

RURALIZATION

The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms

D5.3 Report on lessons learned from confrontations

Report, factsheets and 20 appendices describing the activities in the 20 less successful contexts

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AE	Agro-Ecology
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSA	Community supported agriculture
ELINA	Vital agriculture and forestry in the province of Uusimaa, Finland
EU	European Union
FUA	Functional Urban Area
LAG	Local Action Groups from LEADER
LEADER	French – Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale – In English - Links between actions for the development of the rural economy
NC	Rural newcomers
NE	New entrants into farming
NUTS	Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics, including three hierarchical levels (NUTS 1–3)
WP	Work Package
SC	Farm successors

Partner short names in the report

CE	Consulta Europa Projects and Innovation (Spain)
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France)
CSS	Centre for Social Sciences - Tarsadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont (Hungary)
EcoRur	Asociația Eco Ruralis-In Sprijinul Fermierilor Ecologici Si Traditionali (Romania)
ILS	Institut für Landes- und Stadtentwicklungsforschung, Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development (Germany)
KultLand	Kulturland eG (Germany)
Landg	De Landgenoten (Belgium)
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway (Ireland)
ProVertes	Pro Vértés Nonprofit Zrt. (Hungary)
SA	Shared Assets Limited (United Kingdom)
TdL	Terre de Liens (France)
Teagasc	The Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Ireland)
TUD	Delft University of Technology (The Netherlands)
UNICAL	University of Calabria (Italy)
UNIDEB	University of Debrecen (Hungary)
UTU	University of Turku (Finland)
UWr	University of Wrocław (Poland)
XCN	Xarxa per a la Conservació de la Natura (Spain)

Abstract

This report documents and summarises a series of workshops that were carried out by the RURALIZATION team from July 2021 to January 2022 in 12 European countries.

The workshops consisted in confronting stakeholders from a given geographic area with the results of an innovative practice from another geographic area. The confrontations enriched the knowledge about the practices, aggregated information about their potential transferability, created a deeper understanding of the critical factors for its successful replication and revealed potential barriers to be encountered when attempting to implement those innovative practices in a different context.

The results documented in Section 2.1 confirm the important role played by rural newcomers and new entrants into farming in fostering innovation, and document the identified measures to be undertaken in order to support those who actively contribute to the regeneration of rural areas. To facilitate rural development and rural regeneration the RURALIZATION team also identified barriers limiting the innovation potential of farm successors and documented a series of measures to overcome them. The findings are listed in Section 2.2.

The lessons that the RURALIZATION team extracted from the confrontation process were also documented. They are the general lessons learned from trying to transfer innovative practices from one context to another. Three general approaches to create a more fertile environment for innovation to emerge are documented in section 2.3.

Some ‘quick wins’ that resulted from the workshops are actions that participants agreed to implement as a follow-up. We also identified ‘low hanging fruits’ - easy gains that the RURALIZATION team could achieve by further dissemination of the practices. Those two aspects are listed in section 2.4.

In order to present the results in a more user-friendly format, the findings were synthesised in four factsheets presented in chapter 3. The factsheets represent the four following geographical regions: Norther, Southern, Central and Eastern Europe.

The discussion chapter describes general findings to be considered when attempting to implement measures to resolve existing barriers as well as an initial discussion from the team about the expected outcome from the ‘ruralization’ process, which we called ‘new rurality’.

The individual confrontation reports delivered by the teams are included in Appendix 1-20.

1. Objectives, methodology and participants of the confrontations

1.1 Objectives

The aim of the confrontations was to sharpen the lessons learned about the actors and the practices during task 5.2² “Case studies on promising practices of rural newcomers, new entrants and successors” of the WP5 of the RURALIZATION project. The objectives were three-fold,

- 1) to discuss the results from task 5.2 practices and identify obstacles for the implementation in a different context. Furthermore the participants worked out innovative measures to overcome those obstacles and increase the presence of actively engaged newcomers, new entrants into farming and farm successors.
- 2) to document the general lessons learned about the process of transferring innovative practices.
- 3) to create factsheets for easy access to the information gathered about the practices.

Transferability of practices. The output of the confrontations was documented by the regional teams in individual reports. Those reports are the basis for this report. The individual reports contain detailed complementary data to the practices of the D 5.2 report. The information is organised in critical factors that are relevant to implement practices successfully into a different context. Those success factors, if unavailable in a given context, can represent barriers for the transferability. These potential barriers as well as measures that could be implemented to overcome them were documented. Additional innovative practices to further support rural development in the given context are also described. The full content of the individual confrontation reports delivered by the teams can be found in Appendixes 1-20.

Lessons learned. Based on the experiences collected during the confrontations, researchers extracted the common patterns, and selected and prioritized via a voting system those that were perceived by the majority of the team as most relevant. Those experiences are collected in this report in the form of lessons learned and shall provide further information on how to identify innovative practices in rural areas and how to transfer them into other contexts.

Factsheets. The factsheets will provide an overview of the obtained results from the confrontations. They were clustered by country, and the countries clustered by geographic region. The factsheets contain the innovation domain the practice supports and the critical factors, to obtain positive impacts from them. The factsheets could help readers from similar

² Silvia Sivini, et all (2021).

contexts to identify potential barriers they might encounter in their context and select adequate measures to address them.

1.2 Confrontation methodology

The task T5.2 contains the identification and documentation of 30 case studies that we called “promising practices”. To enrich the information about the case studies and to further explore its potential transferability to other contexts, the confrontations envisaged the presentation of these practices to stakeholders in different, less successful geographic areas. The less successful geographic areas were selected by the regional teams (Table 1) using a pragmatic approach that combined demographics, socio-economic aspects, status of agricultural development as well as the affinity of a given geographic area to a topic covered by one of the promising practices. The 20 selected geographic areas selected by the teams will be further referred to in this report as “confrontation context” and are presented in more detail in each confrontation report (Appendix 1-20).

Partners of Regional Teams	Number of confrontation contexts selected	Countries
1. UNICAL, XCT and CE	3	Italy, Spain
2. UNIDEB, CSS, Pro Vertes, EcoRuralis	3	Hungary, Poland, Rumania
3. ILS and Kulturland	3	Germany
4. CNRS and TdL	3	France
5. NUIG, Teagasc and SA	2	England, Ireland
6. TU Delft and Landg	2	Belgium, Netherlands
7. UTU	2	Finnland
8. UWR	2	Poland

Table 1 Regional teams composition and contexts per team

Each confrontation process consisted in the execution of four workshops with stakeholders from the confrontation context. The workshops consisted of three brainstorming sessions and one focus group session. This process will be further referred to in this report as “confrontation”.

As previously mentioned, the confrontation contexts were selected based on their affinity to the content of a promising practice and this process was called “context-practice-pairing”. There were practices that were paired to more than one context, and we will therefore present the results of confrontations executed in 20 different contexts using 15 promising practices. The 15 selected promising practices will be further referred to in this report as “practice”.

The practices were initially classified according to the key actor that either initiated them or that was the focus of its action. Those actors were (a) rural newcomers, (b) new entrants into

farming and (c) farm successors. Also the type of the geographic area in which the practice was established is a defining criteria. The geographic areas were classified according to the rural type of context they represent and will be further addressed in this report as “context type”. The context types contemplated in this report are (a) predominantly urban, (b) intermediate, and (c) predominantly rural. The context type was also applied to the confrontation context. Table 2 presents an overview of the contexts paired to the respective practices.

Confrontation context name	Code	Confrontation context type	Practice short name and code	Practice context type
Dutch rural municipalities , P10 Platform (NUTS3) - NL	NC1	Intermediate	Remote Work (IE1C)	Pred. rural
Municipality of Vesanto (part of North Savo) (NUTS3)- FI	NC2	Pred. rural	Remote work (IE1C)	Pred. rural
Dolnoslaskie (NUTS2) - PL	NC3	Pred. rural	Cultural festivals (NL4C)	Intermediate
Malito, Cosenza Province (NUTS2) - IT	NC4	Intermediate	Castel del Giudice (IT5C)	Pred. rural
Zabkowicki County (LAU1)- PL	NC5	Pred. urban	Newcomers artisans (HU10C)	Pred. urban
Fejér county/Central Hungary (NUTS3)- HU	NC6	Intermediate	Landwege (DE8C)	Intermediate
Germany (NUTS0) - DE	NC7	Intermediate	Landwege (DE8C)	Intermediate
Alunisu village, Sancraiu commune (NUTS3) - RU	NE1	Pred. rural	Farma Martynika (PL2A)	Intermediate
England (NUTS0/1) - GB	NE2	Pred. urban	Community owned farms (NL_BE3A)	Pred. urban
Catalan Western Lands (approx. NUTS3)- ES	NE3	Intermediate	Casa delle AgriCulture-Tullia e Gino (IT4A)	Pred. urban
Toulouse (NUTS3) - FR	NE4	Pred. urban	Versailles Plain (FR5A)	Pred. urban
Zulte, East Flanders (NUTS3)- BE	NE5	Intermediate	Innovative farm collectives (FR6A)	Pred. rural
Larzac - Occitanie (NUTS2)- FR	NE6	Pred. rural	Innovative farm collectives (FR6A)	Pred. rural
Province of Central Finland (NUTS3)- FI	NE7	Pred. rural	Rural Professions Association (FI8A)	Pred. rural
Clermont-Ferrand (NUTS3)- FR	NE8	Intermediate	Versailles Plain (FR5A)	Pred. urban
Canary Islands (NUTS2)- ES	SC1	Pred. rural	Farm diversification (BE3B)	Pred. rural
Uelzen (NUTS3) - DE	SC2	Pred. rural	Trobades (ES5B)	Intermediate
Timis region (NUTS3)- RU	SC3	Pred. rural	Coutances (FR6B)	Pred. rural
Niedersachsen (NUTS 1)- DE	SC4	Pred. rural	Coutances (FR6B)	Pred. rural
West of Ireland (NUTS 3)- IR	SC5	Pred. rural	ELINA Project (Code FI8B)	Pred. urban

Table 2: Result from “pairing” process: confrontation contexts and practices

With the purpose of further characterizing and exploring the innovative aspects of the practices, an additional criteria was added prior to the pairing process: the domain of

innovation the practice represented. Four domains of innovation were defined: farming; education and training; collaboration; and community building. After the confrontations this classification was fine-tuned via evaluation from the RURALIZATION team members (see Table 3 for further definition of these terms and Figure 1 for the visual presentation of all practices researched corresponding to the innovation domains). Table 4 summarises the definitions of the key methodology elements.

Innovation domain	Definition for the scope of this report
Farming	Innovative practices that lead to new and alternative forms of farming, farm management, legal forms to establish farm ownership, farming product diversification, farming activity diversification.
Education and training	Practices that involve topics such as new education methods, awareness building initiatives, knowledge sharing, technology supported training, collaborative learning, networking platforms for knowledge sharing.
Collaboration	Initiatives that relate to creating collaborative legal forms, or foster collaborative ways of working such as cooperatives, farm collectives or other types of collective work, chapters, associations, inter-community organizations, multi-stakeholder platforms, vertical or horizontal collaboration, public-private collaboration.
Community building	Innovative or new social, cultural and economic activities, such as social labs, hubs and cohorts, that lead to community activation, engagement and new community members integration.

Table 3: Innovation domains represented by the practices

Element	Definition
CONFRONTATION CONTEXT	Less successful geographic areas pragmatically selected by the regional teams, based on demographic, economic, social data, as well as on affinity to the topic of the promising practice.
PRACTICE	Innovative practice selected from a set of 30 case studies documented in task 5.2
CONFRONTATION	Research activity consisting of three brainstorming-sessions and one focus group, where a PRACTICE is presented to stakeholders in a CONFRONTATION CONTEXT, aiming to gain additional information about the CONTEXT and the PRACTICE.

Table 4: Description of the methodology elements

The research activity consisted of the execution of 20 confrontations. In each confrontation, stakeholders in the selected context were introduced to the objectives of the RURALIZATION project and were made acquainted with the contents of the practice. After an initial evaluation of the interest in implementing such a practice in their context, the brainstorming sessions were initiated. The focus of the brainstorming sessions were to verify the suitability

of the practice for the context, to identify the critical factors for a successful implementation and to document potential barriers for the practice within the context. The consolidated critical factors and barriers were then presented in a focus group, where participants were invited to propose measures to overcome the identified barriers and to make the transfer of the presented practice to the context possible.

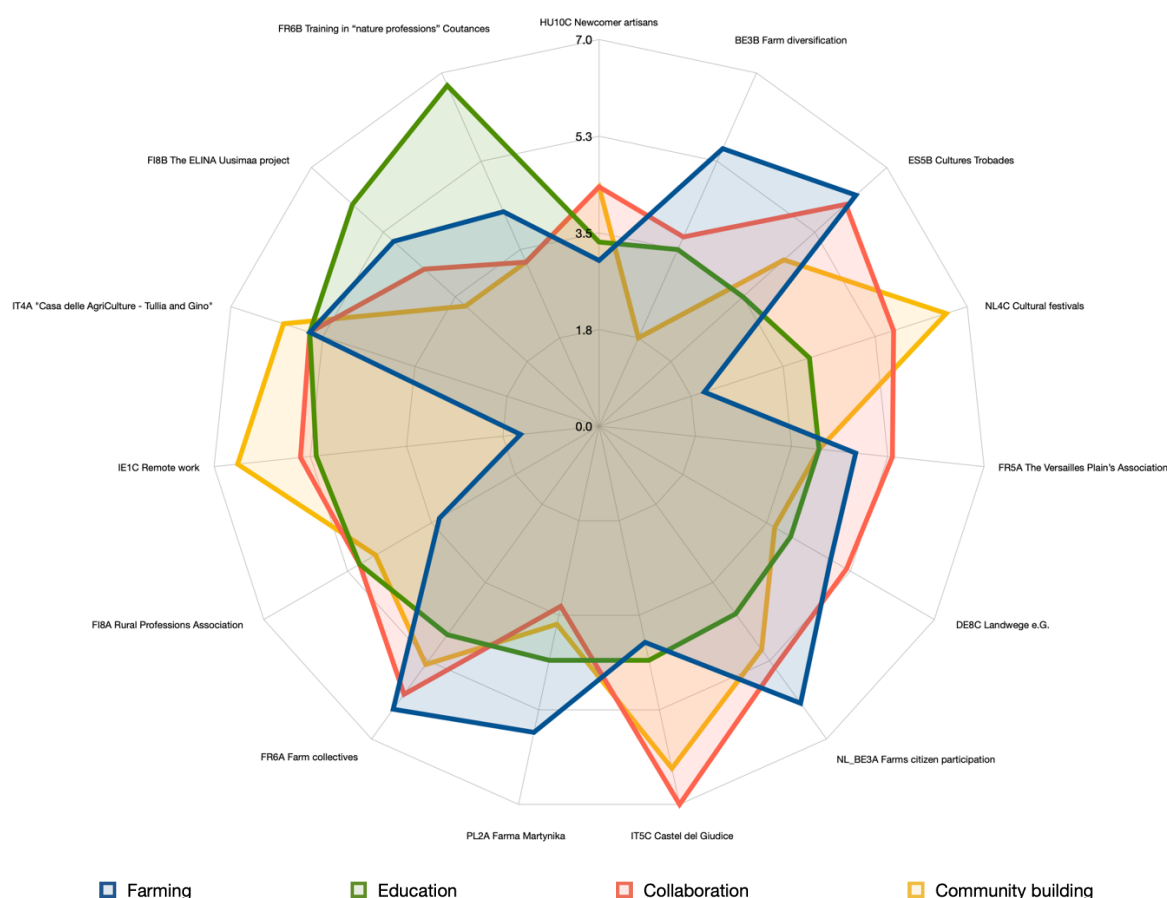


Figure 1: Visual presentation of the practices and the associated innovation domain

1.3 Confrontation participants

The participants of the workshops were stakeholders invited from the 20 confrontation contexts. There were 339 individuals participating. Some individuals participated in more than one session thus accounting for 665 interactions. The brainstorming sessions generated 399 interactions while the focus groups generated 266. There were 31 workshops in physical presence and 50 online workshops. From the gender perspective there was a well-balanced participation with 177 female and 161 male participants. Other genders were weakly represented with only one participant. An overview is shown in Table 5. Further information related to participants, such as the type of stakeholder group they represented, their role and gender can be found in Appendix 21.

