

CoP Compact #13

CSA GroeiTuin013: Linking plant and personal growth

17.09.25



Case Description

Director Hein van den Hurk presented his philosophy and experiences as director of the CSA [GroeiTuin013](#) in Tilburg, the Netherlands, operated by 100 volunteers and 40 day-care trajectories on two hectares of land. Their main mission is fostering social inclusion and personal development among young adults. Building up municipal trust and funding, the emphasis is on creating a vibrant community hub. The discussion also addressed the financial structures of community-supported agriculture and new perspectives of engaging insurances as a funding body.



Takehome lessons

Community Supported Agriculture and Social Growth

- Other than most other CSA projects, GroeiTuin013's central philosophy is not about organic food production, but about the importance of social inclusion with community gardening as an instrument. It was striking to learn, how a strong philosophical basis can be a driver for meaningful participation, where individuals from diverse backgrounds work together in a shared garden and it became clear that Hein's people-oriented vision and conviction gave new directions to the CSA.
- Compared to the many other social initiatives offering support to vulnerable groups – e.g. by dialogue and therapy – GroeiTuin013 offers community gardening as a meaningful goal as part and beyond personal growth. It was interesting to learn, that GroeiTuin013 is originally a project Hein had launched as member of the social housing initiative [Stichting Het Werk](#). Working there he realized that the vulnerable groups could be much better helped if engaging in something meaningful.
- **Community Gardening and Trust in Collaborative Processes**
- Hein van den Hurk made clear that creating trust – not only towards the volunteers and vulnerable persons – but also towards the municipality is key for receiving support. While city officials had been sceptical in the beginning, they clearly changed their mind after the first years as the garden has become a thriving community space.

The role of municipal support and funding

- Due to Heins role in the housing project, he had the possibility of using funds from this organization as seed money when launching 'GroeiTuin 013'. This shows, that a creative mind and skillful management can be effective in other domains. This might be an example for also aother social organisations to go beyond think out-of-the-box and explore new pathways.
- While the housing project had been crucial for getting GroeiTuin013 off the ground, it was clear that subsidies were need in the long run. Hein is convinced that the intrinsic goals regarding personal growth and support for vulnerable people require financial support by the city. Combining this with generating funds from agricultural production (essentially becoming a coop with a business model)

would clearly compromise on the main goals.

- Key to receiving municipal funding is transparency and monitoring of *social impacts* through partnerships with local universities. Though social innovation is hard to measure, the figures produced through inventories are crucial.

Strong regional networking

- Hein also mentioned the collaboration with local organizations, such as the [013 food](#) initiative, to promote sustainable food practices and education.

Continuity

- At the municipality, you need a level of confidence – meanwhile they have confidence in me as a person. But what happens if this civil servant leaves or when I leave?

Discussion

- *Hein: The Community garden is like a bush that attracts a lot of insects, which work together or not. But in any ways, it's a source. Of an equilibrium and it's inspiring, it's stimulating.*
- *Kathy: in our CSA we have people who are volunteers who come and help but you have also people who are a member of the CSA so they just pay a yearly fee but they don't come and help in the garden do you have the same system or is it only volunteers plus the professional farmers helping out? Because in our case we have like 250 members but of that 250 only let's say 25 of them are volunteers that come and help.*
- *Hein: We have no members. We have a shop where people can buy veggies and the neighborhood bordering our garden is a well-off and prepared to pay the price of healthy and tasteful organic food. We have 50 different tomato races, for example. This is not economically viable, but it's something to be proud of, which attracts people, and it's more like that. So we are very dependent on, first, subvention from the municipality and some money from our social housing organization*
- *Micky: When we go to people who should provide subsidies for services, they ask me: okay, give me some numbers what you can do or what you do for me.*
- *How is the business perspective? Experience at Belgian CSA known by a participant: Currently we experience – due to insecurity in the world financial climate and military conflicts – a decline, also because costs have risen, and the financial returns of a job in CSA are simply rather modest. Here we need to consider new strategies and collaborations.*
- *Dirk: we originally had invited an umbrella organization for social care farmers ([SZZ](#)) which cooperates with insurances who provide funding for them – this also could be a model for initiatives such as GroeiTuin013 – couldn't it?*
- *Hein: Yes, absolutely – we are interested in further exploring this.*

Attendees

Dirk Wascher, Reiner Braun, Kathy Belpaeme, Livia Cepoiu, Micky Hickersberger

Next CoP events

8th October 10:00 – 11:00 CEST

12th July 10:00 – 11:00 CEST

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FEAST

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