

Governance Tensions or Growth Pains of an alternative food network:

The case of the Brussels GASAP (*Solidarity Purchasing Groups for Peasant Agriculture*)

Alessandra Manganelli and Frank Moulaert

Abstract

This paper applies the concept of Hybrid Governance to the analysis of a local food network organization. Hybrid Governance captures the key governance tensions experienced by alternative food organizations in their spatial-material dynamics of development and growth. These tensions are framed according to three types: 'organizational, resource and institutional (governance) tensions'. Interrelations among the tensions are also key aspects of the analysis. After an explanation of the conceptual framework and the methodology (section 2), the paper pursues the empirically analysis of the GASAP (section 3), a producers-consumers network developed in Brussels since 2006. The analysis identifies three phases in the GASAP's life-course, showing how governance tensions and their interrelations emerge and play a role in conditioning the governance and the overall development of the organization through time. A concluding section 4 highlights the governance outcomes produced by the tensions in the GASAP organization. Pathways and challenges to improve the governance in more sustainable directions are also mentioned.

The paper argues that the Hybrid Governance approach provides a more synthetic and holistic representation of the real-life governance challenges experienced by local food organizations. By doing so, it provides a more sound basis to suggest improvements and ways forwards in governing alternative food systems.

Key words

Hybrid Governance, Governance Tensions, Alternative Food Networks, Organizations, Institutions.

I. Introduction.

Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) are active in many localities across the world. Reacting to conditions of food insecurity (Johnston and Baker 2005), opposing the perceived unsustainability of conventional food systems (Marsden 2013), or responding to the governance failures visible in the multifaceted food crises (de Schutter 2013), AFNs attempt to tackle unmet social needs and plea for more empowering ways of organizing food systems (Marsden 2013; Wittman et al 2010). Thus, these initiatives are inspired by alternative values and often aim to influence and change the direction of established food policies and practices (Sage 2014).

In their organization and scalar dynamics, AFNs are confronted with significant governance tensions. The growth of an actors' network or movement, the building of coalitions, the political translation of the movement, the need to secure resources for implementing alternative food projects, etc., are possible factors of - or can be responses to - governance tensions experienced by AFNs. As shown in this paper, we link these tensions to organizational, resource and institutional governance dynamics (Manganelli and Moulaert – in preparation). Recent literature refers to governance dynamics of AFNs in diverse ways. Some contributions, for instance, focus primarily on *organizational* aspects, highlighting different governance styles, network power relations (Roep and Wiskerke 2012), or values and social learning mechanisms of AFNs (Rossi and Brunori 2010). Other contributions emphasize the interactions between alternative food movements and State or public sector institutions in advancing advocacy action and fostering policy change (Koc et al 2008; Campbell and MacRae 2013), thus linking AFNs to *institutional* governance dynamics. However, what is missing, is a more holistic understanding of how these different governance dynamics relate and reinforce each other, thus affecting the development of alternative food initiatives and their governance. *By presenting and empirically verifying the concept of hybrid governance for AFNs, this paper intends to develop such understanding.* *Hybrid governance* refers to the interactions among different governance forms – i.e. solidarity, hierarchical, market, networked-based forms of governance; see section 2 – and pinpoints the tensions generated by these interactions. The hybrid governance approach aims to portray the governance reality of AFNs, as it is embedded in a complex system of diverse actors, organizations and institutions having a role in how food systems are or should be governed. The paper argues that disentangling these governance dynamics is fundamental to cast light on the evolution of AFNs and to suggest improvements to their modes of governance.

The hybrid governance approach adopted in this paper is empirically verified through the analysis of a food network organization, i.e. the 'GASAP' (*'Solidarity Purchasing Groups for Peasant Agriculture'*) active in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) since 2006. The GASAP is a Community Supported Agriculture movement linking consumers directly with producers. Throughout the years, the GASAP has experienced a considerable development, counting nowadays over 90 consumer-producer groups scattered in the Brussels-Capital Region 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 35 producers currently, including horticultural farmers, but also small-scale processors.

