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Delineating Sustainable Food Systems as Local Networks ?

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Questioning the limits of terroir

Considering localized food systems as 'niches'...
 ... not only because of their market position,
 ... but first and foremost because they may pave the way to reconfigure hegemonic orderings or 'regimes' (Geels and Schot, 2007)
 → What about the biopolitical dimension of terroir products innovations ? (Barham, 2003 ; Giaccaria et al., 2013)

Looking at the relationship between agriculture and environment in its broad sense, including its agro-physical definition (1), as well as socio-economic dimensions (2). Beyond issues of biodiversity conservation, lie...
 1) perspectives of enhancing plants' capacity of adaptation (Chiffolleau and Desclaux, 2006)
 2) and challenges of re-framing power asymmetries within the supply chains (Bonneuil et al., 2006).

→ Assessing the management of vegetal material as a critical nexus

Potato as the core object of investigations:
 -a plant particularly subject to exhaustion,
 -and hence liable to jeopardize the sustainability of local food systems.

TUBERS MATTER !

- LEGEND
- Farmer or gardener
 - Agri-consortium
 - Restaurant owner
 - Storekeeper
 - ▲ Agricultural engineer
 - ▲ Seed provisioner
 - Laboratory



Between alliance and self-reliance

TYPE 1 – THE CONSORTIUM BUILDS A SPECIFIC NETWORK, BUT TUBERS REMAIN GENERIC MATERIAL, THAT COMES FROM CLASSICAL SUPPLY CHAINS

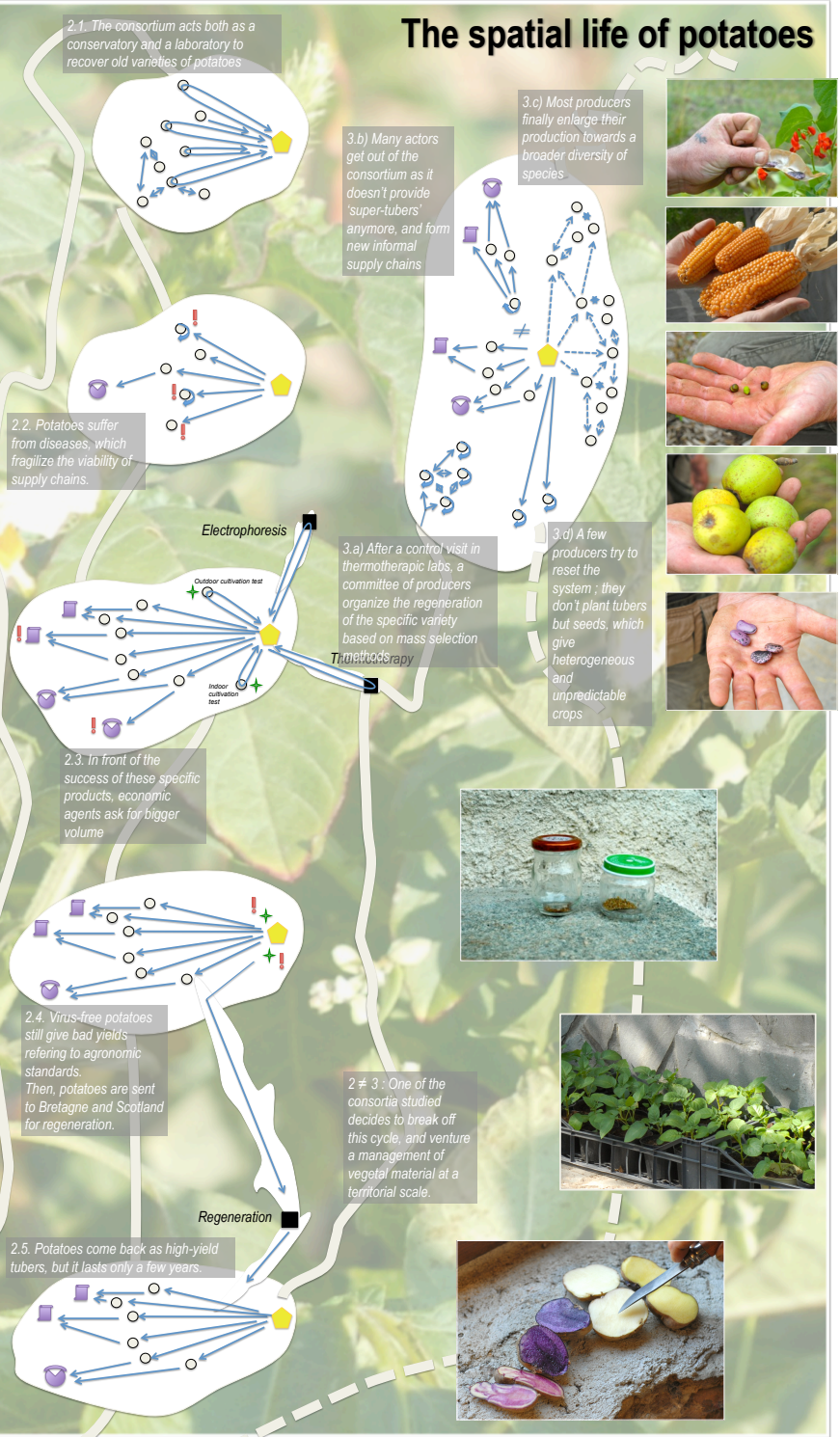
TYPE 2 – PRODUCERS HAND DOWN CROP REGENERATION TO SPECIALIZED LABORATORIES ; THEY SEND BACK AND RE-BUY TUBERS EVERY 5 YEARS.

TYPE 3 – A BROAD DYNAMIC HAS BEEN SET IN MOTION, WHICH FOSTERS THE MANAGEMENT OF BIODIVERSITY. STILL, THE VIABILITY OF THE SYSTEM REMAINS AT STAKE, AS THE REPRODUCTION OF THE FLAGSHIP POTATO IS NOW IN PERIL.

Durability vs sustainability ?

- The comparison of our different cases shows that where stakeholders are able and ready to form alliances with parts of the conventional system, the durability of the local food networks seems better.
 - Nevertheless, sustainability remains at stake, as long as farmers are unable to become less dependent on external manufacturers of seeds.
- The 3rd type gives stakeholders a chance to explicitly address such a contradiction and to define their own transition path which appears to be as tortuous as social innovation

The spatial life of potatoes



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