Foresight Exchange Workshop

“How to integrate agriculture and environmental stakes in foresights?”

Presentation n°2 (S. Treyer, Iddri)
The SCAR Foresight Expert Group 3 Report

With the support of the following institutions:
SCAR Foresight Expert Group 3 Report

“Sustainable Food Consumption and Production in a Resource-Constrained World”

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1. Planetary boundaries should be taken seriously

- There are important risks that scarcities linked to global changes pose serious systemic threats globally and locally to agriculture and food systems
  - Global and local systemic relations among scarcities, non substituability of natural capital (degradation of ecosystems, soil fertility, …)
  - Radical changes in food systems can be expected

- But no easy direct recommendations should be taken from acknowledging global scarcities

- The « limits to growth » debate is about different assumptions, different bets on future technological change, its nature, its pace, and its role in the transformation of our societies, with respect to the pace with which the BAU pathway is getting towards scarcities

- An open and transparent debate about technological choices / planetary boundaries has to be organised
2. Two different narratives made explicit

Productivity: Increase productivity and resource efficiency in the whole food chain
Scientific advances have the potential to bring forward varieties, breeds and technologies that boost productivity and take into account resource scarcities and environmental problems - massive investments into R&D - removal of barriers to adoption by farmers, such as infrastructure, trade barriers and access to markets.

Vs

Sufficiency: productivity and efficiency are not sufficient because of systemic scarcities, more thorough changes in the whole food system are needed
Scientific advances have the potential to bring forward agro-ecosystems that are both productive, respectful for ecosystems and resource saving - demand increases need to be mitigated through behavioural change - environmental externalities need to be internalized in markets - appropriate governance structures that address disruptive effect of trade.

Technological progress to go beyond boundaries vs. Time scarcity to wait for these technological breakthroughs

Funding sufficiency-oriented research is innovative, necessary, and can also lead to new business models and new sources of profitability
3. Making narratives explicit, and their relationship to current decisions

**Narrative**: discourse based on a coherent set of assumptions and principles underpinning and communicating a certain worldview

Levidow (2008):

→ descriptive accounts: claims about objective reality as threats, opportunities and imperatives

→ normative accounts: claims about necessary or desirable responses to that objective reality

→ policy instruments for carrying out those responses

"Regardless of its stated aims, a dominant narrative succeeds in the normative sense of gaining resources and power, while pre-empting alternative futures"

*Transition management is necessary:*

- How to ensure the dominant narrative is questioned?
- How to question also the emerging ones without discarding them?
Thank you for your attention

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