Category	Community	Educators	Entrepreneur	Farmer/ landworker	Media	Professional organisation	Public & civil servant	Researcher	Grand Total
Confrontation Code	Total (Sum)								
NC1- NL	4		1			2	4	1	12
NC2- FI	5		1			8	5	2	21
NC3- PL	3		4	0		4	1		12
NC4- IT	5		6			3	18		32
NC5- PL	7		4	2		1	1		15
NC6- HU	8			2		8			18
NC7- DE				6		14	3	1	24
NE1- RU	5			8		4	1	1	19
NE2- UK	3		1	5				3	12
NE3- ES						6	9	1	16
NE4- FR	1			5		12	2	8	28
NE5- BE				11		1			12
NE6- FR				9	1	11	3	2	26
NE7- FI		7		1		4	4	2	18
NE8- FR				1		10		5	16
SC1- ES	1	2	1	2		5	5		16
SC2- DE				2		2	3		7
SC3- RU	2			5		5			12
SC4- DE		3		3			0		6
SC5- IE				4		11	2		17
Grand Total	44	12	18	66	1	111	61	26	339

Table 5: Overview of confrontation participants by stakeholder type (per confrontations)

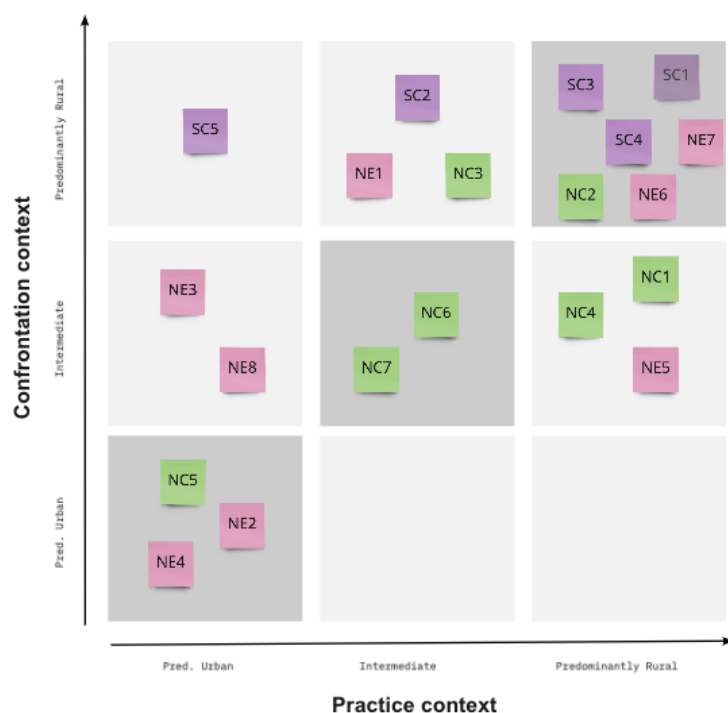


Figure 2: Overview of the rural character from the practice to the confrontation context

The geographical context of the 20 confrontations were as follows: three predominantly urban, seven intermediate, and ten predominantly rural (see Table 2). Compared to the initial context where the practice was documented, there was a tendency to choose contexts with stronger rural character. Although eleven contexts reflected the same rural character as the initial practice, six were confronted to contexts with a stronger rural character (NC3, NE1, NE3, NE8, SC2 and SC5). Only three practices were confronted in areas of less rural character (NC1, NC4 and NE5). Figure 2 helps to visualize this tendency. Furthermore it helps to understand that practices initiated or targeted to successors generally had a more rural character, while practices to and from “rural” newcomers and new entrants into farming were taking place in contexts with more urban character or a proximity to urban centres.

2. Results

The results presented in this report consist of the additional knowledge gained about the practices related to their potential transferability and upscaling. A deeper understanding about the critical factors for its successful replication, potential barriers to be encountered when attempting to implement those innovative practices in a different context and measures to overcome those barriers are the key elements of this additional knowledge.

Section 2.1 will focus on the human capital as a critical factor, showcasing the important role played by rural newcomers and new entrants into farming in fostering and upscaling innovation. The most common barriers preventing the transferability of innovative practices to the researched contexts are discussed. Furthermore we describe measures to overcome those barriers or at least minimise them. The measures to be undertaken in order to increase the presence of newcomers and new entrants in rural areas are listed as well.

In session 2.2 specific issues and difficulties encountered by farm successors will be addressed, as well as proposed solutions to resolve the obstacles encountered by those important players in rural regeneration. Measures to overcome the barriers limiting their innovation potential and regeneration power are discussed.

Section 2.3 will discuss the general lessons related to the attempt of transferring innovative practices from one context to another. First, the RURALIZATION-team identified that there is no “one size fits all” solution for upscaling innovation, and that practices must be adapted, reshaped, repurposed and reframed in order to suit a different rural context. The seed of innovation has to be planted first. Second, if we want to create a more fertile environment for innovation to emerge, alliances, networks and collaboration are crucial. The interdependencies among the stakeholder groups, the multi-layer character of collaboration, and the co-creation of solutions are described. Third, we acknowledge the importance of information and knowledge with its evolving ways of dissemination and sharing. We therefore present proposals on how to make them more easily accessible to rural populations as a means to increase the quality of human capital in rural areas.

Section 2.4 contains a list of activities that were generated as a result of the confrontations. Insights on the potential cross-fertilization of the practices are also presented. For example some aspects of the potential that the confrontation methodology has to ignite activism and to function as a first step to stakeholder engagement, stimulating their creative power with the presentation of case studies, and motivating action via new established networks.

Although access to land is a critical factor and was frequently mentioned as being a barrier for the transferability of most of the practices (only four out of 20 confrontations did not

bring up the subject), the topic will not be further addressed in this paper. The related content collected during the confrontations and addressing the topic “access to land” are detailed in the specific confrontation reports. A list of the most relevant aspects that came up during confrontation can be viewed in Appendix 22. An in-depth analysis of the situation related to access to land and the complete results of the extensively researched topic can be found in the report D6.1, D 6.2 and D6.3³ that were drafted in WP6 of the Ruralization project.

2.1 The role of rural newcomers and new entrants into farming

The ability to replicate or upscale innovative practices would clearly help to ignite and accelerate rural regeneration and development. Being able to transfer to a different context the success that an initiative was able to initially generate would clearly contribute to rural regeneration. One of the key findings of the confrontation process was that adequate human capital needs to be available in order to increase the chance for a successful transfer of the experience. In other words, **qualified human capital is the most critical factor for replicating a promising practice**. In the scope of this report, human capital will include knowledge, skills, experience and motivation of the involved individuals.

We often consider rural newcomers and new entrants into farming as catalysts, bringing along capabilities, required knowledge and skills. Through our research we can confirm that these actors can potentially awaken stagnating rural contexts. When a region was lacking the ability to fully economically, socially and culturally explore its potential these actors were frequently the ones bringing new life through their new ideas and concepts.

Although not only newcomers and new entrants are required to present the right set of skills for a successful practice transfer. Local and regional authorities, public and civil society organisations, as well as established rural dwellers are also to be equipped with the necessary skill set if a context ought to be successful in its endeavours. Those groups will be addressed later in this section and further in section 2.2.

The skills identified in the confrontations as required to create or replicate a successful initiative ranged from psychological, over social to intellectual skills. The skills are mostly acquirable but they can also be the result of personality and character traits. The skills requirements showed to be of individual or of group nature, meaning that either individuals or whole communities should be able to present the given characteristic.

Two of the frequently mentioned individual skills were leadership and pioneerism. When we consider leadership, collective and individual leadership skills are present. Leadership can take different colours and was addressed with different terms such as the “activist” (NC2, NC3), one who sets up and organise the critical mass necessary to get an initiative going, the “activator” (NE7), meaning the fiery and self-motivated person who puts ideas further, the motivated and engaged community member or the “power-horse” (NC7, SC2), with endurance and idealism to move projects further. The leadership role was also described in a

³ D6.1 Typology of actions based on analysis of current innovative actions and discussion with stakeholders; D6.2 Report on legal and policy arrangements in 28 member states; D6.3 Technical report on quantitative analysis of land holdings and land market trends.

more processual way, sometimes representing the capability to facilitate territorial interaction and to orchestrate stakeholders' actions (NE8). Leadership was frequently paired with the qualities of pioneers. Those were praised for being able to start-up new enterprises (NC5), know trends (NC3, NE7), and have the capacity to "initiate a snowball effect" for innovative projects (NC5). Furthermore they are described as visionaries who are able to share this vision in an engaging form to gather support and bring it to more concrete actions.

But one of the most critical skills appears to be business competencies. Under this category some of the mentioned skills were entrepreneurial mindset (SC1, SC5), technical abilities such as financial aspects (NE2, NE6), being a good organiser, knowing how to structure a fundraising initiative or planning the roll-out of an idea in the form of a project (NC6). In addition, business acumen would ask for social and interpersonal skills such as being able to act as networkers and facilitators (NE8). Networkers bring personal relations and connections to other social circles. Those connections, as brought up in one context (NC3), carry business potential and might be missing in rural areas where there are no such established networks yet. Facilitators can build links between seemingly diametrically opposed opinions (NE4), thus fostering collaboration and engaging stakeholder groups within the rural community. To foster collaboration, further social skills were frequently mentioned such as mediation and counselling (NE6, SC1).

Since many of the practices contained agroecological and community oriented approaches to farming, further knowledge in those areas were also listed in many contexts as critical skills. For instance, knowledge about agrobiodiversity and alternative farming practices. Even though this knowledge was claimed to be generally critical for a sustainable transformation of the agricultural landscape, the *de facto* prevailing demand for organic farming education in rural areas was estimated to be smaller than in intermediate areas (SC4), or rural areas closer to urban centres (NE7). This was partially attributed to the fact that the demand for organic farming education is mainly generated by new entrants into farming, who have a stronger presence in those less isolated rural areas; but also to less marketing options.

Summarising, rural newcomers and new entrants into farming are estimated in many contexts as being more qualified and gifted with the required skills to foster innovation than conventional rural dwellers. Nonetheless, these actors cannot achieve success with their efforts if they root their projects in socially infertile soil. This means that the community where an initiative shall be installed has also to fulfil some requirements. The presence of a "strong" community was also identified in the majority of the confrontations as a critical factor leading to success, "strong" communities were described as communities where well-functioning networks are present and interpersonal relationships among its members are well established. In section 2.4 of our learning we will address the measures to support collaboration and to build strong communities.

The fertile ground for innovative initiatives is also defined in many contexts by the quality of the human capital in public services and authorities. Civil servants, local and regional

government employees ought to be able to provide support for project initiators in a diverse range of topics. The requirements were both related to technical as to interpersonal skills. Among others, the technical skills include good knowledge of the administrative processes and the capacity to act as advisors in those matters, and being able to run government programs locally and help to apply for project calls. Specific knowledge about local food systems and agricultural methods were also identified as critical skills to support the initiators of innovative farming projects. The interpersonal skills were related to the counselling function to support individual and collective initiatives. When considering the varied needs that a group of farmers would present when planning to establish themselves as a collective, the array of support needed also requires informed counselling. The key qualities of a counsellor would include not only technical skills, but an ability to support initiation of a project team.

In addition to human capital in the form of skills and knowledge, the second most frequent common critical factor was the active engagement of local authorities. It was clear that practices which succeeded in creating a positive impact on the community and the surrounding areas were having at least some support from local politicians and local governmental institutions.

Most frequent barriers encountered by newcomers and new entrants

Frequently one of the first mentioned barriers for the transferability of a practice was the lack of innovation supportive human capital described above. Since many of the skills can be acquired or transferred via training or practising, we will address the lifting of this barrier in section 2.4 when we discuss the measures to increase knowledge sharing and improve education and training in rural areas.

Other critical factors that were identified as being either absent or difficult to make available in rural contexts are listed below and comprise the most frequently identified barriers for rural newcomers and new entrants into farming and classified as very relevant by the researchers for more than 60% of the confrontations⁴.

Farming infrastructure

Supporting the establishment of new entrants on human-size and locally-oriented farms requires important efforts to change the farm/land structure. One major obstacle for new entrants is the lack of infrastructure in the form of buildings and specific machinery, that would allow a more innovative production. Bundled services to conceptually help them to bring products to market, such as marketing, communication, certification, logistics consulting, are also lacking. Few infrastructures exist to transform and sell food locally, and the creation of this type of infrastructure requires major investments that are not always available.

Digital connectivity and other living infrastructure

To facilitate settlement of newcomers and new entrants in rural areas, as well as their access to services and information, it is necessary to invest in the digitalization of rural

⁴ The relevance of the barriers were defined via survey among the 15 researchers involved in the confrontation process.

areas. This is not only meant in the strict sense of creating interconnectivity infrastructure such as high volume and speed internet access, but also to create more specialised jobs. Specifically relating to farming, digital connectivity is becoming more and more important, due to the expansion of their application in the primary sector itself, in terms of monitoring, the use of sensors, automatization, etc. Beside broadband internet access, other facilities such as housing, schooling, and entertainment are also required. Especially housing on the proximity of farmland is considered a scarce good in most of the cases. This is also due to the fact of limiting and strict rules regarding obtaining a permit to divide an existing farmstead into various housing units. Suitable public transport in rural areas as a minimal requirement for families to move in, as well as to allow for members of community farms to collect product were mentioned as a barrier.

Regulations and subsidies policies

Heavy and strict regulation appears to be one of the common barriers that severely limit innovation in agriculture no matter where in Europe. CAP direct payments are seen as a very relevant constraint for the promotion of sustainable food systems both from a social and environmental perspective. Strict regulation for animal farming (husbandry, slaughter, nitrate overload of the soil), food processing (specification for food labs and equipment), limits to the development of regional specialties (e.g. certification procedures) and small-scale production of artisanal food are just examples of the areas where regulators are hindering innovation. The fact that regulations are actually the same for big farms and agro-industry as well as for small farms/small scale artisanal processing aggravates this fact. Some other concerns regarding exogenous barriers relate to the organic certification systems. Most small-scale farmers considered them to be too complex, bureaucratic and expensive. Beyond representing a bureaucratic and economic burden, the criteria used by the current certification are considered obsolete and should be updated to include items such as the origin of the production, the impact of the production method on the environment and carbon print of the supply chain.

The CAP direct payments were considered not really helpful and sometimes even a constraint to the promotion of sustainable food systems, both, from a social and an environmental perspective. For some regions those payments are promoting massification and the production of goods of low demand, thus generating excessive production and subsequent destruction, instead of promoting biodiversity and sustainable development. One reason could be a lack of political will at European and national level. But also the lack of knowledge from the farmers, due to the complexity of the process, accounts for the fact that many possibilities to collect subsidies are widely unknown. Even if a small scale farmer knows the existence of the subsidies they often prefer to don't apply for them due to the complex bureaucratic procedure.

Access to a viable market

One of the main barriers for the successful implementation of some agro-ecological projects relate to the commercialisation of added-value products. The lack of an existing market, or in other words the access to the demand for higher valued products, is a key barrier for producers in more isolated rural areas.

The proximity to urban centers clearly favours the development of organic farming since it offers the access to the urban population that have not only the desire for differentiated products but also the necessary income to pay for the additional quality. In the absence of such proximity, other forms of selling channels that allow for specific targeting of selected consumer types, would be necessary, such as green public procurement by local municipalities.

Other barriers very often mentioned but perceived as most relevant in less than 60% of the confrontations are the following:

Food illiteracy

Rural and predominantly rural contexts are consistently defined as having less awareness and providing less education in terms of alternative food systems. This condition came consistently across the various confrontations where the demand for higher quality products - such as organic and artisanal produced food - was a critical factor, being therefore considered a barrier for the successful implementation of alternative and innovative farming practices. The influence that the lack of awareness and education has on food demand is increased by the evidently diverging and weaker buying power prevailing in rural areas compared to urban areas. This fact was also highlighted in the previous section and as such has also an impact in the development of the rural gastronomic scene.

Handling public administration bureaucracy

In addition to the information overload on the one hand, and the lack of knowledge of available grants on the other, there is the problem of identifying and understanding the calls for proposals. There is also a basic need for this information to be well articulated, so that it is not necessary to search in numerous different places, organising access to the tools in an effective way. Even if one succeeds in receiving a grant, one of the most prominent obstacles in all the sessions was the lack of support and accompaniment for those people, especially after the first year in which they start a business and when they run the highest risk of failure. In other words, long-term support is missing.

Furthermore, there is a significant bureaucratic barrier when applying for aid, if we consider the southern and eastern European countries. The problem is partially due to the lack of access to information and knowledge but also to the lack of confidence that young people and rural citizens have towards dealing with public administration.

Rural associations and networks such as LEADER groups emphasise the excessive time spent on the justification of subsidies and management of calls for proposals, as opposed to the lack of time spent on communicating the existence of subsidies and providing aid in

a more direct way. Furthermore, farmers usually have to work a lot and therefore have only little time to spend on proposals.

Lack of political will to support innovative farming

The government support in all levels and from all instances is not required only in financial form. Especially political will to create the base and support for various undertakings was identified as a critical factor and mostly a barrier, because of its absence in the local context. As mentioned before, the lack of organic farming educational programs, as well as support to undertake such training is not only the result of missing financial support, but partly a consequence of the lack of political will to foster alternative, agro-ecological farming. The effort would be more efficient if a cooperation would be applied between farmers associations, existing conventional educational centres and school managements, that is supported by local, regional, or national guidelines.

Proposed measures to increase the presence of rural newcomers and new entrants into farming

So clearly, to increase the presence of rural newcomers and new entrants into farming in rural areas, some of the barriers need to be worked on and the attractiveness of rural areas need to be increased. We will therefore discuss measures that could provide this effect and attract this type of people to come to rural areas.

Commoning and collective farming to tackle the lack of farming infrastructure

To improve the availability of agricultural infrastructure and meet some of the various challenges that new entrants encounter to establish in agriculture, commoning and cooperation on a small scale could provide a way to fulfil some of these needs. Material capacity - such as machinery- as well as the know-how, logistic-services, distribution and direct selling support for farmers goods could be reached by means of collaboration or creation of a shared services provider. The available legal forms to support the collaboration among farmers varies from country to country. An exchange at higher political and juridical level should be entailed in order to identify the most efficient legal forms and make them widely available within European member countries. This legal form should ensure the eligibility for CAP subsidies.

The benefits of collective farming would make access to land easier. Collectives will have a larger capacity to pool money from various individuals and/or taking over larger farms. The increase in financial power also facilitates the access to appropriate equipment by sharing the investment. In terms of knowledge, collectives will have more individuals from where to draw the knowhow and working power. The cooperation has the potential to

relieve challenges related to being new to the agricultural work and the agricultural world in general, and overcome the start-up fears, mutualising difficult or time-consuming tasks.