Considering its horizontal and bottom-up type of organization, the typical agents composing the GASAP are the consumers and the producers themselves. Due to the often spontaneous and informal manner by which new GASAP groups are created, not every participant is an actual member of the GASAP network. Becoming a member encompasses practical as well as symbolic aspects. Practical aspects include the right to vote at the general assembly, and,

more recently, the requirement of paying a membership fee; symbolic aspects encompass the embracement of the GASAP's values, expressed in its principles, as well as in its political and societal objectives¹.

With the expansion of the network, including the increase in number of participants, members (producers as well as consumers) and food-basket groups, governance tensions have intensified. Greater resources and relational networks with key actors are needed to deal with logistical issues and other key organizational aspects.

Section 2 of this paper - following this introduction - provides the analytical framework; it 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 efficiency yet having to resolve contradictions between potentially conflictive values, especially those of solidarity based food security and market allocative efficiency. '*Institutional governance tensions*' occur when processes of institutionalization take place, diversely affecting AFNs' organizations. The ambition of the alternative food initiatives to exercise scalar influence on local food policies and export alternative food values, is a substantial part 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. The section also explains the methodological steps adopted to carry out the analysis on the GASAP's governance. It is shown how the three type of governance tensions have been translated into categories for the empirical investigation.

Section 3 gives a historical reconstruction of the three stages in the GASAP's governance. For each stage the analysis interrogates on the degrees and the modalities by which the three types of governance tension and the interaction between them take place. The initial stage in the GASAP history is characterised by a prevalence of organizational dynamics stemming from the challenges of building a bottom-up network, much in accordance with solidarity and bottom-up forms of governance. However, the analysis also reveals that aspects of resource and institutional tensions, embodying more hierarchical and market featuring forms of governance, have emerged as the GASAP organization grew up. The growth of an organization requires greater resources, and, therefore, establishing relations with institutionalized agencies that can provide such resources. The second stage of the GASAP history orbits around its stronger relational interaction with Brussels' institutional actors.

¹ See among others the GASAP's Chart and the GASAP's Statute (<http://gasap.be/le-reseau-des-gasap/>, accessed on May 7 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 on 25 May 2017).

Such connections largely stem from the pressing need to access resources and maintain that access. The latest stage in the development of the GASAP organization shows a greater spatial and material complexity, intensifying organizational and governance dynamics. The need to diversify funding sources pushes the GASAP to ally with state agencies of the neighbouring Walloon Region. Moreover, 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 become stronger as the GASAP organization scales out. Despite its radical nature and its grassroots origin, this organization has become increasingly embedded in the wider organizational and institutional dynamics of the Brussels' food practices and policies. The concluding **fourth section** builds on the previous one by reflecting on the governance outcomes of the tensions on the GASAP. The section examines current and perspective governance and growth challenges of the organization. It concludes with highlighting opportunities to advance the governance and the overall development of this Alternative Food Network.

Section 2 – The Conceptual Framework and the Methodology.

This section explains the analytical framework and the methodology adopted for the empirical analysis. The framework conceptualizes the governance of AFNs as a hybrid between four forms of governance, which generates organizational, resource and institutional governance tensions. In the methodology, the three types of governance tensions and their interactions are translated into empirical categories for the case-study investigation.

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 the 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 combination, or rather a hybrid of these forms which interact among each other in 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, bottom-up organizations must face the hierarchical logics of state systems, or the corporate logics of market actors. Examples are the need to deal with institutional barriers or to cope with market-based regulatory regimes, built under the logics of conventional food

systems (Mount 2012). These and other types of interactions generate tensions in the governance of bottom-up organizations, leading for instance to value conflicts, organizational dilemmas, struggles over regulatory regimes, or competition over the access and use of resources (Manganelli and Moulaert – in preparation)

These hybrid dialectics of governance forms are very present in AFNs. Solidarity and grassroots based forms of governance are generally prevalent in AFNs (Jarosz 2000; Macias 2008). However, in their life-course, AFNs are exposed to different modes of collective behaviour and governing logics. The need to connect to state institutions or other agencies in order to access finance or other resources explains this (Smith and Seyfang 2007). Moreover, AFNs may aim to extend their network, connect to other food organizations, or exercise an influence on food policies and collective practices (Aguayo and Latta 2015). Here hybrids among diverse and seemingly incompatible forms of governance enter the stage. These and other types of interactions and scalar connections between governance forms will produce governance tensions mutually reinforcing or appeasing each other.

