



”Social organisation of urban and peri-urban producers. Management models and innovative partnerships for policy advocacy”

Preliminary Outcome Journal
Biokultura Central Hungarian Association – BCHA

Elaborated by Green Holidays Foundation, Kozard, Hungary

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Preface

The following preliminary outcome journal is aiming to provide a framework for the monitoring of changes in behaviour, relations, actions, activities structure and dynamics of the Biokultúra Central Hungarian Association (BCHA).

The structure of the present document is guided by the study: „Methodological framework for elaboration of case studies, development of local agendas and participatory monitoring”, offered by the overall project management from the organisations IPES and ETC, namely Marielle Dubbeling and Alain Santandreu.

The adaptation of this structure for the Hungarian case study is carried out by Green Holidays Foundation, Judit Cottely and Domonkos Óze, and the contents of it originate from surveys and semi-structured interviews of the following farming members of Biokultura Central Hungarian Association:

- Ms. Carmen Malya, deputy of the BCHA and the leader of the Albertirsa Group of BCHA
- Ms. Edit Zöld, leader of the Gödöllő Group of BCHA
- Mr. Matthew Hayes, executive of Open Garden Foundation, member of BCHA
- Ms. Erzsébet Kovács, member of BCHA
- Ms. Katalin Csörge, member of BCHA
- Ms. Nóra Ecsedi, member of BCHA
- Mr. István Lajos, member of BCHA
- Ms. Olga Rendekné, member of BCHA
- Ms. Edit Nagyiványi, member of BCHA
- Mr. Géza Varga, member of BCHA
- Mr. Ferenc Mór, member of BCHA

The interviews took place in June and July, 2005 by the following ways:

- Personal meetings in Budapest (3 occasions)
- Phone interviews (7 occasions)
- Field visits at 22-23 June (9 visits)
- Further field visits and interviews and phone interviews until 19 July (6 occasions)

Furthermore two working meetings were held participating Ms. Marielle Dubbeling, Ms. Marije Pouw, Ms. Judit Cottely and Mr. Domonkos Óze, and two preparatory meetings of the Green Holidays staff, Ms. Judit Cottely, Mr. Pal Hajas and Mr. Domonkos Óze.

The preliminary outcome journal summarizes experiences, observations, preliminary issues of the mentioned interviewees and staff and prepares a validation workshop at mid-August with further BCHA members, for issues of the future Action Agenda to discuss.

It is recommended document for the overall management of the project, the staff of Green Holidays Foundation and the close local partners of BCHA.

At last we would like to further mention, that the objectives, tools and markers occurred during interviews and mentioned in this journal are just the start up working material for the further workshops and discussions.

Vision

The Biokultura Association, started as a club of gardeners were not just an ecological movement (the first one in the former socialist block), but a political protest organization which found its way of expression in this semi formal structure.

Since then many years passed, and the organization needs reforms. As it is not the fundraising which has the most prospect for peri urban gardeners, the organisation has to professionalize itself also on an economical basis but not leaving its ideological ammunition.

In the present form the mother organization, the Alliance of Biokultura Associations has regional associations and other producers organizations, of which BCHA is one of the regional association of Budapest vicinity small scale organic producers.

The vision has to successfully synthetise the ideas, motivations experiences, knowledge and networks of the past, with creating a new profile which has new form, impulse and can further spread the benefits of sustainable small scale farming. The organization has the mission to forward the green rural, natural message to the overurbanized Budapest.

Therefore the BCHA needs motivated leaders who have capacities to actively run the organization and diverse members who cover the most possible parts of the food chain and policy making.

With this desired base, the organization will be capable to provide practical and essential technical assistance for producers regarding finding markets, advertising products, open possibilities to funds and generally create a competitive segment of the small scale food production, with the alternative message of green farming.

The sustainable idea cannot be divided to economic, social and environmental fields, or urban and rural living spaces but has to provide holistic solutions. Therefore a producers organization like the BCHA has to be socially sensitive, competitive element of the market, professional knowledge base and provide the ecological idea to the urban society through multifunctional agriculture.

The activities therefore have to cover, production, processing, trading, tourism, awareness raising and vocational education.

This vision might be utopistic looking at the organization now, but we believe that old structures are worth to be revitalized with new way, using the old resources as well.

To summarize, we can say, that internal cooperations within the BCHA organization has to be strengthened and widened to cover the food chain. The commitment of few organizers can boost common acts, also to be able to represent a common and significant voice in policy making as well.

The most important mission however is still the message for the urban society, and the structural viability of the organization is just the essential base for this.

In few points can we reflect the observations of the interviews, what would the BCHA need for success:

- Capacity for organizational leadership
- Less individualism of the members
- Synthetizing economical and ideological views
- Opening to tourism and education to support agricultural activities

- Co-operation of producers with other actors of agriculture, namely scientific institutions, authorities and business organizations and naturally involve processors and traders.

Progress markers

The progress markers of the present case study are based at first on those formulated in Montevideo/ Uruguay, with only a few additions.

During the process we expect to extend them to serve specifically the benefits we in Hungary aim to achieve by assisting BCHA in development.

The scores below represent a present status of the given issue and it is based on the semi-formal interviews with BCHA members, so that the concrete judgement were formulated by the Green Holidays Foundation staff.

To concretize the conclusions extracted from the experiences with BCHA members, this structured form was used, and the further discussion will be eased along these ideas and expressions.

During the elaboration of the case study we aim to take a snapshot on the present situation, formulate expectations for further progress, and possibly start the positive changes which we will be able to evaluate through the indicators, namely the below mentioned progress markers.

