourhood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Horticultural therapy	Leisure activity
Other (specify) EXISTING CONSUMER COOPERATIVES AND ORGANIC MARKET GARDENERS			Other (specify) PERMACULTURE		

DESCRIPTION Please describe the practice you have developed.

THE CONSUMER COOPERATIVE "**CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT**" BURST INTO LIFE IN THE AUTUMN OF 2010, WITH THE EXPRESS DESIRE FROM THE OUTSET TO SOURCE FOOD AS LOCALLY AND ORGANICALLY AS POSSIBLE, AND TO SEEK TO SUPPORT SMALL PRODUCERS AND INNOVATIVE PROJECTS, AND TO ESTABLISH STRONG, DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN THE CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS.

AS FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE GROUP – WE OURSELVES ARE, AFTER ALL, CONSUMERS TOO – WE HAD THE GREAT FORTUNE TO BE ABLE TO OFFER OUR ORGANIC PRODUCE FOR THE WEEKLY VEGETABLE BOXES. ONLY A COUPLE OF MONTHS PREVIOUSLY WE HAD DECIDED TO EXPAND OUR GARDEN WITH A VIEW TO COMMERCIALISING, AND MAKING A SMALL, BUT SUSTAINABLE, LIVING.

THE CREATION OF **CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT** THEREFORE OFFERED EXACTLY WHAT WE AS SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS WOULD HAVE WISHED:

- A GROUP OF CONSUMERS, ALL FROM THE SAME TOWN, WHOM WE KNOW PERSONALLY;
- A GROUP OF CONSUMERS COMMITTED TO THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE PROJECT;
- A GROUP OF CONSUMERS DESIRING FRESH, LOCAL, ORGANIC PRODUCE;
- A GROUP OF CONSUMERS PREPARED TO RECEIVE "CLOSED" VEGETABLE BOXES I.E. WITHOUT CHOICE – EVERY BOX CONTAINS WHATEVER THERE IS TO HARVEST IN THE GARDEN THAT PARTICULAR WEEK;
- A CENTRALISED COLLECTION POINT – ONLY 900 METRES FROM THE GARDEN (ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE "KILOMETRE ZERO") – MEANING MINIMAL TRANSPORT, ESPECIALLY SO AS OVER 90% OF THE CONSUMERS COLLECT ON FOOT OR BY BIKE;



- A SHARING OF TASKS – ON A ROTA BASIS, THE COOPERATIVE MEMBERS COMPILE THE VEGETABLE BOXES; MANAGE CORRESPONDENCE, INCLUDING THE ENTRY OF NEW MEMBERS; MAINTAIN THE COLLECTION POINT; ORGANISE WORKSHOPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES; PUBLICISE THE GROUP'S EXISTENCE AND ETHOS ETC.;
- THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ALL THE HARVEST IS ESSENTIALLY SOLD IN ADVANCE (UNLIKE THE VAGARIES OF A WEEKLY MARKET FOR EXAMPLE);
- THE OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THE CONSUMERS' AWARENESS OF THE SEASONALITY OF THE PRODUCE, AND TO INCORPORATE SOME LESSER KNOWN CROPS INTO THE DIET;
- THE OPPORTUNITY, THROUGH VISITS TO THE GARDEN, TO FURTHER INCREASE THE CONSUMERS' KNOWLEDGE OF, AND CONTACT WITH, THEIR FOOD;
- THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP CONSUMERS INFORMED ON A REGULAR BASIS OF THE PROGRESS OF THE CROPS AND OTHER KEY TASKS, AND TO EXPLAIN WHY SOMETHING MAY BE CROPPING TOO EARLY, TOO LATE, IN TOO MUCH QUANTITY OR NOT ENOUGH.

AIMS AND OUTCOMES Which are the main purposes tackled in a community garden with this tool? Which concrete results have been observed at short and long term?

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING WE DESIRED OUR PROJECT – *PHOENICURUS* – WHICH IN ESSENCE IS HORTICULTURAL, TO HAVE A STRONG SOCIAL DIMENSION – WE WANTED POTENTIAL CONSUMERS TO HAVE THE SENSATION THAT THE GARDEN IS AS MUCH THEIRS AS OURS, AND THUS TO REMOVE THE BARRIER OF IGNORANCE WHICH NORMALLY EXISTS BETWEEN PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS IN AN INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM WITH MANY INTERMEDIARIES.