We summarize the emerging tensions in the governance of AFNs according to three types. A *first type* are '**organizational (governance) tensions**', i.e. tensions in the modes of governing AFNs organizations. Dilemmas between horizontal and hierarchical modes of governing, between efficiency and participation, tensions between volunteer engagement and professionalization, are part of this kind of governance tensions. A *second type* is called '**resource (governance) tensions**'. These refer to the governance of seeking to secure access to different types of material resources (land, finance, logistics, infrastructures, etc.), which often necessitates to connect 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 exercise a constraining or enabling role for the empowerment of AFNs, often causing tensions among divergent values, behavioural routines and agendas of actors and institutions involved in the governance of local food systems.

This conceptual-methodological framework that led to the formulation of governance tensions in AFN is rooted in different governance literatures. Theories of SI and collective action help to analyse the organizational governance tensions of bottom-up movements and their connection with resource governance tensions (Moulaert et al. 2005, 2007, Della Porta and Diani 2006). Sociological-institutionalist and multi-scalar approaches to governance (Jessop 2002, Moulaert et al. 2005, 2013, Healey 2006, Swyngedouw and Jessop 2006) shed light on the tensions related to institutionalization processes. These are produced by frictions among different institutional logics, behaviours and value systems of a diversity of agents and organizations, such as state or corporate agents *versus* bottom-up groups. These literatures addressing differences in behavioural logics in the provision of institutional support cover an important dimension of institutional governance tensions. Finally, 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 tensions (Manganelli and Moulaert – in preparation)

Methods of analysis

As shown in Table 2.1 below, the methodology for the empirical analysis has been constructed according to the three types of governance tensions. Qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, document analysis, participatory observation) have been used to verify **a)** the factors of tensions in the GASAP's governance (Table 2.1. - Factors of Tension); **b)** the ways these tensions occur and are experienced by GASAP (Table 2.1. - Nature of the Tensions); and **c)** what governance outcomes these tensions are producing or are expected to produce in the GASAP's organization and its institutional relations (Table 2.1. - Outcomes of the Tensions).

The empirical categories highlighted in the table have been used to analyse the GASAP's governance throughout the development of this organization, starting from its origins up to its current stage of development. A historical analysis was essential to better grasp the dynamic interactions among the different types of governance tension. Practical methods of data collection included face-to-face interviews on the basis of questionnaires with current and historic members of the GASAP's coordination as well as to other key regional food actors. These questionnaires were complemented by the review of key documentation - such as mission statements, yearly reports, key working documents, policy and legal documentation - and participatory observation at relevant meetings, working groups as well as food basket delivery points.

Field-work results have been interpreted and coded by means of the empirical categories inspired by different forms that the three types of governance tensions can adopt (see again Table 2.1). To define better the nature of the tensions in the specific GASAP case, different methodological steps were undertaken. First, preliminary assumptions on the factors of different types of governance tensions (Table 2.1. 'Factors of Tensions') were made on the basis of theoretical and empirical literature review - as well as authors' foreknowledge - on the governance of AFNs. These assumptions were used to structure the questionnaires and carry out a preliminary field-work analysis. In a second stage, these early empirical results were analysed and used to further improve the empirical categories. This was instrumental for a more adequate definition of the factors of tension, their interactions and the ways they became manifest in the GASAP governance. These improved empirical categories were used in a final stage to refine the analysis on the GASAP's governance, and to better understand the current and prospective outcomes of the governance tensions in the GASAP organization (see Table 2.1 'Outcomes of the Tensions' and Section 4).

This close interaction between empirical inquiry and analytical work was crucial to achieve both, a theoretically sound, as well as a case-specific representation of the governance tensions and their interactions.

Table 2.1. Hybrid Governance Methodology - Empirical Categories.