OUTCOME JOURNAL FOR BIOKULTURA CENTRAL HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATION						
SCORE (1 = LOW; 5 = HIGH)						
PROGRESS MARKERS						
Expect to see	1	2	3	4	5	Explanation of the score
1. Peri-urban producers are consolidated in a formal association.				X		The Biokultura, was established as a Club in 1983, then diversified itself to a national association (from recently an alliance) with regional associations and to groups. It has therefore a 3 level organization of which only the local groups are non-formal. So BCHA is a formal and legal entity, however today it is early to decide if the association, as member of an alliance is viable enough.
2. The producers identify their needs and priorities differentiated by gender and have established a common vision, identity and agreed on strategies to act on them.		X				Referring to the interviews with members and management, this is a weak point. The ideological movement, 2 decades ago fulfilled its duty, but nowadays there is a lack of common view which would consider economical and more practical questions, generally the common view needs to be updated to motivate better the nowadays members, especially the producers.
3. The producers are developing effective partnerships with strategic local actors to contribute to their vision and objectives.		X				This is valid of more non-formal partnerships, and especially to the issue of ecological consciousness raising. But the association would be more effective with more formal partnerships and economical partnerships as well.
4. The organisation of producers, together with other organisations, is carrying out training events and/or exchange visits to strengthen the capacities of their members.				X		In our case of the BCHA, this profile is quite well developed since members are open to exchange their experiences and time to time they launch courses and other information events.
5. The organisation of producers develops activities that attract external (financial) resources.		X				However, the general management of Biokultura is a fundraising organization as well, small producers are lacking tools for attracting capital and financial resources. More characteristic is, that individual members are active in fundraising or through informal relations which is not specifically linked to BCHA. The distribution of membership fees is structurally ok, though such a little amount of money is activated that is still cannot be called a significant strength. The organization, after the first wave boom of funds in the 90s, is lacking funding sources and the conclusion is often drawn that former resources were not invested in activities which would sustainably generate new incomes nowadays. This fact however cannot be changed, for the rare projects and support it is a good idea to follow, to try to give some financial self supporting power for the organisation.

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6. The organisation of producers develops active and democratic policies that allows them to grow and/or not to reduce the number of its members.			X			The members are individually generally active and their act are democratic concerning group acts. But those activities rarely aim policies, therefore the number of members are not rising, though it is neither collpsing. More likely the activities of the members are reduced, inspite of they are remaining to be members.
Like to see	1	2	3	4	5	Explanation of the score
7. They are participating in local platforms with other actors that carry out actions for the promotion of UPA and sustainable local development.				X		They have strong informal links to people for the same aims and ideas, the members often act together with other actors committed to sustainable rural development, even if thets many times without official organization of the BCHA.
8. They have consolidated the income from UPA as part of the permanent income of the members of the organisation/association.		X				There is a large diversity of members, some are hobby farmers, some are full-time farmers. Some make a good living, others just earn a small complementary income.
9. They are actively looking for funding and support of governmental and non-governmental organisms, to implement their action plans.	X					As explained above, funding sources are considerably more rare as they were a decade ago. The fundraising activity remained a task of the BCHA, but the vast majority of this work is under the responsibility of the mother organization, the Alliance of Biokultura Associations.
10. They are working with technical institutions to develop appropriate technologies for sustainable production, processing and commercialisation.			X			This activity is rather informal, but what keeps it still on a satisfactory level is that BCHA has good relation with universities.
11. They are implementing associative structures to develop productive chains and/or improve their environment, interpersonal relationships and access to resources.		X				There is no formalized activity in this direction, the individual initiatives are making these developments. Here also, as generally is characteristic that the members improve secors which are in close interst to their individual businesses.
12. They are applying permanent systems of monitoring and feedback, which allow them improve their forms of organisation, operation and policy advocacy.	X					By the time we did not experience BCHA activity aiming this objective.
+1. The organisation has committed leaders, with higher activity and responsibility			X			The general representative, Ms. Carmen Malya is activeand motivated person, though the changing organizational and political environment would require manager-type group leaders and people who can afford the extra time for those positions.

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+2. The organisation has a diverse range of members, concerning their type of activity		X				The shift in character of the members of different associations are easy to see in the case of BCHA. While the activists and ideologists are mainly members of the Central Club, the BCHA consist mainly producers, while there would be need for more processors, specially traders and more members with organisational skills and ambitions.
+3. The organization represents significant power towards policy making		X				The BCHA participated one significant demonstration in the near past for policy goals, but the ideas formulated still do not receive enough publicity.
+4. The organisation represents significant economical power towards the actors of trade		X				The organisation would be stronger with more internal alliances, links partnerships and organization, (which depends also on the lack of full time employees), because there are plenty of members with strong own motivation and successful activity on the small scale organic field.
+5. The producers are also representing a formal producers cooperative, or are on the way to do so.		X				This is a general weakness of Hungarian small scale agriculture, so the BCHA would successfully exploit their resources of knowledge and partnerships if they would formalize their economical activity as well in the form of a cooperative.
Love to see	1	2	3	4	5	Explanation of the score
13. They are monitoring and documenting permanently the impact of their UPA activities.	X					No steps to this objective were recognised so far.
14. They have their own resources and qualified staff to provide technical and financial services to their members and to other organisations.			X			Important to mention the the mother organization provides general technical assistance and has a small paid staff, so that this is not a primary objective of BCHA, or if it would be several other preconditions would have to realize. We consider this as a long term objective.
15. They are establishing relations with other local or national producer associations to carry out lobbying activities that promote the integration of UPA and other forms of production into programmes, policies and budgets of local, national and/or governmental organisations.			X			As the Alliance is a broad partnership between associations, BCHA is also in formal relation with other regional associations and other organic producers and certifying organizations.