OUR INSPIRATION FOR THIS TYPE OF APPROACH IS PRIMARILY INSTINCTIVE, BUT ALSO REINFORCED BY OUR KNOWLEDGE OF PERMACULTURE THEORY, WHICH HAS AS ITS FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS CARE OF THE EARTH AND CARE OF PEOPLE. BY PEOPLE IT IS UNDERSTOOD NOT ONLY THE PERSONS DIRECTLY WORKING THE LAND, BUT ALSO THE “CONSUMERS” WHO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF THE HARVEST.

THE CREATION OF *CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT* JOINTLY ENABLED US TO ACHIEVE THIS – THE CONSUMERS KNOW WHO IS GROWING THEIR FOOD, WHERE, AND HOW. THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEASONS, AND UNDERSTAND THAT NOT EVERYTHING CAN BE CULTIVATED ALL YEAR ROUND. WE, AS PRODUCERS, ARE ABLE TO EXPLAIN DIRECTLY TO THE CONSUMERS – WHETHER WRITTEN OR SPOKEN – WHAT WE ARE DOING, WHEN, HOW AND WHY. THUS A MUTUAL TRUST IS FOSTERED, AND BOTH PARTIES PARTICIPATE IN A SHARED, ENRICHING EXPERIENCE.

WHAT MAKES IT A GOOD PRACTICE OR TOOL? Identify which elements make this action a good practice, for ex. Innovation, coherence, link with other projects or people, favours social mixing, simplify work, earn time or money, etc.

WHEN CONCEIVING *CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT*, THE FRENCH SYSTEM OF “AMAPs” AND THE BRITISH “CSAs” WERE USED AS BASIC MODELS. THE IDEA OF A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CONSUMERS, WHO BUY THE COMPLETE HARVEST IN ADVANCE, AND THEREBY SHARE THE RISKS WHICH NORMALLY THE GROWER HAS TO ASSUME ALONE, IS IN ITSELF HIGHLY INNOVATIVE IN CATALUNYA, AND MAY EVEN BE THE ONLY EXAMPLE OF SUCH A PROJECT THERE.



APART FROM THOSE FACETS, THE GROUP UNANIMOUSLY WANTED THE FRESH PRODUCE TO BE SOURCED AS LOCALLY AND ORGANICALLY AS POSSIBLE, WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT WE AS GROWERS COULD OFFER. RETURNING TO THE INFLUENCE OF PERMACULTURE, AND ITS IDEA OF MINIMISING EXTERNAL RESOURCES AND ACHIEVING CLOSED CYCLES, WE ALSO PRODUCE ALL OUR OWN COMPOST; SAVE SEEDS FOR A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CROPS – AS WELL AS CULTIVATING EVERMORE LOCAL HERITAGE VARIETIES; AND PREPARE OUR OWN SEEDLINGS. INCIDENTALLY, IN ORDER TO PRODUCE ITS OWN FLOUR, AS A GROUP WE ALSO SOWED A FIELD OF ORGANIC SPELT, OF WHICH THE SUBSEQUENT STRAW IS NOW MULCHING THE GARDEN. THIS INITIATIVE ALSO ENABLED US TO ORGANISE AN ACTIVITY TO LEARN HOW TO SCYTHE AND MAKE SHEAVES.

AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, **CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT** ALSO ENDEAVOURS TO TAKE COOPERATIVISM ONE STEP FURTHER, AND “RELEARN” TRADITIONAL SKILLS TO IMPROVE THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF ALL, BENEFITING FIRST AND FOREMOST THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH MEMBERS ALREADY POSSESS. ALTHOUGH THE **TRANSITION TOWN** MOVEMENT IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO REACH CATALUNYA, THIS WAY OF THINKING ECHOES A LOT ITS PHILOSOPHY, AND THE COOPERATIVE ACTS AS A DE FACTO TRANSITION GROUP HERE. IN THE GARDEN TOO, WE HOPE TO DEMONSTRATE, FOR EXAMPLE BY FOREGOING MACHINERY, THAT ALTERNATIVE FOOD PRODUCTION IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT HEALTHIER FOR US AND THE LAND.