<u>Type of Governance Tensions</u>	<u>Factors of Tension</u>	<u>Nature of Tension in Hybrid Governance terms</u>	<u>Governance Outcomes</u>
<p>ORGANIZATIONAL</p> <p>Tensions in the governance of the organization of the AFNs stemming from different sources</p> <p>Dynamics of decentralization and inter-spatiality in the organizational and territorial structure of the project/network</p>	<p>Growth in the Organization/ Network (increase of actors, social, spatial/material bases) requires other governance structures</p> <p>Tensions between the tendency to decentralization/enlargement of the territorial reach and the need to federate the network</p> <p>Cross-territorial food projects intersecting different jurisdictional subdivisions (constraints/opportunities)</p>	<p>-Tensions between horizontal-participatory and hierarchical-economic efficient decision-making arrangements</p> <p>-Economic efficiency vs qualitative needs satisfaction</p> <p>-Tensions in values, principles, identity</p>	<p>Increased self-reflexivity on changes and adaptations in decision-making modalities</p> <p>Stronger self-reflection on own values and identity</p>
<p>RESOURCE</p> <p>Tensions in the governance of the access to and use of resources (land, capital, physical infrastructures, skills ...)</p>	<p>Searching access to and control of material resources (logistics, cultivable land, infrastructures, finance, etc)</p>	<p>- Tensions between diversity of institutional actors (state, corporate, communities, organizations) as to their control capacities of access and use of resources</p> <p>-Interactions bottom-up food networks top-down state/corporate systems for negotiating/ claiming access/control of resources</p>	<p>Greater tendency towards resource diversification</p> <p>Enhanced inter-scalar connections for acquiring greater resources</p> <p>Expected enduring conditions of resource dependence from external agents</p>

		-Strategic leadership, forms of proactive conflict management and cooperation -Conflicts among visions concerning the allocation of resources	
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 or/influencing the food governance,	-Hybrid actors' and policy networks negotiating supportive policy/institutional spaces -Socio-political transformative forces - AFN constraining vs. enabling institutions -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.

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

The GASAP organization originated in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2006, during the early phases of a nascent local food movement. Driven by the need to contribute to building an alternative for the mainstream food system, the GASAP adopted a grass-root and self-organizing view of organization, such as the building of horizontal and trust relationships between consumers and producers, or the implementation of customary principles and practices about food quality and delivery. These seed values have characterized and 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 early stages participants (including the actual members, in the role of consumers and producers) and food baskets' outlets, has gradually increased in numbers and have started to spread over a wider area. This goes along with the progressive formation of a coordinating body and the progressive formalization of the GASAP into a no-profit association (2012). Contested relations of resource dependence from state agencies started to emerge from the

early stages of the GASAP, following the need to secure financial resources. 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 is under growth pressure because it must face the need to reconsider its logistics of food distribution and, in consequence, its organizational structure. The following part of this 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.

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

As a radically bottom-up organization, with originally no formal links with institutions, the GASAP has been shaped by alternative values and imaginaries. Important 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 support a different type of agriculture². Similarly to other Community Supported Agriculture and Food Sovereignty Movements (Aguayo and Latta 2015; Nigh and Cabañas 2015), the GASAP supports small scale, peasant and agro-ecological agriculture and opposes the mainstream corporate food systems' values.

Referring to the highlighted 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 assembling participants, gatherings, decision-making, have been mainly horizontal, informal, and based on personal relations, often connected to friendship or commonality of visions and values on the food system. Moreover, the forging of alliances and relational networks with other food sovereignty organizations, have been also motivated by the proximity in core ideologies and societal values. Among these organizations we count the French CSA movement 'AMAP' (Poulot 2013), featuring as a model in the imaginaries of the GASAP's pioneers. Furthermore, from the start and along its life-course the GASAP has connected with regional, Belgian based as well as international movements for the right to food and the defence of peasant agriculture (*see timeline scheme in the annex*).

Yet, the GASAP movement has needed to cope with its own socio-spatial specificity and modalities of developing. Already in the first years of its existence different GASAP groups, each of them connecting one producer with 15 to 20 groups of consumers, have sprung in the Brussels region from informal relations among citizens and activists living in proximity to each other.