The concept of “territorial farms” was explored as a viable solution for predominantly urban areas. Territorial farms in this sense were farms established in urban surrounding areas and dedicated to cover the needs of this specific urban community. These collective farms could be managed by an array of stakeholders interested in the maintenance of agricultural land in the vicinity of urban agglomerations. These farms would be available to receive the new entrants, offering them the possibility to establish in the area. The territorial farms could also serve as farm incubators and make available food processing facilities for artisanal food production activities. The farms could become an experimental site for emblematic actions to improve the biodiversity and environmental management of the area.

In this regard, the collective could respond to new entrants’ aspirations of questioning traditional models of setting up in agriculture. In this practice, the farm becomes a shared enterprise whose conduct and future are decided among individuals who have equal status and power as associates in the farm. Among critical tools identified to support the development of farm collectives, there were:

- Communication tools to develop the ability to dialogue, such as information and training on how to organise and conduct meetings to achieve the set strategic as well as tactical objectives. Even basic knowhow such as how to set frequency, agenda, speech distribution, rotating organising responsibility, etc.
- Tools on governance, to help collectives adopt agreed-upon and operational statuses and value charters, work on responsibility repartition, develop decision-making processes that satisfy the group, create conflict-resolution mechanisms, etc.
- Tools on financial and technical aspects of working as a group (e.g. schemes to collect/count work time of associates; tools to know how to share investment, risk, equipment; juridical tools to set up a collective enterprise etc.).

Investment in internet and digitization in remote rural areas

Another key factor is the internet and the digitalisation of services, especially for entrepreneurs, and to attract younger and innovative people. Young generations need access to broadband internet as well as a functional mobile internet. The availability of fast internet facilitates the installation also of the currently *en vogue* working nomads: urban dwellers working remotely and bringing their knowhow and their consumption power to rural villages. The Corona Crisis⁵ pushed the establishment of remote work, which can be a huge potential for rural areas, if they provide this minimum infrastructure. Remote workers can be important for farmers, especially for organic farmers, because, as mentioned already above, they usually have a higher income, and therefore can afford to buy the more expensive organic products. Additionally, if more remote workers come to a certain area, the potential for direct marketing rises, which is usually more profitable for farmers than selling their products to retail companies.

⁵ Worldwide pandemic on SARS-Covid 19, affecting Europe from march 2020 until the publication of this report

Beside the availability of fast internet, social infrastructure such as personal, health and school services (kindergartens, schools, shopping facilities and doctors), a good level of public transportation and more up-to-date housing prove to be a way to make rural villages more attractive. The public sector has a crucial role of providing these structures especially in more remote rural areas.

Remote rural areas usually have a lower level of social infrastructure than urban or suburban areas. Nevertheless it seems to be crucial to provide an infrastructure which has at least a certain minimum standard to address newcomers needs.

Increasing rural attractiveness

Taking into account the high share of farmers retiring in the coming years, we also realise that local authorities need to better observe the demographic evolution of the population in their specific districts, taking advantage of the potential higher interest that newcomers show for farming and rural development. This should result in a consequent increase in the supply of services as required by this segment, thus increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for the settling of new generations and avoiding emigration of youth.

Efforts should be increased, to make rural businesses, professions and lifestyles better known in general, and especially among the younger population. Collaboration with schools should be strived to achieve this aim.

Considering that the technological revolution has also reached the primary sector, it is considered that some rural areas will not have enough skilled labour available in the future. Rural areas need to be presented to young generations as a place of modern technology and modern jobs. The actors of the various primary sector industries could work in collaboration to implement those measures to promote rural areas image and reputation as an attractive living and working environment.

Working on the social fabric

The social fabric in small villages is densely knotted and newcomers have a hard time finding the adequate social context to establish first contacts. It was proposed that crash courses, the type of “how to live in the country” should be offered as an opportunity to learn the specificities of the local society, giving newcomers a hands-on opportunity to experience the way of life they want to adopt. Such a course, or other types of organised encounters, would provide for an opportunity to meet, establish first contacts and build connections with locals. Social relations are built by experience, therefore events that facilitate potential candidates to see, hear, smell and feel the countryside could have a positive impact in their decision to move in. Visiting farms, newcomer cafes and other events at regular cycles could promote the building of more connections and expand the patterns of innovation in rural areas. Potential candidates must meet the ones that already live and work in rural areas. Also students of all levels could be invited to be part

of organised farms and company visits, to be present and participate in classes of rural professions as well as in offering practical professional orientation and vocational tests. As discussed earlier in this section, the social fabric is an important element when addressing the characteristics of “strong” communities. Therefore, personal connections between older and recently established farmers are also part of this fabric. It would be therefore interesting to create a database of older farmers and new entrants, create activities to make them interact so that the relationship is already existing a long time before one retiring farmer starts to think about his or her retirement.

Tackling bureaucracy and the rigidity of support programs

The agriculture business is complex and time-consuming. Small farms are less equipped with human resources and are therefore less prepared to perform activities that are not directly related to the core business. A way to solve this shortage of time is to offer external support to perform the non-agriculture-related activities, tailored to the startup phase going through until the retirement and succession phase. The availability of this type of counselling and advice varies strongly from country to country and from region to region, and is sometimes already offered as a public service or by civil society organisations (e.g. churches, NGOs). This type of social counselling and consultation is time consuming and requires skilled staff that are not widely available, as already mentioned earlier in this paper. An initial way to tackle this problem would be to make a database available. A compendium of all existing services available, their type of offer and conditions to receive them. Often the lack of the service is not the problem, but the difficulty to find out who or which organisation could help.

On another note, it cannot be neglected that the nature of farming business is of strong interfamilial relation and activity. This fact can cause intense tension and the availability of external mediation/help to manage social and human dynamics in the long term could alleviate the problem. When considering collective farms, events like the entry or exit of associates also often causes interpersonal stress and require support from a counsellor. Most of the time financial means to pay for the service are not available, particularly if the group is going through a transformation period.

In addition to the time consumption related to all activities not contributing directly to the resolution of the farming routine, the benefit from performing those activities can be demotivating. If we consider the level of bureaucracy required for the process of applying for subsidies, and put this in contrast to the set of values that most of the new entrants and newcomers share, the application for subsidy is more a constraint than a help. The financial help offered to farmers by the state should allow farmers more individual scope of action, be broader in their scope of support and favours initiatives leading to diversification and innovation.

An additional, more human resources consuming solution on the local level, could be that communities or regions provide help for the farmers in the form of a professional office to apply for national and international funds. This office or agency would compose applications in cooperation with the local farmers, so that they can concentrate on their daily business. This possible solution would require the will of elected officers to dedicate

funds on innovative agricultural businesses. Nevertheless it could be a more effective way for communities to invest on gathering funds than spending their own limited funds directly on local farmers. Local councils could also function as "dissemination antennae" for relevant information. In the form of advisory offices, or field workshops, the figure of the rural development agent could be activated and enhanced.

At regional or national level there should be efforts put into increasing the viability of small farming in opposition to favouring scale, for instance by differentiating the subsidy program for big and small farms. Also, subsidy schemes to support farmers in the transition to new approaches, in the diversification of their offering, in favouring innovation and risk taking should be put in place. Especially the starting period where lots of (financial) insecurities are present needs to be bridged.

Increase access to education on alternative farming and food systems

The desirability of a transition from conventional to agroecological farming is not only due to technical and economical reasons but also to the increasing importance of socio-cultural aspects, such as animal welfare and environmental impacts. It is therefore of relevance to support new entrants into farming in their effort of transitioning to alternative farming methods. Although not being the focus of this section, it is relevant to state that this subject is also relevant for farm successors. Taking advantage of the greater interest younger generations are showing to alternative ways of farming it would be wise to increase the offering of appropriate and stateily financed training facilities. There should be an effort to close the gap between offer and demand for agro-ecological education for all age groups.

In line with the financial challenges many (starting) farmers face, the idea of paid internship and wider support during the formation period could have a positive impact. Education and awareness building is also required to increase food literacy, providing training and developing information campaigns to increase the knowledge about alternative food systems, food sovereignty and food security. This would increase the awareness of the population about new forms of agriculture such as cooperative, community-supported agriculture, and the individual responsibility towards regional and organic food. Those measures could accelerate the transition to sustainable growth and rural regeneration.

2.2 The latent innovation potential of farm successors

We have explored the important role that rural newcomers and new entrants into farming play in the process of implementing innovative, regenerative initiatives. The other important actor in the process of developing rural life in rural and predominantly rural areas are the farm successors. New entrants and newcomers less frequently establish themselves in those more remote rural areas. We identified many obstacles that this new generation of farmers

are experiencing and have come across proposals on how to support them. They are the ones that have the internal conditions to continue to develop the agriculture business they will inherit from their families. New generations have the innovative potential inherent to the younger population. The majority have come into contact with different realities than their parents, have developed different skills and acquired different knowledge. This makes them susceptible to developing different dreams and aspirations, as we have seen in D 4.5 Ruralization report⁶ which documents a wide array of foresight activities undertaken to find out the ingredients for alternative futures in different types of rural areas in Europe.

If we want this group to be able to explore their innovative power, combined with their farming knowhow, it is necessary to work on the removal of the barriers that are limiting their innovative capacity and preventing their motivation to maintain and to develop the farm business they will inherit.

Farm succession is a complex process. It involves not only the young generation's motivation, but also the economic and legal aspects of farm inheritance as well as psychological, social and cultural aspects of family inheritance. It is therefore important to pay attention to the interest of both the successor and the retiring farmer. This dual focus is critical and should be considered under multiple perspectives: economic (e.g. the viability and the attractiveness of the farming activity), social (the needs of retiring farmers), emotional (re-defining the continuing role of the older farmer on the farm), legal and organisational (e.g. farm ownership).

Within this complexity, the critical factor identified for maximizing the potential of this group as rural changemakers was appropriate training and information. Again this will be generally discussed further in the section 2.3 of knowledge sharing and building of human capital but some specific factors will be addressed in the section.

The lack of governmental pension schemes for farmers in some countries was considered a very important negative factor impacting the decision of successors about taking over their parents' farm. This fact was also mentioned as one of the main barriers for farming cooperatives, since in this setting the lack of a regular pension after stopping the activity is not backed by support from a potential successor. The non-existence of farmers' retirement and pension plans reflects the reality that farmers need a different approach. The focus on 'retirement' in the normal sense of exit and ceasing work activities is generally not appropriate in a farming context. Farming is a way of life and farmers may want to stay involved in the farm after succession, which can also benefit its future. Farmer's retirement is more a "stepping back" than a "stepping away" is this need to be considered when designing a solution for succession.

Farm succession is impacted by many different factors across time, such as a young potential farmer gaining an initial interest in the profession, to the technical aspects of farm legal transfer. The findings presented here, both the barriers and measures to address these, are reflective of a set of cases and their exploration in new contexts. They are therefore not comprehensive, but nevertheless provide useful insights into the issues impacting current

⁶ Tuomas Kuhmonen (2021)

levels of farm succession and the potential policy measures that could help overcome these obstacles.

Barriers identified to farm successors

Farming as an economically viable livelihood for successors

Successors need to view farming as an attractive profession that provides a financially viable livelihood. In a number of confrontations the issue of farm viability and the wider economic resilience of farms emerged as a key barrier inhibiting greater levels of farm succession. Dependence on subsidies and low commodity prices are issues particularly highlighted in the Canary Islands context (SC1). In the Slow Succession, Slow Revolution case in the Uelzen context (SC2) economic viability and financial security emerged as critical factors. Assessment of the ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5) brought to light the strong need for transformative change to *support the economic sustainability of farm livelihoods and the survival of the family farm*.

Farming as a socially viable livelihood for successors

The challenge of farming providing a viable livelihood for successors is also social and linked to difficulties retaining young people and potential successors in farm families and rural areas. The issue of rural exodus is identified in the confrontation of the farm diversification at succession case study in the Canary Islands context (SC1), with the need for better services and social opportunities important to retain youth in rural areas. The presence of rural educational institutions emerged as important in both confrontations exploring the training in 'nature professions' case (the Timis area - SC3 and the Niedersachsen context - SC4), also showing the importance of education opportunities to retain youth in rural areas.

Another part of the challenge is to attract potential successors back to rural areas when they do leave to pursue social and economic opportunities elsewhere. In the confrontation involving the ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5) it was shown how children in farm families leave rural areas to access education and work in other places. This can then also mean the skills and wider life experience gained may not have a role in the more traditional family farm. This creates a role for innovation and diversification on farms to make farming a more attractive profession that can draw on a range of skills, which also should improve farm viability.

Traditional gender norms

Farming must be seen as a viable livelihood for the male and female successor equally and this is currently a challenge. The gender imbalance in the farming profession is also an issue impacting the viability of farming as a livelihood. Women may not see themselves, or be seen as by others, as future farmers because of traditional gender norms in the

farming profession. The confrontation involving the ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5) suggests that there is potential to improve levels of farm succession by also improving the gender balance in the next farming generation.

Looking beyond the successor to support the successor

The confrontations show in different ways how focusing only on the perspective of the successor will not effectively address the need for greater succession levels to support generational renewal in farming. Attention is needed to the farm, the successor and the existing farmer. Issues relating to the successor and farm viability have already been discussed above in relation to how farming needs to be a financially and socially viable occupation for successors to take it on. The confrontations also showed another key part of the process needing attention –the existing farmer.

The confrontations highlighted both social and financial issues related to farmer retirement and the consequent impact of these issues on levels of succession. Existing farmers also face financial challenges on retirement if they do not have adequate retirement income, which can delay the move away from their profession. The results of the Slow Succession, Slow Revolution case explored in the Uelzen context (SC2) identified the issue of retirement income and lack of government farmer pension schemes as a barrier to succession. Retirement can also bring a feeling of loss of professional status and result in breakdown of the natural social connections created by farming activities. This can result in issues such as social isolation and mental health challenges. Farming is often a deeply ingrained way of life and farmers may want to retire in the traditional sense of ceasing work and prefer to stay connected to farming. However, strong involvement of the original main farmer can also have a negative effect for the successor if they feel they lack autonomy in running the farm, as identified in the Uelzen context (SC2). Nevertheless, it is important that an older-age friendly environment exists to support the farmer stepping back. This is a strong point made in the west of Ireland Irish context (SC5).

Overcoming obstacles: measures to address the barriers identified

Measures to support farm innovation at succession

Increased levels of innovation on farms provides an opportunity to harness the latent, untapped potential of a farm and realise a more sustainable farm business. Farms can be a place of social, cultural, environmental and more technical or economic innovation. Directly supporting farm innovation emerges a key objective in helping address the issue of farming not providing a viable livelihood for successors. Two case studies and their confrontations explored specific areas of farm-based innovation - the traditional food cultures explored in the Slow Succession, Slow Revolution case in the Uelzen context (SC2) and the community connected farming of CSA Hof Pente in the Timis area (SC3). In the Slow Succession, Slow Revolution case (SC2) one of the key outcomes was specifically the need for financial support for farms in transition to support innovation and entrepreneurial risk taking.

The exploration of the farm diversification at succession case in the Canary Islands context (SC1) resulted in a range of emerging areas of innovation and diversification potential, such as developing farm-based activities in other economic sectors (e.g. tourism, energy, creative economy), changing the farming system to a more economically resilient approach (e.g. diversification into organic production), or extending operations up the supply chain (e.g. adding value to farm produce). These cross-sector intersections provide important spaces for innovation to support increased farm viability, which in turn should help to make farming a realistic and attractive livelihood for successors. Policy measures in this area could also target particular groups who are under-represented in farming, such as female farmers.

Measures to support human capital development to support succession

Paired with the above measure, human capital development is also important. The confrontation exploring the farm diversification at succession case in the Canary Islands context (SC1) points to the need not just for financial grants, but also paired with wider human capital development, such as enterprise management and digital skills to help any financial investment support building an economically resilient farm business. More broadly, the importance of focusing on human capital development is also emphasised in the training in 'nature professions' and CSA Hof Pente confrontation in the Timis area (SC3). The focus of the ELINA project on both business issues and succession in tandem is supported as an approach in the west of Ireland context (SC5). So in addition to business training, succession information and support would also be an important part of human capital building paired with financial grants supporting innovation at succession.

Measures to support the needs of the existing farmer

The confrontations on the ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5) and the Slow Succession, Slow Revolution case in the Uelzen context (SC2) both point in particular to the social and financial needs of the existing farmer looking to step back or retire from farming. In Uelzen retirement income and the lack of government pension schemes emerged as a key barrier. In the west of Ireland (SC5) it was highlighted how the issue of loss of social connections and professional roles can lead to isolation and psychological challenges for retired farmers. Alongside this there is the issue that these farmers may want to stay connected to farming and not fully retire. Embracing this can also enhance farming through continuing engagement on farm bringing a generation of grounded expertise and knowledge. There is a need for creation of supports that support a more age-friendly farming environment. The west of Ireland confrontation points to work piloting this concept in the form of a social organisation addressing the needs of older farmers.

Integrated, longer-term farm succession policies

Alongside the specific measures outlined, the need for a wider, more integrated policy framework is another key finding that can be drawn from the confrontation reports. The need for policy that is integrated, that works to address multiple issues, actors and areas of traditional policy division is clear both from the promising practice succession case studies and their confrontation in new contexts. For example, from the successor perspective, a range of needs requiring policy intervention emerge. Those particularly highlighted here are supporting greater gender equality by directly supporting female successors and tackling the farm viability issue to ensure farming remains a rural livelihood option. The more logistical and technical aspects of succession (e.g. information and support on the legal aspects of farm transfer, succession planning) also need to be part of the policy measures, as shown in the case of ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5). Measures should be part of an integrated policy approach with attention to wider social and economic issues that come into play in the succession process.