STEP BY STEP Please, describe how to put in practice, guiding with clear instruction and materials needed someone that would like to experiment your tool in a local community garden around Europe

HERE IN CARDEDEU, OUR PROJECT **PHOENICURUS**, AND THE IDEA TO CREATE A CONSUMER GROUP WERE BORN MORE OR LESS SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND THE TWO INITIATIVES HAVE ESSENTIALLY DEVELOPED IN TANDOM. THANKS TO OTHER PREVIOUSLY EXISTING GROUPS (e.g. **HORTS VITALS**), THERE WAS ALREADY A FAIRLY ESTABLISHED NETWORK OF PEOPLE IN THE TOWN WITH SIMILAR CONCERNS AND DESIRES. THROUGH WORD-OF-MOUTH, AND A PUBLIC LAUNCH MEETING, IT PROVED RELATIVELY EASY TO ACHIEVE THE QUORUM OF FAMILIES NEEDED TO MAKE **CARDEDEU AUTOSUFICIENT** A REALITY.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS INVOLVED MONTHLY ASSEMBLIES TO DEFINE THE GROUP’S IDEOLOGY AND AIMS ON ONE HAND, AND ON THE OTHER TO DECIDE PRACTICAL ASPECTS SUCH AS WHAT FORMAT THE BOX SCHEME WOULD HAVE; WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH ETC. VARIOUS COMMISSIONS WERE CREATED IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH SPECIFIC THEMES. THESE WERE:

- + SOURCING OF OTHER (NON-HORTICULTURAL) PRODUCTS;
- + LEGAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS;
- + INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION;
- + ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ORGANISATION

AS GROWERS, OUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- + CROP PLANNING – WHICH VARIETIES; WHEN TO SOW; WHICH QUANTITIES ETC. TO ENSURE THAT WE ARE ABLE TO SUPPLY BOXES THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE YEAR;
- + ALL HORTICULTURAL TASKS – SOWING; TRANSPLANTING; CARING; HARVESTING ETC.;
- + TRANSPORTING THE HARVEST TO THE COLLECTION POINT;
- + COMMUNICATION – WRITTEN (E-MAILS AND BLOG); PRESENCE AT DISTRIBUTION OF BOXES; PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASSEMBLIES (BOTH AS CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS);
- + ORGANISATION OF ACTIVITIES – MONTHLY “OPEN DOORS”; OTHER ONE-OFF EVENTS RELATED TO THE GARDEN AND ITS CYCLES.



IN OUR CASE, EVERYTHING WAS MORE OR LESS INITIATED FROM SCRATCH, BUT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO CREATE A SIMILAR DYNAMIC AND RELATIONSHIP IN OTHER WAYS:

- + AN EXISTING GROUP OF CONSUMERS COULD IDENTIFY AND APPROACH A LOCAL, ORGANIC MARKET GARDENER AND PROPOSE THIS TYPE OF MODEL;
- + A GROWER COULD, WITH EXISTING CUSTOMERS, PROPOSE THAT THEY GROUP THEMSELVES INTO A COOPERATIVE WITH THESE PRINCIPLES.

COMPETENCES Which are the previous knowledge and skills required to put in practice this tool?

AS FAR AS THE CONSUMERS WERE CONCERNED, A VERY SMALL HANDFUL OF INDIVIDUALS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN MEMBERS OF OTHER COOPERATIVES, AND THEREFORE WERE ABLE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. ADVICE WAS ALSO SOUGHT FROM OTHER EXISTING GROUPS IN NEARBY TOWNS. IN GENERAL THOUGH, IT HAS VERY MUCH BEEN A CASE OF A SHARED JOURNEY.

WE, AS PRODUCERS, GAINED OUR EXPERIENCE THROUGH MANY MONTHS OF WWOOFing, WITH MUCH OF THE KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO RUN A MARKET GARDEN BEING ACQUIRED DURING SIX MONTHS AT ONE PARTICULAR FARM IN WALES. WHAT CAN NOT BE OVERLOOKED THOUGH IS THE NECESSITY OF GOOD COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS, AS ULTIMATELY, A LOT OF OUR TASK IS EDUCATIONAL AS WE SEEK TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF GOOD, HEALTHY, SEASONAL FOOD. GARDENING ALSO REQUIRES PATIENCE AND OBSERVATION.

EVALUATION How do you normally evaluate the outcomes of this tool?

THE BEAUTY OF SUCH DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN GROWERS AND CONSUMERS IS THAT EVALUATION AS SUCH IS AN ORGANIC ONGOING PROCESS REALISED FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WHEN THE BOXES ARE COLLECTED. INEVITABLY, E-MAIL IS ALSO USED, AND THE REGULAR ASSEMBLIES ALSO OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS. TO ENSURE THAT EVERYBODY HAS A MORE FORMAL PROCEDURE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ON EVERY ASPECT OF THE VEGETABLE BOXES, WE HAVE SENT ROUND A QUESTIONNAIRE TOWARDS THE END OF EACH SEASON (APRIL AND OCTOBER).

DISCLAIMING AND DECLARATION OF HONOUR	yes	no
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Putting an X in the previous boxes means that you are agreeing with the cited statements