² See on that the GASAP's chart and mission statements, partly also available in the GASAP's website (<http://gasap.be/>, accessed on May 4th 2017).

Following these spatial-material dynamics, internal governing bodies have organically emerged, encompassing working groups dealing with the management of consumers' waiting lists, the installation of 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 multiplied and:

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

"At the beginning there was not a pre-conceived strategy of expansion of the food baskets. It was more of a spontaneous process. Requests to enter (the system) became quickly very high and we needed to manage them in some ways" (cit. from interview with a historic GASAP's leader).

These organizational dynamics - giving place to a spontaneous, informal, and in a way *ad hoc* endogenous governance - were producing considerable coordination and management challenges. Organizational governance tensions therefore have emerged since the initial phases of the GASAP's development, stirred by spontaneous and endogenous dynamics of growth (see timeline scheme in the annex and Table 2.1. organizational governance tensions - factors of tension). Furthermore, other governance tensions began to emerge as the GASAP started to respond to the above dynamics. Connections among the tensions also started to play a role.

Emerging governance tensions and their connections.

As stated above, governance tensions have become manifest in the early stage of the GASAP mainly in the form of organizational (governance) tensions. As the organization started to grow and scale out in the Brussels Region, 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. These dynamics induced internal discussions in the GASAP about the need for greater human and material resources in order to deal with the organizational management. As a result, organizational governance tensions fostered the need for access to and control of resources (see Table 2.1 - '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 originated in Brussels in the same years. These two groups - DDH and GASAP - were practically overlapping at the origins, since leading activists of the DDH were the key agents of the

GASAP's conception and formation. Relational proximity and dialogue between the two organizations have persisted through time.

Fostering 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 Ministry³. These institutional relations constituted 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 our Ministry was very close and open to this kind of environmental-food related associations. This have allowed some collaborations to happen" (Cit. from the Cabinet of the Environmental Ministry which was in power those years).

The first funding application for a coordinator (2009-2010) signed the beginning of a trajectory of constant interactions between the GASAP and the IBGE in order 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 tensions for the GASAP all along its history. 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 different socio-political and socio-professional cultures, governance modalities and bureaucratic practices (see table 2.1 Row 3 – Institutional Governance Tensions).

In a way, conditions of resource dependence interact with and reinforce these institutional governance tensions. However, these types of governance tensions were more strongly perceived in the subsequent phase of the GASAP's life-course, also due to a governmental turnover at the Regional level (see section 3.2).

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

With organizational governance tensions prevailing in the early phase, soon resource and institutional dynamics and tensions started to emerge and interfere with the GASAP's governance. Yet, these types of governance tensions and their interconnections became more visible in the (intermediate) stage 2. In this phase the GASAP organization has grown further in number of participants and members, reaching over 60 consumers-producer

³ 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.

groups (GASAP Activity Report 2012). At that time already, producers⁴ were mainly located outside the administrative boundaries of the Brussels Region, contributing to the trans-territorial outreach of the organization. Along with these growth dynamics, other material and organizational changes started to occur in the GASAP. These changes spurred from new demands by consumers for more variety in products, beyond fruits and vegetables. A few consumer groups within the GASAP already started to self-organize accordingly, linking with more producers and developing more capacious types of food-basket. These growth factors and material changes 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, became higher on the GASAP's agenda. However, building up the capacity to meet these demands clashed 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).

We argue that these new interactions among resource and organizational governance dynamics and tensions, stirred new institutional governance interactions (see also timeline scheme in the annex). Part of the GASAP's leading team started to search for new supportive policy spaces complying with the Brussel's sustainable food agenda. Opportunities were negotiated and found also by means of already established relationships and knowledge networks with key institutional food actors⁵. These actors co-promoted a new inter-governmental programme which included an axis on sustainable food⁶. A project proposal on logistics presented by the GASAP was selected and embedded in that program.