These demands also call for a specific policy approach that sees multiple different types of organisations working together to address interlinked issues. This is clear for example from the ELIINA project in the west of Ireland context (SC5) where replicating ELINA in the Irish context is viewed to require a range of organisations and agencies, such as in the areas of enterprise development, agriculture, farming and education. The farm diversification at succession case in the Canary Islands context (SC1) also highlights the need for multiple actors to come together to overcome obstacles, such as collaborations involving citizens, public bodies and universities.

2.3 Lessons learned

As one of the focuses for this report, the RURALIZATION team has extracted the general lessons learned. Those lessons were patterns identified throughout the interactions with stakeholders. Furthermore this chapter documents and gives rich insights into the obstacles stakeholders face in the process of developing their projects, while following their dreams and struggling to implement innovative projects. We will discuss the three elements that were experienced by 80% of the researchers during the confrontations, that we consider as common lessons learned from the confrontation process.

Co-creating to achieve transferability

In general, the practices were not fully replicable. But the case studies are useful to transfer positive experiences to other contexts and support the development of rural areas' needs. Through this, the stakeholder might be able to make early steps and create the conditions for initiatives to happen on its own. Practices used in the confrontations were sometimes in place for more than 5, even more than 10 years, therefore it is important to put the success into the time perspective and find the beginning of the thread, if we want to start anew. Instead of establishing a top-down approach, the solution proposed in most of the confrontations was to establish broad principles and adapt them to the new context vision, considering the available resources and using a collaborative process to involve the

stakeholders in the community and create their own narrative. In other words, some procedures of the best practices are transferable, but new initiatives need to be created from “bottom-up”.

The methodology used in the confrontations, which was presenting a practice to stakeholders of a different context, allowed to shed light on subjective elements that were not all evident from the initial practice research. The contextual differences identified and requiring adaptation were of different types: some confrontations were taken across national borders, others just took place in an intermediate area rather than a rural area, or vice-versa. Some were just within the same national boundaries but exploring a different geographic region with some different characteristics related to climate or urbanisation. No matter the degree of contextual diversity, differences in value systems were always present. This simple and obvious fact results in a natural barrier that can only be overcome with involvement of the participants. As it will be discussed later in this section, the collaboration of stakeholders of different types and at different levels is a critical factor to be able to re-create a path of success. Precisely, to combine presented initiatives with local specificity and resources seems to be the best way to design new plans with the stakeholders involved, to co-create innovations that a community needs and wants.

Let's take the opportunity to describe a bit more the contextual differences in need of attention, as well as the differences in value systems from members of the same community that require attention. Origin and age of the involved persons were often a reason for divergent opinions on the feasibility of certain initiatives. Preconceived ideas such as that rural newcomers are more individualistic than rural locals, and locals being less willing to work in collaboration is one example that could be expressed in the opposite way in another context. This means the tendency to collaborate cannot be solely expected from newcomers, but in some rural contexts it can be a specific characteristic of the local population. What the practices and the confrontations showed is that collaboration needs a base-ground of trust that needs to be constructed first. The differences in the collectivity spirit can be bridged by a facilitation and orchestration process led by a “seed planter”, the individual or collectivity with the leadership and pioneering skills so sought after.

The world view differences between rural population and urban newcomers that were present in some contexts also requires flexibility and adaptation in the process of implementing initiatives. For instance the “working landscape” of conventional rural dwellers in some contexts requires a different approach than the romantic, idealised view that newcomers might have from the rural landscape. Rural inhabitants often described newcomers as those that “do not want farming buildings neighbouring their properties (especially animal farming)”. Bringing together these different world views can be challenging, but it can also be a source of creative power and serve as a means to spark curiosity and generate a constructive exchange of ideas, based on the common ground of same interests. Practices initially created in more urban areas had a tendency to generate more barriers when presented in rural communities. This could be partially explained by the

fact that rural communities have a more conservative and sceptical attitude towards innovation. But it is important to highlight that the core idea of the innovative practice was always well received and started a creative process within the participating group.

Another form of expressing the necessity to reconstruct the case and co-create the process was less transactional and more narrative oriented. The confrontations showed that there is a need to localise, regionalize the narrative to adapt to the current context. Sometimes the need to overcome existing mistrust of collective initiatives is very strong. Finding an innovative solution that has a collective breath and respects the value systems of the involved persons is the first step. Involving relevant stakeholders and offering support to create solutions that reflect the reality of their context is crucial. For instance, industrial/intensive farming cooperatives operate in terms of conservative values and ways that will mostly hinder their capacity to overcome barriers, to innovate and contribute to rural regeneration. Farm collectives nowadays have more horizontal management and are more agile in their decisions. Much work remains to be done to sensitise older farmers about the possibility of transferring their land to family outsiders and specifically to collectives. Collective farms are in some contexts negatively perceived by the rural and agricultural world. They are considered “non-productive”, “sectarian” or “hippy”. Therefore it is necessary to connect these different ways of work and perceptions, to create a bridge between the different minded groups. Without this step it will be more difficult or impossible to set free the potential of transformation and increase the opportunities for the affected groups to be trusted, and as a consequence be able to take over a farm or initiate a diversification process.

The change of scale between a successful individual case and a prescription for a global policy or dynamic to promote it in a broader way is a difficult and complex undertaking. The timeline has to be evaluated and realistically planned, to take into consideration the time needed to work on and build human interactions. Scale up takes place over time, and the various actors have to become used to working together, form a system and develop a collective dynamic, to finally disseminate information and encourage others to follow.

All those statements relate to the fact that initiatives would be more successful if they are collectively generated or adapted by collective processes. Therefore even a recipe book will need to be rewritten to consider the locally available ingredients.

Once the seed is planted and the initiative starts to become a reality, it would be helpful to have systems in place to upscale sustainably in the future, ensuring organic growth and development of the context over years. As discussed in the previous topic, human capital is key, and so are the actors that initiate the innovation: identifying and supporting “early newcomers” that will pave the way for and attract others is a way to accelerate the “seeding of innovation”. Ensuring the first step of “re-activating” the community relationships, (re-)building a strong functional community requires qualified support and resources. This process we will discuss in the next topic.

Creating alliances and collaboration to jointly overcome obstacles

As already mentioned in connection with other topics on previous sections, collaboration is the core aspect of many solution approaches and proposals. Not one confrontation occurred without coming up with the requirement for some sort of coordinated interaction among different stakeholders. Although this topic was briefly introduced and mentioned in other sessions relating to human capital and to co-creation, we will now describe some of the examples that were explored. If vertical or horizontal, bottom-up or top-down, multi-stakeholder or just a network of same interests and like-minded people ... the breadth and depth of the proposed cooperation, networking, association or simple orchestration of efforts were very large and deep. Bottom-up collaboration relying on active participation by local citizens such as community centres run by volunteers for instance were among the most cited. Public-private collaboration was also presented in many forms and set as a requirement to generate strong and long-term impact. Stronger cooperation between diverse private organizations such as entrepreneurs, housing associations, sports associations, churches were mentioned as increasing the potential to create the level of engagement required in a community and make an initiative succeed.

Pooling efforts were not only meant on an individual basis. To expand the impact of limited resources the cooperation between neighbouring villages was also proposed as a means to facilitate the access to markets (for example for artisanal food, or art crafts) and to gain critical mass.

Considering the multi-stakeholder approach of our methodology, it is clear that collaboration struck over various types of actors also within the agricultural sector: among farmers, producers, retailers, consumers, authorities, entrepreneurs, and members of the farms' surrounding community. Most of the time the primary objective was to build strong community relations, but sometimes the cooperation proposed strived for solving a specific problem. We have mentioned in other parts of this report the key aspect of building communities for the purpose of creating a sense of pertaining. Dedicating means to develop these relations within communities is one of the key measures to foster innovation, rural regeneration and development.

Articulation, coordination and cooperation among independent regenerative actors was also a topic on the meta-level, being this interregional such as among different projects within a region, or within a country. International concerted effort, where existing organisations and stakeholders interested in promoting a topic - such as for example agroecological farming, support for successors, promotion of remote work in rural areas, or promotion of rural professions - would be connected and able to interchange knowledge and information.

The positive impact of collaboration can for instance be reflected on the size, diversity or improvement of the capacity to deal with increasing complexity of rural professions and increasingly global markets. The horizontal collaboration of various producers creates not

only the obvious advantages of security and stability through pooled financial resources, but also a more attractive and broader offering for consumers. Concerted effort from across the agroecological food and farming movement is needed if the interested parties ought to lobby for changes in the agricultural and rural development planning system. A collaborative solution approach to create environmental and agricultural policy and subsidy frameworks which support and prioritise community/ collective farms and farming at small scale - as opposed to industrial agriculture - was expressed as a strong wish.

Create a counterpart to the industrial/ intensive agriculture lobby

One of the specific targets of collaboration was liaised to the need to support and promote agroecology in general. Agroecology methods of agriculture being one of the pillars of many discussed initiatives. The powerful position of the conventional agriculture lobby, the current applied subsidy schemes and incentives, as well as the lack of trained educators and teachers in organic farming was indicated as a barrier to agroecological development. The lack of territorial cohesion and the high competitiveness of the farm business, especially among the long-established farmers, was mentioned as a factor hindering the potential for collaboration. Also the specific power dynamics in rural areas, where newcomers may want to establish agro-ecological farms, was indicated as an obstacle.

Therefore, a broad alliance of all alternative food systems movements was presented as a viable form to create a significant mass to counteract the power of industrial/ intensive agriculture and conventional food systems. Alternative food systems and movements with similar interests mentioned were regenerative agriculture, permaculture, Community-Supported Agriculture, organic / biodynamic, and vegan movement among others. Uniting these movements by creating a common denominator - for example ecological well being - would increase the strength of each singular movement and consolidate the intention around one voice. This would give the aggregated movement more power to face the establishment of industrial/ intensive agriculture. The direction of the pooled effort would not necessarily be confrontative, but would rather be constructive and striving for again identifying common interests, creating a common vision of what agriculture is and what are its objectives. To accelerate the takeup of agro-ecological forms of farming, strong benefits could be derived for dialogue and alliance of the industrial/ intensive and agroecological agriculture lobby. Involving the chamber of agriculture and other relevant political and governmental instances to jointly develop solutions would surely aggregate additional value. Specific measures were proposed, such as to organize workshops and round tables with these groups of stakeholders, to promote creative concepts, innovation and collaboration across the above-mentioned organizations.

Building up strong communities

Having the network structure would not be enough, as from an existing network something dynamic has to emerge. It is important to create a mixture of stability and connection, to allow small conflicts to take place among members of the network and to create the necessary tension as an engine to ignite human relations.

In practical terms, it would be important for individuals participating at the start-up phase to first map all local actors that they judge necessary to be engaged. Identifying a way that they get to know each other is a starting point before the establishment of relationships and the construction of a trustful broad community.

Documenting the knowledge about and facilitating the know-how transfer of stakeholder engagement and community building initiatives would be at the core of a comprehensive set of measures to foster rural development initiatives. During the confrontations we were not able to explore the exact content of such a “community building” program, but among other important elements it was mentioned the “how to” define the problem, “how-to” identify the common denominator among different group views and “how to” make this common interest a central aspect. Allowing the expression of diverse territorial visions, to use prospective scenarios and enable actors to “project” themselves and identify their own responsibility in the future of the community were some of the methods presented. A platform on ‘how-to’ develop community initiatives was proposed as a solution to collect all the knowledge available and to present tools helping communities to start their process of community building.

Because the solutions are multi-faceted, involve actions on different levels and ask for coordination among different groups of stakeholders, dialogue between the groups is necessary. Meant is the dialogue between organic and conventional farmers, educators and traditional farming networks, and civil and public servants, between cereal farmers, market gardeners and other landowners, between the agricultural world and local elected officials, involving local authorities in the governance of a concrete agricultural project, etc. All those interactions require qualified and targeted facilitation and orchestration. Rural development consultants with all sets of skills previously discussed would be in the front, offering the necessary support to achieve this objective.

The whole field of advancing rural human capital building also requires intensified collaboration among industrial/ intensive and agroecological agriculture schools, to develop an integrated, “ecologized” curriculum covering both farming approaches. We will address this topic and other types of “knowledge” and “how-to” platforms later in this section.

What was voiced was the general need for alliances, partnerships and collaboration from all stakeholders involved, leveraging available resources, overcoming potential rivalries and competition between specific groups in order to generate integrative approaches and to maximize the positive outcomes of a transformation.

Building human capital

Even though flexibility, improvisation and adaptation was a clear need from the stakeholders in the confrontation context, their thirst for information and know-how was as well an important desire that would lead to an efficient way of reaching success.

One-way knowledge transfer

The myriad of “how-tos” that were identified, provide important hints for the direction of the first-steps that support the replication of the initiatives: ‘How-to settle as a remote worker’; ‘How to communicate better’ (for farmers); ‘How-to’ for newbies in the country-side; ‘How-to’ for community based farming; ‘How-to’ for consumer-producer coop (“Consumer-Producer Cooperative Academy”); ‘How-to develop community initiatives’; ‘How-to go to market and establish a brand’; ‘How-to’ and methodology to develop collaboration between farmers; ‘How-to farm’ for people of all ages, ethnicities and experience levels; ‘How-to certify my product’. The list is non-exhaustive but very rich.

It was not the scope of the confrontations to explore the content of such knowledge-databases. Neither was it the scope to make a prioritisation that leads to the implementation of any of these suggestions. Nevertheless, this is clearly an interesting aspect to focus on in further research.

Peer-to-peer learning opportunities

In addition to knowledge databases there were many expressions leading to the creation of hubs, platforms and networks for learning, as well as the exchange of proposals and knowledge. For instance regional, national or European support to the creation of centres, offices or digital platforms for project initiators would be welcome. These platforms of peers would help change-makers more easily to find information and support for developing their ideas and implementing their projects. The platforms could make use of technology and cultivate opportunities to support participative learning, participative project planning, coordination of projects, knowledge exchange and networking among peers and within agricultural sector members. There could also be platforms for “wanna-bees” to establish networks of collective farms.

The mutualised knowledge and peer-to-peer support could have some impact reducing the need for business advisors and consultants. Specially the task to develop a business plan and request project funds, in a centralised, understandable, and informative way, can save a lot of time and effort for the project initiators and allow them to focus their resources on the more specialised tasks. The focus on knowledge exchange and sharing is especially important in farming. It provides for more effective learning and skills outcomes than one-way knowledge transfer.

The hubs could offer access to peers with experience in some critical areas. For instance a farmer that has successfully gone through the process of passing his farm over to the successors can be a highly valued mentor for other retiring farmers and their successors. Other topics that could benefit from peer-to-peer learning and knowledge transfer are the

request for project funds and subsidies, applying for certification, developing a business plan for product diversification and the transition to organic agriculture practices, just to mention a few.

Different spaces of engagement for successors

One of the practices researched offered in itself the basic approach to solve some of the training aspects identified in other confrontations. It focuses on a combination of different types of training, such as small groups, study trips and some larger events. Farmers may take part in public, larger training events but then join smaller training groups for continuous learning⁷. This format could be further expanded by networking activities, such as group visits to farmers fairs to promote the intergenerational connection between the existing, older farming generation and the upcoming one. Potentially more informal 'spaces of engagement' could be added, such as the social place of farming and the family itself. Also schools could be a further space of engagement. Activity in schools would support the objective of making rural professions more visible and attractive, for instance by raising awareness and interest in farming as a profession, that could increase the attractiveness of the farming activity for the potential successor well before the time of transfer arrives.

The role of agroecological education

As mentioned in other sections, agroecological farming was at the core of many practices used during the confrontations. It is clear that the specific knowledge linked to the practice of agroecology is a critical factor to advance any type of initiative that relies on implementing a form of agroecological production. The demand for agroecological products, as well as the demand for the production of such goods is a positive trend (see 4.5 Trend Report). We have identified that lacking educational opportunities in this sector is a barrier in many European contextes. Because one of the many reasons for this was the scarcity of educators and teachers, there were proposals to solve this potential issue. Among them was the proposal to create a "train-the-trainer" program, in universities, schools and elsewhere, where the future educators are forming and emerging. It was also proposed to have a closer look in the curriculum of universities to systematically include agroecology and content that aligns environmental, economical and socio-cultural new realities. Attractive training and continuous education offerings for vocational school teachers in the conventional sector would also help overcome the current limitation. Important is that educators and teachers are motivated to continuously develop their knowledge.

Expanding the view from traditional education, one could think of other options to increase the learning opportunities and incentivise students for their dedication to the

⁷ Ruuska, P. (2021)

subject. Some of them are (a) to integrate organic agriculture as workshops within the conventional farming education program, (b) to identify organic farms that are willing to become partners and hubs of expertise, (c) to develop supplementary school offerings, (d) to offer Governmental financial support for adults interested in professional transition towards agroecology, (e) to increase financial support for students during their education and training and (f) to provide conventional farmers with examples of successful conversion stories, in the form of biographies of progressive farmers that have succeeded in the transition.

Accelerating the spread of farm collectives

The exchange of information between articulated advisory organisations was proposed as a means to accelerate the creation of farm collectives and community supported agriculture. By preventing a lack of knowledge, the exchange would create synergies and allow to support collectives with the skills and methods, and to orient them towards the most appropriate support organisation.

This type of external facilitation can be an important asset to make the most of a collective. As mentioned above, another idea is to set up a learning platform and provide networking possibilities to exchange knowledge and experiences between peers.

2.4 Quick wins and low hanging fruits

To confront people with topics that they are not naturally inclined to deal with or at least not interested in at a certain point in time, raises a barrier that can be subsequently overcome by curiosity and the intellectual challenge of coming up with solutions. It ends up generating sudden insight and proves to be very creative. Participants realize that there is still untapped potential in their own region, while creative new initiatives are envisaged. Through the lively exchange between different stakeholders, information is cascaded and processed, unveiling new opportunities for relations and actions to be explored.

The actions that were planned to be undertaken as a result of the workshops are listed per confrontation in the table below.

NC3: Culture festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One particular benefit of the workshop was to show that the local LEADER group is very well prepared to support initiatives of residents. ● The discussion about identifying and encouraging newcomers to share their visions and resources in common work have sown a seed of new approach to the problem.
NC5: Artisans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The residents of Nowina have clearly used the confrontation workshop to reflect their own community. ● The idea of pooling resources with other villages seems to have caught traction and might be exploited in the future. ● Moreover, joint reflection on the role of early newcomers have contributed to even more integration within the community.
NE1: Martinyka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inspired by the debate and by the positive action and energy behind the Farma Martynika, stakeholders put the basis for an informal network to take

	local action in promoting the region especially in the lines of potential new entrants.
NE2 Herrenboeden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several participants in the event were interested in continuing the conversations around community farms and deepening the connections made with each other after the event had finished • A Slack channel was set up as a first step.
NE6 Farm collectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring a network of collective farms to further support the emergence of this practice in the Occitanie region.
NE7 Rural professions association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAMK University is ready to explore the possibilities for getting public funding for the initial steps of the project and running the project if it gets funded.
NE8 Versailles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the existing alliance, increase community involvement
SC1 Farm diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings between local agricultural agencies and the regional one to increase collaboration of the inter-island's government.
SC2 Trobades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a successors network and run round tables for peer-to-peer support
SC4 Coutances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Bildungstag" – an education day- congregating educators from all orientations (organic and industrial/ intensive farming) to discuss the future of agricultural education was an honourable objective to be set for the near future.

Table 6: Actions planned to be undertaken as a result of the workshops

One additional gain from the exercise of conducting the 20 confrontations and cross-analysing the findings was that some of the proposed solutions in certain confrontations were the core innovation from another practice. We could consider that the prototype of the proposed solution already exists in another promising practice. For instance, one of the solutions proposed to lift some barriers related to farm successors was the creation of a network and knowledge base on farm succession, with the possibility to create peer-to-peer interaction and knowledge sharing among potential farm successors in a given region. A big part of this work is already being implemented in the ELINA project in Finland and documented in the FI8B practice. Its transferability was the focus of the confrontation SC5, but the requirements for such a practice came up in SC1 and SC2 while discussing farming diversification practices with successors. One could imagine that a follow-up workshop with the stakeholders of SC1 and SC2 to present the FI8B would be the right seed to be thrown on a fertile soil.


Another example of low hanging fruit is the stronger dissemination of the LEADER project. It seems that in many contexts this resource is available in the form of human capital and financial means, but that the majority of the potential beneficiaries are not aware of the possibility to apply for such funds. Since the presence of a strong community to embrace the initiative was mentioned as a barrier in confrontations NC3, NC4, NC5, NE3, NE4 and NE8,

one could imagine a specific support to these communities delivered by LEADER consultants in facilitating the process of community building. Although LEADER consultants may facilitate the process theoretically, in fact different LAGs have different topics of priority. In some regions it was underlined by stakeholders that the LAG consultants were not available to support youths or that they are mainly involved in solving bureaucratic issues. It would be important to define overarching goals to align a portion of the efforts from LAGs consultants to support/promote territorial animation.

“Territorial farms” are another example of a solution that can address various of the obstacles identified in many confrontation contexts. The term stays for a CSA farm located near an urban centre. They can address issues such as urban proximity, market availability for differentiated products as well as pooled infra-structure and learning facilities to accelerate the dissemination of agroecological farming methods.

3. Factsheets

The aim of the confrontations were to evaluate the potential transferability of innovative practices from one successful context into another, less successful one. The findings of this process could help interested subjects in identifying (a) the critical factors required for achieving the most impact from initiatives in a given region. By further evaluating the presence or the absence of the critical factor in its own region, the reader will be able to define obstacles for success, or barriers. Once the barriers are identified, page two of the factsheet provides for (b) creative solutions and measures to be undertaken to potentially lift the encountered barriers. The solutions were classified among other criteria by their (c) level of intervention. The findings of the research were grouped by geographic location where the research took place, assuming some similarities of the rural context at least based on geography and climate. Those regions are **Northern Europe**, containing England, Finland and Ireland; **Southern Europe**, containing Italy and Spain; **Eastern Europe**, containing Hungary, Poland and Romania; and **Central Europe**, containing Belgium, France, Germany and The Netherlands.



RURAL INNOVATION - I

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Northern Europe?

The RURALIZATION project aims to contribute to the development of a new rural frontier. Based on the premise that rural regeneration is needed to create opportunities for new generations of existing and future rural inhabitants, the RURALIZATION project aims to promote rural innovation. Rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and farm successors are key players for bringing innovation of various domains into rural areas.

We confronted stakeholders in Northern Europe with four promising innovative practices and identified the critical factors for its successful transferability, as well as measures to remove barriers that change-makers may encounter.

Critical factors to facilitate rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and successors in promoting generational renewal and innovation in Northern Europe.

(a) Critical factors to promote innovation in the domains of collaboration & community building

- Presence of individual with leadership
- Presence of a functioning community or hub, to welcome newcomers, e.g. remote workers
- Availability of a range of different places and spaces for interaction and engagement of farm successors.


Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of farming

- Access to land for agriculture projects, secure for a suitable length of time for long-term agro ecological techniques
- Public support for farm successors that addresses both successor's and existing farmer's needs
- Appropriate training, information for farm successors to overcome the challenge of complexity.
- Peer-to-peer knowledge-exchange and learning opportunities for successors
- Availability of forums to discuss the farm succession topic as part of a wider set of farming challenges
- Active and early targeting of potential successors to ensure availability of successors, e.g. by encouraging their return after education leave.


Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of education

- Cooperation between farms, other rural enterprises and their stakeholders to communicate the forms of rural livelihoods to the youth, to the education system and to the surrounding society.
- Appreciative attitude towards agriculture
- Understanding of "rural" as a broader concept than just traditional professions and rural livelihood.

For more information please refer to the project website: www.ruralization.eu - and to the deliverables of WPS 'Rural new comers and new entrants into farming'.



*The project RURALIZATION has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement N°817642.



RURAL INNOVATION - I

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Northern Europe?

Do critical factors presented represents barriers in your context?

Check some of the possible solutions that actors (farmers, local authorities, local youth, and civil society organisations) in Northern Europe proposed to overcome barriers at different intervention levels

(b)

Measure	Action to be taken by	Leverage level	Target audience
Seeking external funding to subsidise coop membership and make it more accessible	The coordinating organisation of community farms	Local, regional and national	NGOs and funders
Addressing structural inequality in agriculture, so that farmers from diverse backgrounds can enter the industry and thrive	Farming organisations, educational/training institutions providing some farms, funders	Local, regional and national	NGOs, farmer networks, farms and funders
Engaging with the planning sector/policy to simplify and reform policy around building on agricultural land	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals	National	NGOs, farmers' organisations, planners and planning policy-makers
Approaching landowners to access even small parcels of land for community farms	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local landowners	Local/regional	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local landowners
Setting up an umbrella organisation for community farms in England, with a focus on land acquisition and local/regional and national level	Farmers organisations, NGOs	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations, NGOs
More guidance available for business planning for agroecological and community farm initiatives	Farmers organisations/NGOs, perhaps with support from financial institutions	National	Farmers organisations, NGOs
Engaging with councils to get more access to council land/land for community enterprises/initiatives	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local councils	Local/regional	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local councils
Productively challenging ideas of the countryside as purely a space of recreation, leisure and a productive landscape	Farmers organisations, NGOs, new entrants, community members interested in setting up community farms	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations, NGOs, new entrants, community members interested in setting up community farms
Providing adequate accommodation for farmers and their families on site	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals, local councils	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals/policy-makers, local councils
Re-define farmer retirement and develop measures to support this new definition	Governments, policy makers, farmers involved in process of re-definition	National and European	Farmers close to retirement and 'retired'
Provide incentives to encourage participation in succession training and information programmes	Governments, policy makers	National and European	Farmers - successor and existing farmer
Design succession training and information programmes to encompass peer to peer learning and delivery to both formal learning and more informal social phases of learning. Farm viability also a key topic to address.	Collaborative, multi actor approach involving stakeholders and public bodies	Regional, national	Farmers - successor and existing farmer
Longer term approach to succession policy. Succession question is a continuous part of farm planning. Also provide space in policy design for measures to be tailored to individual farm needs	Governments, policy makers	National and European	Policy makers, Government
Direct supports to increase the number of female farm successors	Governments, policy makers	National and European	Female farm successors
Supports to encourage the return of potential successors who have left rural areas to pursue education and work elsewhere	Governments, policy makers	National and European	Potential successors
Support a more age-friendly farming environment where the social needs of ageing farmers are better addressed	Governments, policy makers, NGOs, farmer cooperatives	Local, regional, National	Farmers close to retirement and 'retired'
Provide financial assistance to use professional services (e.g. solicitors, mediators) that assist with succession planning	Governments, policy makers	National and European	All farmers
Improve broadband network - it is needed everywhere	Public bodies, private firms	Local, regional and national	Existing and potential rural establishments
Strengthen remote work culture	NGOs	Local, regional and national	Potential remote workers

(c)

groups, tiers at

Figure 3: Factsheets content



RURAL INNOVATION - I

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- Peer-to-peer knowledge-exchange and learning opportunities for successors
- Availability of forums to discuss the farm succession topic as part of a wider set of farming challenges
- Active and early targeting of potential successors to ensure availability of successors, e.g. by encouraging their return after education leave.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of education

- Cooperation between farms, other rural enterprises and their stakeholders to communicate the forms of rural livelihoods to the youth, to the education system and to the surrounding society.
- Appreciative attitude towards agriculture
- Understanding of "rural" as a broader concept than just traditional professions and rural livelihood.

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RURAL INNOVATION - I

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Do critical factors presented represents barriers in your context?

Check some of the possible solutions that actors (farmers, local authorities, local action groups, rural youth, and civil society organisations) in Northern Europe proposed to remove barriers at different intervention levels

Measure	Action to be taken by	Leverage level	Target audience
Seeking external funding to subsidise coop membership and make it more accessible	The coordinating organisation of community farms	Local, regional and national	NGOs and funders
Addressing structural inequality in agriculture, so that farmers from diverse backgrounds can enter the industry and thrive	Farming organisations, educational/training institutions (including some farms), funders	Local, regional and national	NGOs, farmers' networks, farms and funders
Engaging with the planning sector/policy to simplify and reform policy around building on agricultural land	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals	National	NGOs, farmers' organisations, planners and planning policy-makers
Approaching landowners to access even small parcels of land for community farms	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local landowners	Local/regional	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local landowners
Setting up an umbrella organisation for community farms in England, with a focus on land acquisition and local/regional and national level democratic structures	Farmers organisations, NGOs	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations, NGOs
More guidance available for business planning for agroecological and community farm initiatives	Farmers organisations/NGOs, perhaps with support from financial institutions	National	Farmers organisations, NGOs
Engaging with councils to get more access to council farmland for community enterprises/initiatives	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local councils	Local/regional	Farmers organisations, NGOs, community members interested in setting up community farms, local councils
Productively challenging ideas of the countryside as purely a space of recreation, towards also being a productive landscape	Farmers organisations, NGOs, new entrants, community members interested in setting up community farms	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations, NGOs, new entrants, community members interested in setting up community farms
Providing adequate accommodation for farmers and their families on site	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals, local councils	Local, regional and national	Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals/policy-makers, local councils
Re-define farmer retirement and develop measures to support this new definition.	Governments, policy-makers, farmers involved in process of re-definition	National and European	Farmers close to retirement and 'retired'
Provide incentives to encourage participation in succession training and information programmes	Governments, policy-makers	National and European	Farmers - successor and existing farmer
Design succession training and information programmes to encompass peer to peer learning and delivery in both formal training and more informal social places of farming. Farm viability also a key topic to address.	Collaborative, multi-actor approach involving stakeholders and public bodies	Regional, national	Farmers - successor and existing farmer
Longer-term approach to succession policy. Succession question is a continuous part of farm planning. Also provide space in policy design for measures to be tailored to individual farm needs.	Governments, policy-makers	National and European	Policymakers, Government
Direct supports to increase the number of female farm successors	Governments, policy-makers	National and European	Female farm successors
Supports to encourage the return of potential successors who have left rural areas to pursue education and work elsewhere.	Governments, policy-makers	National and European	Potential successors
Support a more age-friendly farming environment where the social needs of ageing farmers are better addressed	Governments, policy-makers, NGOs, farmer cooperatives	Local, regional, National	Farmers close to retirement and 'retired'
Provide financial assistance to use professional services (e.g. solicitors, mediators) that assist with succession planning	Governments, policy-makers	National and European	All farmers
Improve broadband network - it is needed everywhere	Public bodies, private firms	Local, regional and national	Existing and potential rural inhabitants
Strengthen remote work culture	NGOs	Local, regional and national	Potential remote workers



RURAL INNOVATION - II

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Southern Europe?

The RURALIZATION project aims to contribute to the development of a new rural frontier. Based on the premise that rural regeneration is needed to create opportunities for new generations of existing and future rural inhabitants, the RURALIZATION project aims to promote rural innovation. Rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and farm successors are key players for bringing innovation of various domains into rural areas.

We confronted stakeholders in Southern Europe with three promising innovative practices and identified the critical factors for its successful transferability, as well as measures to remove barriers that change-makers may encounter.

Critical factors to facilitate rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and successors in promoting generational renewal and innovation in Southern Europe.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domains of collaboration & community building

- Availability of basic services (education, health, access to housing, land, transport, digital connection)
- Presence of collaborative culture
- Possibility of recovery and use of abandoned buildings
- Pro-active role of the Municipality and fund-raising capacity
- Economic activities jointly managed by local municipality, entrepreneurs and citizens
- Rural development agencies and local and regional administration promote territorial animation and support youths in entering into farming
- Presence of new entrants interested in developing collective farming projects
- Many socio cultural organisations present and active in the local context
- Integration of migrants, refugee and asylum seekers.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of farming

- Access to land for multifunctional and organic farming, and use of abandoned land for agriculture
- Rural extensions services to facilitate access to subsidies and to support and accompaniment for farmers who receive grants (especially after the first year in which they start a business)
- Farmers willing to diversify products and adopt a multifunctional approach (especially leisure services in tourist areas where experiential tourism is becoming a trend)
- Short supply chains (local farmer's markets, Food Policy Pacts)
- New entrants have an agroecological and multifunctional approach to farmland
- Many small agro ecological initiatives are emerging and cooperate amongst them.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of education

- New generations with different skills, knowledge and backgrounds that wish to remain or return to the local context
- Facilitate access to education, especially those courses that can be useful for farm successors and new entrants: entrepreneurship, ecological productions, certifications, access to grants and advice, digital and commercial skills
- Formal, informal and non formal learning promoting agroecology.

For more information please refer to the project website: www.ruralization.eu - and to the deliverables of WP5 'Rural new comers and new entrants into farming'.



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RURAL INNOVATION- II

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Southern Europe?

Do critical factors presented represents barriers in your context?

Check some of the possible solutions that actors (farmers, local authorities, local action groups, rural youth, and civil society organisations) in Souther Europe proposed to remove barriers at different intervention levels

Measure	Action to be taken by	Leverage level	Target audience
Social innovation laboratories and territorial animation facilitating community dynamics and re-building of community belonging	Local Councils, LAGs, ONGs/ local association	Local	Rural youths, local communities' members interested in promoting innovative local project
Fostering cooperatives values through a public-private collaboration project that support the creation and consolidation of social and solidarity economy projects (e.g. Ponent Coopera - https://ponentcoopera.cat)	Regional Governments, NGOs, local association, Cooperatives, Farmers organizations, Universities	Regional	Cooperatives, farmers, rural youths, interested local communities' members
Re-activate basic services and cultural facilities to attract newcomers and encourage the remain of youths in rural areas (involving community cooperatives/ entrepreneurs in their management in order to reduce the municipality's operative costs)	Governments, policy-makers, local councils, ONGs/local associations, entrepreneurs	Local, regional, national	Local communities, rural new comers
Promote preventive awareness-raising and communication work with local community for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees	Local councils, NGOs	Local	Local communities
Develop networking and synergies amongst social initiatives and agroecological ones to develop common narrative on rural areas and to promote initiatives with collective breath.	Farmers, NGOs/local associations,	Local	New comers, new entrants into farming, rural youths, local communities
Promote local food systems (e.g. Creation of local markets at municipal level; platforms to share the means to distribute agroecological products; shared use of food transformation infrastructures; public spaces consume local and organic food - green public procurement; food policy plan)	Farming organisations, local councils, farmers, NGOs/local association	Local, regional	Farmers, local communities
Favour access to land by enhancing the role of the municipality as guarantor for the lease of abandoned land for organic cultivation	Local councils, Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals	Local, regional	New entrants into farming, rural youths, farmers
Promote regional policies to favour land access (e.g. regional law to support the creation of "Associazione Fondiaria"/land Bank)	Policy makers, regional governments	Regional	New entrants into farming, rural youths, interested farmers, landowners
Training civil servants to enhance the fund-raising capacities of the municipalities to promote rural regenerative projects (e.g. to restore public buildings and public facilities)	Local councils, governments, education/training institutions	Regional, national	Civil servants
Re-use of restored public buildings to open craft shops; for tourism activities/accommodation; economic and social activities	Local councils, NGOs/ Associations	Local	Rural youths, new comers, interested local communities' members
Creation of an information desk/advisory office to support youths/farmers for accessing public funds, solving bureaucratic issues and informing on opportunities connected to multifunctional farming and agroecology	Local councils, LAGs, farmers organisations, planning professionals	Local/regional	Rural youths, local communities' members and interested farmers
Raising awareness on natural values and on the ultimate goals of sustainable farming by improving the relationship between environmental associations and farmers with an agroecological sensitivity	Environmental associations, farmers, farmers organisations, NGOs	Local, regional	Farmers
Implementation of a new hall- mark for those farming projects that go beyond an organic certification and that undertake other impactful measures in environmental and social terms, opening new markets for added-value products	Policy makers, Governments, NGOs/associations	Local, regional, national, european	Farmers
Specialized education/training courses on multifunctional and agroecological farming	Education systems, Farmers organisations/NGOs and planning professionals	Local, regional and national	New entrants into farming, rural youths, interested farmers
Creation of a digital platform/a regional center to disseminate informations and support local project participative planning	Regional Governments, policy-makers, LAGs	Regional, National	Municipalities, local communities
Design succession training/new entrants training and information programmes to encompass peer to peer learning and delivery in both formal educational system and informal learning	Farmers organisations, ONGs, education/training institutions	Regional, National	Farmers successors, new entrants into farming, farmers



RURAL INNOVATION - III

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Eastern Europe?