However, this further layer of institutional interactions seems not to have led to improvements in governance relations, e.g. to enhanced participatory and collaborative dynamics and mutual learnings, nor to concrete implementations. One core reason for these missed opportunities relates to changes in the Brussels political environment. Following the elections, a change in the political coalition of the Regional Ministry of the Environment - also responsible for food policies - occurred in 2014. The new political coalition adopted a more rational and pragmatic attitude towards food and ecologically oriented bottom-up initiatives. The project proposed by the GASAP stopped after one year, due to new orientations in the allocation of funding and in the delivery of programs and policies. Together with other food and environmental initiatives, the GASAP started to experience greater restrictions in core funding, and more strict rules of compliance for funding schemes:

⁴ 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)

⁵ A key leading institutional actor is still represented by sub-sections of the abovementioned IBGE.

⁶ See 'Alliance Emploi-Environnement – Report 2014':

http://www.environnement.brussels/sites/default/files/user_files/rap_aee-alim_rapport2014_fr.pdf (accessed on 19 April 2017).

“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)

“I think the stability of funding sources has become a great concern for the associations. Many grants are given on a project-basis, and therefore precarious. This reduces the decisional autonomy of the organizations” (Quote from the Cabinet of the Environmental Ministry of the previous coalition).

These sharpened hierarchical governance modalities affected the resource base of the GASAP network, generating tensions. The increased uncertainty in accessing and securing funding goes hand by hand with an increased distance in agendas and values (institutional governance tensions).

Furthermore, mismatches in the territorial organization, due to the increasingly trans-territorial character of the GASAP, also start to play a role as a potential factor of tensions (see table 2.1 – 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 Brussels' food policies and 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. We can argue that 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 contributed to push 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 Wallonia Government, which was in process of elaborating new policies on Agriculture and Sustainable Development⁷. The trans-territorial character of the GASAP is regarded by some

⁷ See among others, this link : <http://www.wallonie.be/fr/strategie-wallonne-de-developpement-durable> (accessed on May 4th 2017).

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 Brussels-Capital Region. The opportunity was offered by a call for project on Sustainable Food launched in October 2014 by the Regional Agency for Research and Innovation - INNOVIRIS⁸. This call promotes 'Living Lab' projects, which 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 pushed to seize this chance as a new opportunity to implement priorities on the GASAP's agenda. The selection procedure ended 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 GASAP. The other aims to elaborate 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), working on improving the relations between producers and consumers. This has also been a priority for GASAP since a long time. Both projects involve different types of actors: research agents, alternative food organizations, also in the form of 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 seem to come from the need to cooperate 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).

Furthermore, other organizational governance tensions relate to the increased degree of professionalization required by the projects. Conflicts have started to emerge between volunteer participation, which is regarded as an essential driver of the GASAP organization, and professional agency, as well as between participatory-horizontal versus hierarchical-efficient decision-making practices (see table 2.1. organizational governance tensions – factors of tensions). As a result, the GASAP has been experiencing a revived need to reflect

⁸ See <http://www.innoviris.be/en> (accessed on May 4th 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 on 4th May 2017) for the specific call.

on how participatory modes of governance can co-exist with the need for professionalization and more efficient decision-making.

Section 4. Outcomes of the tensions in the GASAP's governance. State of the art and future orientations.

The previous section has shown how governance tensions are manifest in each of the three phases of the GASAP's life-course. Interrelations among the tensions have amplified as the GASAP developed, becoming more embedded in the socio-institutional system of local and regional food policies and practices. In a way, each phase of the GASAP's life-course shows a recurrent pattern. New governance relations are built in each stage, also in reaction to perceived tensions at the organizational and resource levels. Institutional governance tensions have played an increasing role in the intermediate and latest stages of the GASAP's history, as the organization started to connect with a larger network of diverse actors.

What outcomes are these tensions producing on the GASAP's governance? Critical governance challenges and future perspectives are highlighted in the sequel of this section.

As to organizational governance tensions, core values and ideologies continue to play a strong role in the way GASAP leaders view its future. The awareness still predominates of being a citizens-led movement, which defends and supports a certain '*model*' of agriculture, in line with a wider network of food sovereignty and Community Supported Agriculture movements (see the introduction). Yet, outcomes of the tensions are also visible, which interfere with the organizational governance of the GASAP in important ways. It is arguable that these outcomes will strongly condition the GASAP's development in the next future.