The RURALIZATION project aims to contribute to the development of a new rural frontier. Based on the premise that rural regeneration is needed to create opportunities for new generations of existing and future rural inhabitants, the RURALIZATION project aims to promote rural innovation. Rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and farm successors are key players for bringing innovation of various domains into rural areas.

We confronted stakeholders in Eastern Europe with five promising innovative practices and identified the critical factors for its successful transferability, as well as measures to remove barriers that change-makers may encounter.

Critical factors to facilitate rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and successors in promoting generational renewal and innovation in Eastern Europe.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domains of collaboration & community building

- Balance between collective organisation (with appropriate division of tasks) and strong leadership (often embodied by individual leaders). Strong leadership often related to the presence of newcomers.
- Welcoming community for new inhabitants
- Rural community interest and openness to hosting cultural events
- Purpose, scale and character of cultural activities have to match local needs
- Broadband internet connection
- Spirit of cooperation among stakeholders
- Available local community networks to support newcomers social life
- Ability to run achieve synergies among different actions.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of farming

- Presence of and access to markets for agro ecological and artisanal products
- Access to land for organic production and presence of agro ecological farmers
- Farmers ability to develop a brand
- Ability to exercise quality control over organically produced goods

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of education

- Ability to attract and mobilise human capital
- Presence of agro ecology and regenerative farming knowledge
- Presence of community oriented education on topics such as alternative, agroecological farming

For more information please refer to the project website: www.ruralization.eu – and to the deliverables of WP5 ‘Rural new comers and new entrants into farming’.



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RURAL INNOVATION - III

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Eastern Europe?

Do critical factors presented represents barriers in your context?

Check some of the possible solutions that actors (farmers, local authorities, local action groups, rural youth, and civil society organisations) in Eastern Europe proposed to remove barriers at different intervention levels

Leverage level/ Proposal originated by	Local	Regional	National	European
Farmers and landworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Information network, community building •Activities linking non-formal education and on-farm educational courses by local NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More information and knowledge •Support for establishing regional food supply chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Access to the land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Capacity building
Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Community building, network, trust development •Support for early newcomers who can then serve as mentors for the subsequent ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More local producer (suitable for demands) •Stimulating the process of immigration to rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More suitable legal and organizational forms, education •Stimulating the process of immigration to rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Stimulating the process of immigration to rural areas
Civil & public servants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Community building, network, trust development •Taking the leading role in organizing local events •Engaging local actors to help with event organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Network building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Suitable grants, information, education •Broadband internet connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge building
Private organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Using local rather than supralocal resources for organizing local events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support for promoting local artisanal products in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support for producers (both farmers and artisans) •Promoting agroecology concept in food production and landscape management 	



RURAL INNOVATION - IV

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Central Europe?

The RURALIZATION project aims to contribute to the development of a new rural frontier. Based on the premise that rural regeneration is needed to create opportunities for new generations of existing and future rural inhabitants, the RURALIZATION project aims to promote rural innovation. Rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and farm successors are key players for bringing innovation of various domains into rural areas.

We confronted stakeholders in Central Europe with six promising innovative practices and identified the critical factors for its successful transferability, as well as measures to remove barriers that change-makers may encounter.

Critical factors to facilitate rural newcomers, new entrants into farming and successors in promoting generational renewal and innovation in Central Europe.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domains of collaboration & community building

- Available buildings & facilities: housing for new inhabitants, collective work locations, childcare, primary schools, local sports or cultural associations for social interaction and high level of digital interconnectivity
- Dialogue between organic and conventional farmers; dialogue between cereal farmers and market gardeners; dialogue between the agricultural world and local elected officials
- Collaborative culture, tight collaboration between local civil society organisations, presence of functional local/regional networks.

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of farming

- Available market for agro ecological goods: purchasing power, food literacy
- Presence or agro ecological "scene": apprenticeship, schools, training opportunities, AE farmers
- Political will to support and accelerate implementation of innovative initiatives, such as AE farming
- Goodwill of traditional land owners and availability of suitable land for small farms and collectives
- Legal forms to support collective farming
- Available food processing facilities (buildings, machinery) and know-how to operate them
- Available external counselling for farmers: farming issues, business planing, collaborative work

Critical factors to promote innovation in the domain of education

- Political will to advance the sustainable transition to agro ecology
- Intense collaboration among all conventional farming and AE education systems

For more information please refer to the project website: www.ruralization.eu – and to the deliverables of WP5 'Rural new comers and new entrants into farming'.



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RURAL INNOVATION - IV

What it takes to foster innovation in rural contexts in Central Europe?

Do critical factors presented represents barriers in your context?

Check some of the possible solutions that actors (farmers, local authorities, local action groups, rural youth, and civil society organisations) in Central Europe proposed to remove barriers at different intervention levels

Leverage level/ Proposed by	Local	Regional	National	European
Farmers and landworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching for interpersonal dynamics • Recalling common inspiration • Built good structural organization to facilitate dialogues among different stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support to create solid access to land • Develop farm incubators • Develop peer-to-peer farmer learning and mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic improvements to farmer's income • Lower administrative burden • Simplify extensive regulation • Facilitate housing for farmers • Payed internship or unemployment benefit during training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidy-schemes that support diversity, innovation and small-scale farming
Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm visits, village cafes to increase contact f from community with farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in accessibility for small villages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data-collection to evaluate current development of organic agriculture, • Demonstrate segments with shortage of organic supply • Include digital skills in school curriculum 	
Civil & public servants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a "nutrition council to increase population awareness of ecological and health benefits of agroecology • Investment in facilities and infrastructure, such as food processing infrastructure and local supply chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase governmental employees knowledge about agroecology • Develop coherent and sustainable territorial food policy and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationwide optical fiber networks to increase digital connectivity • Planning policy to foster integrative planing • Deploy new land solutions: land financing, progressive land transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build networks of exchange and expertise with researchers
Private organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage bottom-up innovation with projects funds to increase pioneerism and innovation. • Promote integration of newcomers • Promote remote work within companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration among conventional and AE education institutions. • Continuous education for vocational teachers about AE farming. • Investment in digital connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance among movements of similar interest (regenerative agriculture, permaculture, CSA, byodynamic, vegan, etc.) and farmers organizations, chamber of agriculture. • Financial support for farmers during transition to AE farming. 	

4. Discussion

4.1 General thoughts related to action research

In this section we will elaborate on the topic of implementing measures to solve complex and systemic problems. The importance of considering the cause and effect, as well as the right point of intervention will be briefly addressed.

Turning vicious into virtuous circle is critical for establishing sustainable solutions

The numerous hindering obstacles that we have pointed out in preceding chapters are interconnected. Through this interdependency, improvements regarding one factor may have positive effects on other ones. Through various confrontations, in various types of contexts, in different countries and touching almost all innovation types, we could observe this kind of vicious circle that could be turned into a virtuous one.

As follows we describe some examples. The absence of a favourable economic environment in rural areas, capable of adequately remunerating new economic activities, is one of the barriers influencing the launch of some activities. In order to increase the sales of diverse and high quality products, a higher buying power of the local population would be desirable. But to generate a higher buying power, more successful local employers are needed, offering job opportunities for better qualified employees, paying higher salaries and thus allowing in turn to rely on the local market as their customers. If the local economy is characterised by a weak local buying power, it is necessary to generate more qualified employment, to increase the local buying power. This would in turn make the local market more attractive to other entrepreneurial actions and motivate more local businesses to set up. More newcomers would generate more demand for better products!

Another paradoxical example is the following: proving farm activities is required to get the permission to build farm and housing buildings on farming land, but in order to establish as a farmer and prove farm activity a new arrived farmer needs housing and building. Therefore: there should be established an easier and forward looking way to prove connection to farming activity and to allow for the construction of the necessary infrastructure. This would increase the possible number of new farmers.

To add one more example we can mention the metropolitan vicinity. This is generally considered a threat to rural areas. If we consider the increasing demand from urban populations for food produced “locally” or at least as close as possible to the area where they live, metropolitan areas become an opportunity. The areas surrounding urban centers could become again the origin of their name: “Urb” designated originally towns that were walled and protected dwellers from outside dangers. In the future we could define “Urbs” as centers protected by a circle of surrounding farms that would provide them with the necessary natural goods for a healthy living, like in Paris in the beginning of

the 19th century. Instead of competing with housing projects that increase the price of land and considerably complicate the installation of new farmers, agricultural land would become highly valued for producing the most sought after goods that the urban population wants to buy. Through collective land ownership farmers would be highly desirable partners to work on this land and produce the biodiversity, organic food and artisanal goods to nourish the urban population it encloses. Therefore metropolitan proximity should not be viewed as a barrier, due to the real estate and housing market pressure, but much more as a critical success factor to have established demand for high quality agricultural products! However, it should be noted that local policy makers, planning authorities and economic players need to be involved in such a suburban farming concept to be successful.

Last but not least, there is the idea that the presence of newcomers is beneficial to a context and attracts more newcomers that in turn help to increase the attractiveness of the area and consequently start new initiatives. The virtuous cycle of “newcomers – new initiatives – more newcomers” is a clear objective to be achieved to set innovation and regeneration in motion. It starts with attracting newcomers.

Finding the right point of intervention, fast versus slow, top-down versus bottom-up

To identify the most impactful intervention point to change those dynamics is definitely a subject for further research, recommendations and action. Maybe not having a local market is not a cause, but the consequence of not producing higher quality goods. The lack of innovative activities can be the cause and not the consequence of the absence of a market, and as such, of better remunerated employment conditions. Political measures, subventions and aid need to be designed at the right level to break this vicious circle and allow for more local self-sufficiency and in case of isolated rural areas, less dependency from urban centers.

When searching for solutions it will be also important to identify the right direction and speed of intervention, in order to turn the vicious circles into virtuous circles of rural development.

Facilitation and orchestration would certainly be a strong asset to go beyond specific initiatives and towards building successful strong communities. While this would surely enable them to tackle any type of problem in collaboration and put forward solutions, those stakeholder engagement and facilitation tools can take time to be put in place and to show results. There needs to be a balance between achieving tangible and visible short term results to motivate the community and to continue to build on the creation of human capital, individual and collective, to create more resilient, organically growing rural communities.

4.2 New rurality

One of the key elements of the RURALIZATION research is the notion and concept of the RURALIZATION process. Where should it lead to? What should be the visual image of the “new rurality”? It was not an objective of this part of the research to answer this question, but obviously and naturally this topic arised by the simple fact of interacting with all the different stakeholders participating in the workshops, hearing their dreams, doubts, ideas, plans, visions and aspirations.

The members of the RURALIZATION team conducted an exercise where participating members were challenged to take a position in relation to a provoking statement. The statement was as follows:

“It is important to define new-rurality based on the needs of the rural inhabitants and avoid re-creating urban life in rural spaces.”

RURALIZATION team members involved at the confrontation research were able to express their thought, based on the impressions they collected during the confrontations, but also based on their own experience, personal or professional, in the way they themselves view and dream about the development of rural landscapes in Europe.

Therefore the next paragraphs are literally replications of their contributions. With the decision to not edit, cut, consolidate or reformulate them, we open the field for an upcoming in depth exchange within the whole team. We publish this extract as simple inspiration and food for thought. And look forward to the upcoming discussion as well as potentially future research about this fascinating topic.

“We should not hurt the livability in socially close-knitted rural communities, if newcomers are not willing to take part in social activities.”

“The question of how to productively challenge ideas of the countryside as purely a space of recreation, and the particular aesthetics which come along with these, needs to be addressed as part of rural regeneration. Rural/peri-urban areas should also be recognised as working environments, especially for small-scale farms which often seek to attract a local customer base and to reduce ‘food miles’.”

“The concept of ‘rural’ is more than just some traditional professions and livelihoods of rural areas.”

“Those young people who dream about rural futures want to adopt a rural lifestyle and live in the rural fabric; they are ready to accept less diversified local services than in the cities – the place matters and rural life should not be considered as a spatial extension of the urban.”

“If ‘urban life’ is understood as high levels of consumption, job specialization, pace of life, individualization - then I completely agree that trying to introduce such a model in rural areas is probably pointless and potentially harmful. However, there are some aspects of ‘urban life’ that could help in making rural areas thrive: the idea of cooperation, diversity, openness are all positive aspects of urbanity that seem beneficial for rural areas too.”

“This affirmation is particularly important because it implies that we must be careful (in our analyses) not to systematically oppose newcomers and rural people. These two populations often have different representations, but in order to promote the development of rural areas it is important to underline that they have common aspirations. Our case studies are promising because they manage to articulate the aspirations of rural populations and newcomers without distorting rural areas and rural way of life.”

“The new rurality must open up rural territories to new economic activities, for example, technological, artistic or cultural activities, promoting opportunities and new entrepreneurial initiatives in rural areas linked to technological innovation and ecology. The main ingredient of the recipe seems to be innovation and, above all, social innovation, which is nothing more than a more effective and efficient combination of the existing elements in the territory to solve social challenges. The narrative about depopulation and its problems must be changed and the focus must be placed on the enormous potential and opportunities offered by sparsely populated rural areas. The important role to be played by public-private partnerships in this whole issue is also particularly emphasised. Therefore, although it is important to define new-rurality based on the needs of the rural inhabitants and to avoid re-creating urban life in rural spaces, it is essential that these areas have the basic services and facilities of urban centres.”

“New-rurality arrives into a rural space with fresh, creative energy but also with different, sometimes novel expectations. In many instances these mix with the already entrenched cultural and geographical lifestyles creating a unique rural space in all its complexity moving away from the typologies of urban life. Conciliating these currents it is imperative that rural spaces develop on the needs and expectations of their inhabitants, both new and more established rurals.”

“Protection of rural lifestyle and rural characteristics are more important for urban newcomers than for many locals.”

“The process of ruralization shall be based on the idea that rural areas are different from urban areas, that people searching for a living in rural areas may be looking for something different than they had in the cities. We need also to take into consideration that there are already inhabitants in the rural areas that have kept tradition in place, that care for what they have, and do not want newcomers to arrive and just change the whole way of living, trying to replicate exactly what they have fled from.”

“It is important to create the right conditions for a rural life that respects not only rural inhabitants (who can be in some regions rather urban oriented than rural oriented), but that also respects and regenerates the land for the sake of the whole society. We should invest in people wanting to be guardians of the land, stimulate and support them, such as to create rural areas that are able to balance the city life and offer all essentials that nature brings us: safe food, fresh air, clean water, calming environments, beauty of landscapes, necessary biodiversity...”

“It is difficult to give a definitive assessment of the statement but we have outlined some broad thoughts in the context of our confrontation. NUIG confronted a practice from a predominantly urban area in a predominantly rural one, however there were similarities between both from a farming perspective. While the needs of rural and ‘urban’ inhabitants can differ and strongly merit different approaches, in some areas (sectors of the economy e.g. farming, groups of people e.g. women) they may also share needs and ways of life. The contexts NUIG analysed helped to highlight that there isn’t a clear division between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ life. The boundaries can be blurred. These comments are not at all to discount that they need separate attention, it is just in the context of our confrontation these are the ‘lessons’ we find emerging.”

“Although I can see some arguments in favour of this statement, I tend to reject it. This is mostly because I think that the mentioned contradiction between the needs of the rural inhabitants and not wanting to recreate urban life in rural spaces is false. In the Dutch confrontation, the ‘Countryside agenda’ of the Dutch Association of Rural Municipalities was mentioned quite some time. Although this agenda pays some tribute to remaining rural uniqueness, it mainly focuses on ‘levelling-up’ the countryside. Among other things, it suggests improvement of (digital) infrastructure, support for rural business parks, specific labour market policies to make working in rural areas more attractive, a higher level of care services and more opportunities for housing in rural areas. All of these topics are in the Dutch context better organised in urban than in rural areas. As such, it seems clear that the needs of rural inhabitants could also be fulfilled by bringing urban quality services and investments to rural areas. So, I do absolutely support the notion that new-rurality has to be defined based on the needs of rural inhabitants. However, I am not at all convinced that this means that the re-creation of urban life in rural spaces has to be excluded. Rural areas may profit from copying some urban practices, while still remaining unique.”

“It is important that rural lifestyles distinctively differ from urban ones in order to complement those with their specific strengths. Rural lifestyles tend to be more holistic, closer to nature, more collective while urban ones are more geared towards excellence, culture, creativity and individualism. An openness and exchange without a cultural dominance of one above the other should be aspired.”

“It is important to support the needs of the rural inhabitants to favour a participative approach in the definition of a new rurality.”

“This sentence doesn't reflect our experience in the confrontations, as these didn't highlight a strong opposition between rural and urban lifestyles. Rather, our confrontations put forward that a positive aspect of the good practices lies in the ‘hybridization’ of rural and urban needs and rural and urban cultures/ideas. For instance, confronting the Versailles plain case study in another area, we developed common arguments on the need to preserve agricultural/rural land close to cities. We highlighted the urban-rural interdependence with cities needing the food supply and ecosystem amenities supported by rural land, while farmers and rural inhabitants can benefit from the proximity of urban markets and community to support their activities. In the confrontation of the ‘farm collectives’ case-study, new entrants highlighted the attractiveness of some rural values such as autonomy, DIY, solidarity between neighbours, entrepreneurship. Yet these new entrants also raised the necessity to transform traditional agricultural modes of organisation and integrated into their collective farms knowledge from their urban background and studies (horizontal organisation, sociocracy, gender equality etc.). This ‘mix’ was deemed necessary to make the practice successful, both in integrating locally while also triggering renewal in the local area.”

“I think this sentence is a bit too binary - it presents ‘urban life’ and ‘rural life’ and the people who live in both circumstances as too separate and dissimilar, when if approached in terms of values or what makes a good life, there may well be certain things in common, perhaps such as ‘a sense of community’ or ‘access to green space’. I also think particular attention to getting the views/needs of a true cross-section of rural populations would be vital, not just the people who often hold power in existing forms of governance such as parish councils, in order that existing inequitable power dynamics are not re-entrenched in this process. For example, ensuring the views of younger people, Black people and People of Colour, people of all sexualities and genders and none, and lower income households, currently living in the countryside are heard. However, I think it would also likely be a real loss to completely discount the dreams or desires of people currently living in urban areas who want to build a life in the countryside in the future (including people who perhaps felt forced to move out of rural areas they grew up in to find work in cities etc) - it would be interesting to bring (again a cross-section) of these people into dialogue with existing rural communities to understand where each other are coming from and what it would take to build thriving rural communities together.”

“From my point of view it is true that a new-rurality should be defined. The majority of rural inhabitants in the EU are not part of ‘primary production’. So for most rural inhabitants rural space is rather a recreational space, which produces healthy food, than agricultural farmland that produces food to sustain the nutrition of a nation or sell agricultural products on the world market. Industrialised farming is not able to provide this demand on recreational space

and healthy food so far. So actually there is a huge potential for innovations on farming, but the cultural barriers between the (old) farming population and the other inhabitants of rural areas are still slowing this development down. Many of the promising practices show where starting points can be set, to create a more integrative rural space, where inhabitants and farmers come together.”

“Regarding the urban lifestyle I would not write ‘avoid re-creating urban life in rural spaces’. Maybe it would be better to write ‘integrate part of urban lifestyles into a new form of a ruralised way of living which integrates both the needs of the farming and the non-farming population’. But this is just a thought.”

5. Conclusions

The confrontation process created the possibility to explore the existing promising practices under a different contextual perspective thus shedding light in areas that the initial research was not able to do. Placing an innovative practice in a similar but nonetheless different geographic area made it possible to collect the ideas from stakeholders that were genuinely interested in the subject matter and willing to evaluate the given practice under the light of their own environment, experience and intentions.

The method has a strong capacity to move people out of their comfort zone and of their primary way of thinking. It provides an opportunity for participants to expand their horizons and to identify potential new development paths. By reflecting on their own community they become aware of their weaknesses. The creativity that is unleashed as a result of this process is capable to break internal barriers and to build new bridges to previously unknown aspects.

Taking the bird view perspective over all the different types of innovative initiatives we discussed, the general image that comes across is one of a multidimensional solution, asking for coordinated measures, orchestrated by a leader/leader group and involving many stakeholders. The vision to follow is not the one of a single dreamer, but ideally a vision developed in collaboration with a strong engaged community working towards a common goal for their living territory.

The multidimensional aspect also reflects the condition of complexity and contextual diversity. There is no one silver bullet solution for all problems and obstacles that new generations face when striving to realise their dreams in the rural countryside. The creativity and innovation arising from project initiators can probably not be linked to only one factor and has to be considered as systemic. It requires a multi-generational, multi-curricular process embedded in a collaborative environment, placed under the umbrella of a highly “hands-on” community. The ideal environment would resemble a big laboratory of ideas, operating as a workshop where different stakeholders can experiment and test new ideas, put them in place and verify its efficiency. With regard to the actors that need to be involved in order to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the application of innovative practices, the main actors highlighted were the local public administrations as promoters of rural development in general.

The new profile of the rural development agent is dramatically changed under this view: from being useful technicians who write projects they should become the ones that promote development in practice. Rural development agents could promote attractive areas, improve work plans, and promote initiatives adapted to the different realities. In general, both politicians and the administration are key players in promoting and boosting development. Lobby groups and private organisations, together with the government at local and regional level, are the fabric that has the capacity to overcome obstacles and succeed in implementing innovative practices that contribute to rural regeneration.

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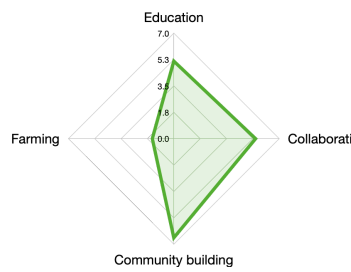
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Appendix 1: P10 Network of rural municipalities (The Netherlands, NC1)

Organising partner:	TU Delft	Innovation 
Practice:	Remote work as a promising practice to attract newcomers to rural areas (Ireland, IE1C)	
Practice context:	Ireland - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	P10 network of rural municipalities NUTS3, Netherlands - Intermediate	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 18th 2021	

Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has given a boost to remote work in many European countries. An Irish study into the potential of remote work for rural areas (IE1C) has been conducted during the pandemic. This report confronts the results of this study to the differing context of Dutch rural areas, based on three brainstorm sessions and a focus group with relevant stakeholders. It shows that there are indeed some important differences between the Irish and the Dutch context, which may make remote work more hybrid in the Netherlands and may make Dutch rural communities less welcoming towards incoming remote workers. Nonetheless, remote work is likely to stay and will affect Dutch rural areas in the future. Most stakeholders welcome this situation and see plenty of opportunities to make it successful for both rural areas and remote workers. As remote workers currently lack representation and remote work as such is not promoted in rural areas, the creation of Grow Remote chapters or (a) comparable organisation(s) would reinforce opportunities for remote workers and remote work.

Context

Since the arrival of Covid-19 in the Netherlands, working remotely has become a reality for many Dutch employees. Moreover, many employers are planning to continue (some forms of) working

remotely even after all Covid restrictions are withdrawn. Working hybrid seems to become the norm for many employees. This means that they will partly work in an office, and partly from home or elsewhere (Rijksoverheid, 2021). Therefore, it is interesting to investigate the effects of and opportunities for remote work in Dutch rural areas. This study reports the results of a confrontation in which Dutch stakeholders from rural areas discuss the results of the Irish report on remote working and Grow Remote (Weir et al., 2021). This report may add knowledge about the potential for remote working in Dutch rural areas, while also revealing the potential and limits of the practices as investigated in the Irish context.

Similarities

The Irish and Dutch contexts are similar on three topics. A first similarity is that rural areas in both countries have recently experienced a serious growth of remote work and are likely to see this continued after the withdrawal of Covid restrictions. The T5.2 report on Grow Remote in the Irish context (IE1C, Weir et al., 2021) describes how during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which remote work in Ireland was investigated, people and businesses increasingly started to work remotely. This also gives opportunities for Irish rural areas, as people can now easily combine a high-skilled job that used to be in an urban context with living in a rural area (IE1C, Weir et al., 2021). In the Netherlands, research during the first wave of Covid-19 suggests that many work and travel habits for Dutch people and businesses may structurally change as well (De Haas et al., 2020). Most workers report positive experiences about working remotely and expect that they may work remote or hybrid in the future (De Haas et al., 2020). Earlier Dutch research already showed that workers tend to live further away from their office when they can work from home more often (De Vos et al., 2019). This could mean that Dutch rural areas, which are always relatively close to urban places, could see an increase of inhabitants.

A second similarity considers the active sense of community which is found in both Irish and Dutch rural areas. The Irish report mentions that organisations like Grow Remote are formed bottom-up and rely on active participation by local citizens. For example, the Town Tasters approach in Dingle, Co. Kerry, relies on active local communities (IE1C, Weir et al., 2021). Dutch rural communities are also known for active citizen engagement (Vermeij, 2015). Almost every village has its own community centre and/or a village council, which is run by volunteers (Landelijke Vereniging Kleine Kernen [LVKK], 2021). This provides ample opportunities for active citizens in Dutch rural areas to improve the local infrastructure for remote work and support integration of new inhabitants who want to work remote if they consider this within the village interest.

A third similarity considers the amount of cooperation between governments on multiple levels with entrepreneurs and civil organisations. The Irish report mentions how the bottom-up organised local chapters of Grow Remote cooperate with local governments and existing local businesses and organisations. It also mentions how the national organisation of Grow Remote cooperates with the national government and businesses who plan to increase remote work (IE1C, Weir et al., 2021). This shows the strong cooperation between different institutions who deal with rural areas and/or remote work. In the Netherlands, there is also a strong cooperation between such institutions. Active citizens

and rural municipalities are used to having continuous communication about how to achieve societal goals in villages (Ubels et al., 2019). This would enable the required cooperative approach of governments and businesses to allow increased support for remote work and remote workers.

Differences

There are also differences between the Irish and the Dutch context. Three of these are most important. First, the Netherlands is a much more urbanised country than Ireland. The Netherlands has 507 inhabitants per square kilometre. Ireland has 72 inhabitants per square kilometre (Eurostat, 2021a). Of the seven Irish NUTS3 regions, six are predominantly rural and one is predominantly urban. Of the 40 Dutch NUTS3, one is predominantly rural, 17 are intermediate, and 22 are predominantly urban (Eurostat, 2021b). This also has effects on the character of remote work. Dutch rural communities are thus located closer to urban areas. This leads to more opportunities for hybrid work in the Netherlands (De Vos et al., 2019). This contextual difference makes remote work in Ireland of a more permanent character, whereas in the Netherlands it is more likely to be part-time.

A second difference is also related to the level of urbanisation and considers the differing amount of available space. As the Netherlands is much more densely populated, it also seems to have a fiercer competition for space than Ireland. In the Dutch obstacles for the realisation of future rural dreams, the lack of available housing and land to plot it was mentioned regularly. This was not found in Ireland (Kuhmonen et al., 2021). Consequently, there may be less support for welcoming new remote workers in Dutch rural communities that already seem to lack space to allow for housing, infrastructure, nature, and agriculture.

A third difference is that the digital infrastructure in Dutch rural areas is further developed than in Irish rural areas. The OECD (2020) shows that the Netherlands has a higher percentage of rural households with access to fast broadband. This influences the character of remote work in both countries. The Irish report discusses the creation of central buildings in rural communities with strong enough digital connectivity (Weir et al., 2021). In the Netherlands, the level of digital connectivity in rural areas is generally strong enough to allow for working remotely from home (Buitelaar, 2021).

Why the context was chosen

Like Ireland, the Netherlands experiences growth of remote work in rural areas and has many active rural citizens who are used to cooperating with other stakeholders. This makes it interesting to investigate the potential for remote work in Dutch rural areas. There is no organisation like Grow Remote which actively organizes and represents remote workers. However, the Netherlands lacks NUTS 3 regions which are comparable to West Ireland. Therefore, the research focuses on the P10 network of rural municipalities. This covers 29 of the most rural Dutch municipalities, which are in different regions, but mostly in the relatively peripheral regions of the country (P10, 2021a; Annex 2).

In the 'Countryside agenda' of this organisation, P10 requests more support for rural remote work from the national government (P10, 2021b).

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

Stakeholders are generally interested in and positive about the practice of increased remote work in Dutch rural areas. They mention a wide variety of positive consequences that would be the result of the implementation of this practice. If current rural citizens could work and/or study remotely, more knowledgeable and highly educated people would be able to stay in the region. Remote work also allows people to combine jobs, to work when it pleases them and to spend more time and money in their own community. This could improve the livability, service levels and economic prospects of rural areas. It may, for example, enable more businesses to relocate to or locate themselves in the countryside. One participant mentioned that this could give new functions to the increased amount of empty farm stables in the Dutch countryside.

An increased number of remote workers also demographically balances the currently ageing rural areas. According to some stakeholders, newcomers from urban contexts could culturally enrich rural areas and reduce the experienced divide between urban and rural life. Furthermore, stakeholders point at the environmental benefits of this practice. If people travel less for work and live more distributedly over the country, traffic jams are likely to reduce. This would have a positive impact on sustainability. Hence, there is quite some interest and enthusiasm among stakeholders about an increase in remote work. They generally also seem to support the idea that it will inevitably lead to more workers who want to live in rural areas. One stakeholder mentioned that this would also help people in urban areas who are desperately looking for a house.

Despite the general enthusiasm, participants also mention some potential disadvantages of this practice. Within organisations, team dynamics may be lost, which would reduce their innovation capacity. Continuous remote work may also cause social isolation of the remote workers. For rural communities, participants also foresee some disadvantages. If remote workers will come to the countryside, they may evict poorer residents from their rural communities, because of the general lack of housing opportunities in Dutch rural areas. This may hurt the livability in socially close-knitted rural communities. If newcomers are not willing to take part in social activities, the social life of certain villages may suffer. Consequently, current inhabitants may get less enthusiastic about further newcomers, which would make it more difficult for them to integrate. Finally, some stakeholders mentioned the possibility that an increase of remote work may not lead to an increase of young and highly skilled workers in rural communities, since it would also enable workers in current rural businesses to stay in an urban area.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Stakeholders mentioned a small number of critical factors that are related to the implementation of more remote work in rural areas. The digital connectivity of rural areas must be on the same level as in urban areas. There must be enough housing available where potentially new inhabitants could live. Collective work locations, as also mentioned in the Irish report (Weir et al., 2021), are also seen as an important contributing factor to people feeling welcome. Finally, stakeholders point to the importance of available childcare, primary schools, and opportunities to socially interact within the community, for example in local sports or cultural associations.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

The issues are described under the critical factors. But stakeholders also mention several potential barriers for the implementation of the practice. In some rural communities, there may be a lack of support among residents, which will make it hard to create a successful integration of newcomer remote workers and existing inhabitants. This integration could also be difficult because the perceived rural 'cooperative' culture may be incompatible with the urban 'individualist' culture in which newcomers are socialized. Moreover, there could be a lack of willingness among newcomers to socially contribute to their new rural area. A poor quality of digital connectivity could also be a barrier, especially since telecom companies often consider it inefficient to invest in improved digital connectivity in rural areas. Many stakeholders also mention the lack of available housing in rural areas, the lack of services and the poor accessibility of many rural areas, which makes it harder to attract remote workers, even if they are willing to live there. Finally, stakeholders point at the lack of a clear representation of remote workers and their interest, and a general lack of clear responsibility for fixing the mentioned barriers. If no one takes this responsibility, the barriers will remain in place.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

A lot of measures have been identified by stakeholders and actors have been indicated which could have a role in implementing these to overcome obstacles and successfully implement remote work in rural areas. Optical fibre could be installed throughout the country, in which the national government has a role. There could be an increase in available housing in rural areas or opportunities to build more, in which provinces and municipalities could have a role. Municipalities could also make sure that young people from villages who may face eviction because of their poor position on the housing market receive preferential treatment in finding a house. The level of services in villages could also be improved, in which entrepreneurs, municipalities and local communities have a role. The accessibility of small villages could also be improved, in which provinces and municipalities have a role. There

could also be stronger cooperation between employers, municipalities, and rural communities to promote the integration of newcomers. In general, the national government could have a larger role in planning policy, allowing for more integrative planning decisions. Employers could also have a role in making sure that remote work is accepted within the organisational culture. On the other hand, everyone has a role in looking out for each other to avoid social isolation of remote workers. To enable a process of increased remote work and social integration of remote workers, there could be stronger cooperation between entrepreneurs, housing associations, sports associations, and churches. There could be a role for educational institutions in teaching digital skills and informing children about the opportunities to work remotely. Village councils, entrepreneurs and municipalities could cooperate to create local or regional centers in which remote workers could use office space. Meetings could be organized with existing inhabitants to discuss the desirability of more newcomers who work remote and with newcomers and current inhabitants to meet each other. Employers' organisations and trade unions have a role in integrating better facilities for remote work in collective labour agreements. There could also be an investigation into how empty farm stables could be re-used to support remote work or remote workers. Finally, an organisation like Grow Remote, which currently does not exist in the Netherlands, could have a huge role in Organising remote workers and promoting remote work.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development

The wide variety of ideas has been reported in the previous section. Some of them overlap with further innovative ideas as they are not just related to the implementation of the practice.

Lessons learned and recommendations:

Additional lessons, considerations, and applicability

There are some additional lessons to be learned about this practice. To understand the position of all relevant stakeholders on the practice, it would be good to have some additional interviews. Some stakeholders, such as national government institutions and some trade unions, were not able to attend the stakeholder session. During the session, stakeholders mentioned roles for some other stakeholders as well, such as housing associations, sports associations, and churches. Furthermore, a representative of the employers' organisation mentioned that it would be wise to directly interview some larger businesses. The views of all these stakeholders could further inform researchers about the applicability of more remote work in rural areas and the opportunities for remote workers.

Furthermore, because of the unclear future of remote work, it is hard to predict how this practice will evolve. As mentioned before, there are currently many employees who work from home. It is not yet clear how many organisations will continue to work remotely or hybrid after Covid restrictions are definitively withdrawn. However, this is of huge importance for the impact that the practice of remote work will have on Dutch rural areas.