A first type of outcome concerns the increased self-reflexivity of the GASAP on its own governance (see third column first row of Table 2.1) such as the participation of the employees and volunteers in the decision-making process.

"In terms of our own governance, I think going through 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."
(Quote from the Coordinator).

Thus, communication, coordination, inclusive but also efficient decision-making are key knots to disentangle. How to take efficient decisions without inhibiting the motivation of volunteers to take part of the decision-making process, is currently a key concern the GASAP. This is especially true for an organization which is largely driven by volunteers' engagement and participation.

Moreover, a related issue concerns how to federate, and include in the decision-making, a wider range of members and participants to the organization, from the producers to the consumers, also improving proximity relations between both⁹. Given the intention to further scale out to the neighbouring Region of Wallonia, these organizational governance dynamics might play a key role in the future, probably leading to a radical re-adaptation of the network's governance.

A second range of outcomes relates to access to resources and how it is governed. Tensions for the access to funding have led to a greater diversification of financial resources. If in the initial stages the GASAP relied exclusively on the Brussels' agency IBGE, nowadays funding also comes from the Wallonia government, from the Co-create project-partnership, and, partially, from membership fees.

However, securing stable core funding remains a matter of concern for the GASAP. It is expected that the GASAP will continue to rely on external funding sources, often only project-based and subject to governmental turnovers and political shifts (communication from the GASAP's coordinator). This is likely to create problems in ensuring a sound and stable human capital to coordinate the network. As a consequence, new ways to increase access to funding might be necessary. This might encompass the building of relations with government agencies at different levels (Pradel et al. 2013), partnering with other organizations for joint access to funding, while seeking for alternative forms of fundraising, from more robust membership fees to other forms of participatory or solidarity financing¹⁰. The complexity of these new relationships might exert further pressures on both organizational and institutional governance.

From an institutional governance perspective, outcomes seem to be rather ambivalent and controversial. On the one hand, a greater capacity and openness to collaborate with a wider range of actors of the Brussels' foodscape is observable. On the other hand, divergences in organizational practices, behaviours, values, might hinder the possibility to achieve durable and empowering governance relations. Thus, it is still early to evaluate what the GASAP can implement and learn from these partnerships, also in terms of collaborative and empowering governance capacities.

It can be argued that, as a regionally wide network, the GASAP can contribute to the improvement of the Brussels' local food system in relevant ways. An organization like the GASAP could, for instance, help to achieve some of the goals of the Brussels' recently elaborated food strategy¹¹. A whole axe of the Strategy relates to improving the (local) food

⁹ One of the Co-create projects in which the GASAP is involved (COSY-Food) works in this direction.

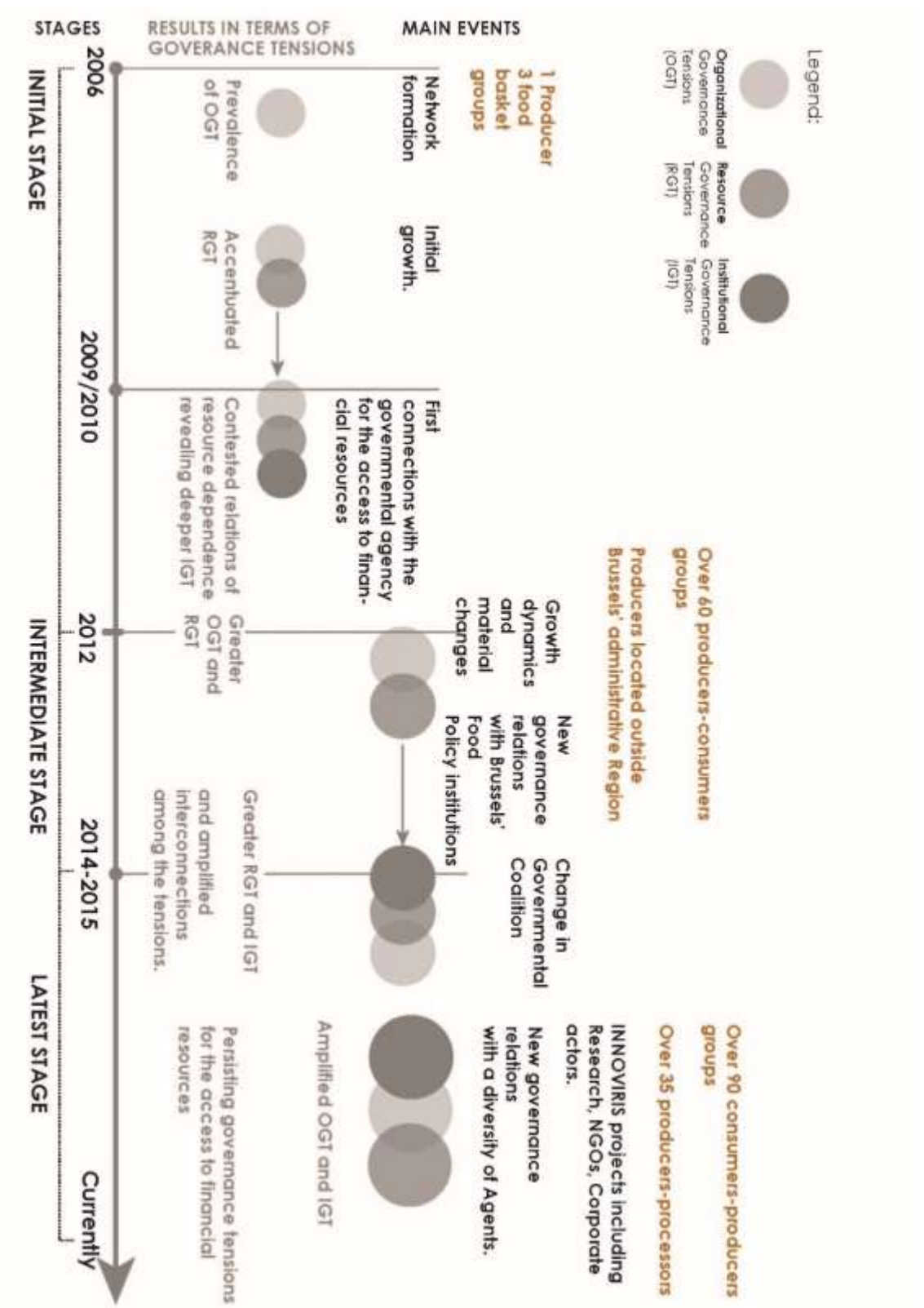
¹⁰ On this respect the legal framework of the "Asbl" could partially condition the types of funding this kind of association is entitled to pursue. See for instance <http://www.assoc.be/index.php?page=subsides> (accessed on 25 May 2017).

¹¹ To retrieve documentation on the Strategy see for instance <http://www.environnement.brussels/thematiques/alimentation/action-de-la-region/strategie-good-food-vers-un-systeme-alimentaire-plus> (accessed on 25 May 2017).

supply, also by making it more accessible to a diversified range of consumers (See Axe 2 and action 3 of the Strategy). Greater incentives and support could be given to an organization like the GASAP to work in that direction. Modalities to target lower income groups, children, schools, or opening up to a more culturally and ethnically diverse population, could be areas of joint work between the GASAP, other organizations, as well as institutional actors. Areas of greater collaboration for an organization like the GASAP and Brussels' food policy institutions are therefore possible.

In order to pursue similar goals, however, governance tensions need to be overcome or developed in a positive direction. On the one hand, a greater outward looking, the willingness to collaborate and embrace new goals and missions, should come from the GASAP. On the other hand, access to resources (e.g. greater funding, human resources), as well as institutional support to carry out these missions should be provided without overturning the democratic organizational and institutional governance dynamics. A high level of resource self-sufficiency could be an important step in the direction of such sustainable governance ambitions.

Annex – GASAP's synthetic timeline scheme



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