The creation and growth of an organisation like Grow Remote seems quite applicable in the Dutch context. Many stakeholders mentioned the importance of bottom-up organisation and the lack of a current representative of remote workers or promotor of remote work. Municipalities, village councils nor trade unions seem perfectly fit to take up this role themselves. It is therefore imaginable that Dutch chapters of Grow Remote arise or that a comparable organisation will be founded. This also seems necessary to strongly defend the interests of remote workers and to create better facilities for remote work.

Meanwhile, remote work in the Netherlands is likely to be of a much more hybrid character than represented in the Irish report (Weir et al., 2021). The Netherlands is much more densely populated than Ireland and its rural regions are less peripheral. This makes hybrid work a more likely structural situation after Covid restrictions are withdrawn. The remote work as explained in the Irish context will probably not fully replicate. If remote work is to develop further in Dutch rural areas, it will be more hybrid and less concentrated in central centers. Moreover, communities which are suffering under a lack of available housing will be less welcoming towards new remote workers. This means that Dutch chapters of Grow Remote or comparable organisations would have to be willing to also defend the interests of hybrid workers and take these contextual differences into account.

Next steps and recommendations

To conclude this report, there are five main next steps and recommendations to further support the development of this practice. These are listed beneath:

1. See if Grow Remote chapters or (a) comparable organisation(s) could settle in the Netherlands. Up until that moment, try to take the interests of remote workers into account when making policy decisions or collective labor agreements.
2. Support (digital) infrastructure improvements and the building of more houses in rural areas to accommodate more inhabitants and remote workers.
3. Improve the general level of services in rural areas. Specifically, centers where remote workers could use office space locally could be developed to integrate remote workers and let them make the connection with rural communities.
4. Empower local citizens to cooperate to accommodate remote workers and to develop a strategy for the probable increase of remote work.
5. Keep investigating the developments of remote work and the opportunities for remote workers in the countryside. By doing so, rural areas can flexibly respond to social developments which impact remote workers in their communities.

These next steps require many actors to maintain involved in their implementation: Remote workers, governments on all levels, the P10 network, current local citizens, trade unions, employers, employers' organisations, housing associations, sports associations, village councils, churches,

telecom companies, and research institutions all have a role in promoting remote work and facilitating remote workers.

Contributors

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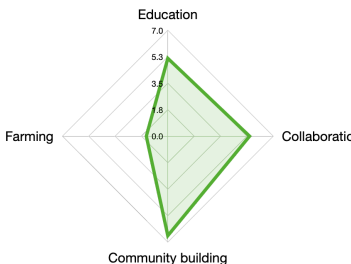
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Report NC1 annex 2 – Overview of P10 municipalities

Municipality	NUTS 3 region	Urban-rural typology (Eurostat, 2021)	Level of urbanization LAU-2 (Eurostat, 2021)
Weststellingwerf	Zuidoost Friesland	Intermediate	Rural areas
Ooststellingwerf	Zuidoost Friesland	Intermediate	Rural areas
Opsterland	Zuidoost Friesland	Intermediate	Rural areas
De Fryske Marren	Zuidwest Friesland	Intermediate	Rural areas
Noardeast Fryslan	Noord Friesland	Intermediate	Rural areas
Het Hogeland	Overig Groningen	Intermediate	Rural areas
Westerkwartier	Overig Groningen	Intermediate	Rural areas
Aa en Hunze	Noord Drenthe	Intermediate	Rural areas
Midden-Drenthe	Noord Drenthe	Intermediate	Rural areas
Borger-Odoorn	Zuidoost Drenthe	Intermediate	Rural areas
De Wolden	Zuidwest Drenthe	Intermediate	Rural areas
Westerveld	Zuidwest Drenthe	Intermediate	Rural areas
Dinkelland	Twente	Predominantly urban	Rural areas
Tubbergen	Twente	Predominantly urban	Rural areas
Hof van Twente	Twente	Predominantly urban	Towns and suburbs
Twenterand	Twente	Predominantly urban	Towns and suburbs
Berkelland	Achterhoek	Intermediate	Towns and suburbs
Bronckhorst	Achterhoek	Intermediate	Rural areas
West Betuwe	Zuidwest Gelderland	Intermediate	Towns and suburbs
Medemblik	Kop van Noord-Holland	Predominantly urban	Towns and suburbs
Hollands Kroon	Kop van Noord-Holland	Predominantly urban	Rural areas
Goeree-Overflakkee	Groot Rijnmond	Predominantly urban	Rural areas
Peel en Maas	Noord Limburg	Intermediate	Towns and suburbs
Horst aan de Maas	Noord Limburg	Intermediate	Rural areas
Leudal	Midden Limburg	Intermediate	Rural areas
Altena	Midden Noord-Brabant	Predominantly urban	Rural areas
Schouwen-Duiveland	Overig Zeeland	Intermediate	Rural areas
Hulst	Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen	Predominantly rural	Rural areas
Sluis	Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen	Predominantly rural	Rural areas

Appendix 2: Vesanto (Finland, NC2)

Organising partner:	UTU	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Remote work as a promising practice to attract newcomers to rural areas (Ireland, IE1C)	
Practice context:	Ireland - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Vesanto, Northern Savo (NUTS3)- Rural	
Workshop location:	Vesanto	
Date:	November 9th and 13th 2021	

Context

Vesanto is a municipality (LAU2) in the western part of the province of North Savo (NUTS3). Vesanto is located at the province border 80 km from the capital city, so it is really a remote rural area. The municipality has about 2,000 inhabitants and it has suffered from population loss for decades. As much as 42% of the inhabitants are at least 64 years old and in 1990–2020 the average age of the population has risen from 42.8 years to 55.4 years. In recent years, in-migration has exceeded out-migration, however. The population density is 4.6 inhabitants/km² (Statistics Finland).

The home region of the Grow Remote practice, the West Region in Ireland, has a population density of 27 inhabitants/km², which is about one third of the national average but more than five times of that in Vesanto. All Irish counties have indicated population growth during the past few decades, whereas the population in Vesanto has decreased steadily since the mid 1950s; the developments since 1990 are illustrated in Figure 1. So, demographics are rather different between the contexts despite that both areas are predominantly rural areas in the regional typologies.

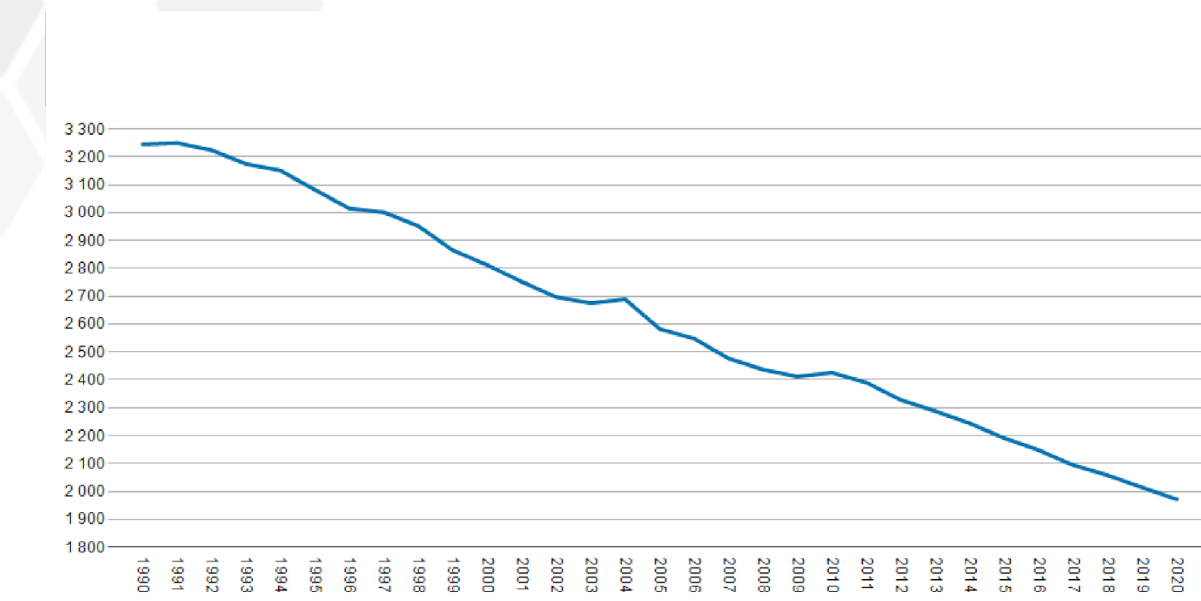


Figure 1. Population in Vesanto, 1990–2020 (Statistics Finland).

Also the environment is very different in these areas. Vesanto is located in the central part of Finland and the winter is harsh and snowy, whereas the West Region of Ireland is green all year round. In Vesanto, the forests are an important part of the land and numerous lakes can make short distances quite long sometimes.

Primary industries – agriculture and forestry – are important and comprise 22% of the jobs (in 2019; Statistics Finland). Health and social services is the largest sector of employment within the municipality (26% of jobs). There are 21% more employed persons than jobs in the municipality, indicating that an important part of the employed people either commute to neighbouring municipalities or do remote work. There is a fixed body of established remote workers in the municipality and the Covid pandemic has increased the number of remote workers considerably at least for some time. There is a high school and a brand new wooden school building in the municipality which is an attraction and makes it possible for the young people to study quite a long time from home without having to leave (at least) to the province capital town to study.

Internet access is a prerequisite of remote work. Vesanto was among the early adopters of optical fibre networks, but since then the coverage and quality of connections has not improved as fast as in many other municipalities in the neighbourhood of the province capital cities (Figure 2). Still, the possibilities for remote work are satisfactory in large parts of the municipality and also the mobile connections work quite well.

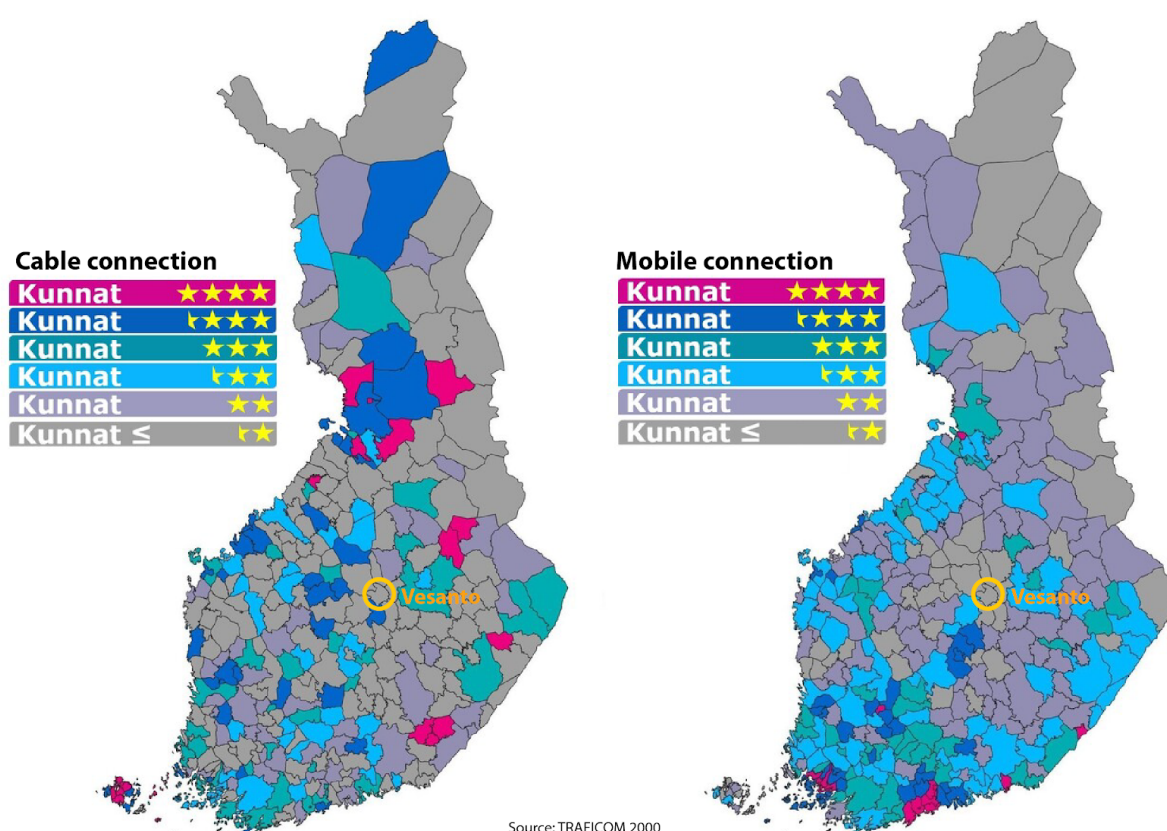


Figure 2. Coverage and quality of the cable and mobile networks in Finland.

Workshop method and results

A set of interactive assessment processes are organised in order to assess the feasibility of the selected practice in another context.

Workshop and focus group

An open invitation to the workshop was sent to local people in the reference context. The online workshop was organised in two parts/sessions. First, the Grow Remote practice was introduced briefly to the participants and then, especially, the potential and feasibility of the practice was discussed. Second, the practice was introduced in detail by one of the founders of the practice and a brief assessment of the impact in the original context was provided. After this, the obstacles and the needed actions to adopt the practice in this reference context were discussed together. In this way, two slightly different assessments were produced.

The first workshop session had five participants and the second workshop session had seven participants. They represented:

- Local municipality

- Local bank
- Local remote workers
- Regional rural development authority
- Rural research and development professionals

The third workshop had nine participants and their expertise was excellent for the assessment of the practice. They represented:

- Local municipality
- Local bank
- Local remote workers
- Local community development projects
- Local LEADER group
- Locally based people working in digital businesses
- Remote workers

The focus group was organised after the workshops and the results of the assessments of the workshops were used as an input for the online meeting. The four participants represented:

- Regional remote work development project
- Local remote workers
- Local entrepreneur
- Regional youth project

After the introductory presentations of the RURALIZATION project, the questions that were discussed in each session were:

- Could the practice promote regeneration and positive development in this local community? Is there potential?
- Are there some obstacles for adopting the practice in this local community? Why would it not work here?
- Which actions are needed to make this come true also in this local community and by whom? What should happen?

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

There was a great interest in the practice among the local actors. In general, the infrastructure for remote work was considered good or very good. There are also many jobs that can be done remotely. Six main points were raised in the process. First, in this context, there is more demand for the **community** than for the connections. The region is a very sparsely populated area and part of the remote workers feel isolated and lonely.

Second, **a hub** could help with these problems and the hub could be used also as an attraction for the newcomers. The local public sector has some facilities that are not needed in the provision of the services and these could be used by remote workers.

Third, even though remote work is a popular topic in the news due to increased popularity – driven by the Covid pandemic – there is no specific **organisation to promote** it. Many of the projects are

focused on the extension of the broadband network in rural areas; in some rural locations, also hubs are set up, but not here. Not all the possibilities and benefits of remote work are that well known in the public (e.g. climate benefits and saved money). Especially the idea of 80,000 'open jobs that nobody owns' is inspiring. The official public service (TE-offices) does not provide Remote First or Free Location jobs and several of the jobs having a label 'several locations' or 'remote work' are not actually that. So, there is a gap.

Fourth, there is currently a growing lack of labour also in the rural areas, also in this region. If one of the spouses could do remote work, the other could arrive and take up a local job. Attractive remote work facilities could alleviate local labour shortage as well.

Fifth, there are really many **summer cottages and holiday houses** in the municipality (the population doubles in the summer); these have served as a stepping stone to remote work in the original context and could serve in that role also here.

Sixth, a person working for Facebook or some other global business would certainly enrich the local community and inspire young people to follow the **role model**. So, there was a gap and a demand for the practice also in this context.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Based on the contributions, critical factors for the implementation of the practice in this particular context included the organiser and the community. Facilities can be found and internet access is available. If a suitable organiser is not found in the local community or among the external actors, there will be no start. This is the most critical factor. The other critical factor is related to the community. There are several people in the municipality who work remotely, but these established remote workers have facilities at home. They could be part of the new community, but a number of other newcomers would be needed to make the community vital. A 'nest' e.g. a hub would be helpful in this. In case these two things could be settled, the other challenges are not that critical.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the practice

During the sessions, six main points were identified as key issues or barriers for implementing the practice in this particular context. First, some **activist** is needed to set it up and to organise the 'critical mass' – this voluntary person is not necessarily found here.

Second, rural and local development work is very much driven by the local **municipalities** or publicly funded **projects**. A project is a risk in setting up this type of activity as results are expected soon and the boost of a social movement is missing. The main role of the local municipality is to provide public services, but also to participate and to encourage the local community. However, taking up the tasks of Grow Remote (which is a social enterprise) would be challenging for a project and for a municipality.

Third, the **broadband infrastructure** is still incomplete in many places. In Vesanto, the coverage is quite good but not complete. Also a local **hub** is missing.

Fourth, the facilities do not create the culture. Established remote workers in the region tend to work from home, but they could participate in coffee breaks etc. in the hubs. Setting up a **remote work culture** is a major challenge.

Fifth, relatedly, a **systemic change** is required: a new way of thinking, organising and acting. As a representative of Grow Remote stated: 'When jobs can be anywhere, we do everything that they could be here'. Observing that all global jobs could be done here is a major intellectual innovation. Businesses should be encouraged to open feasible jobs for everybody everywhere and not just in the city centre. Local culture should be open to welcome newcomers to the local community. Many changes are needed to make the concept work here.

Sixth, **social enterprises** are quite rare in Finland. Organising finance could be a major challenge and the current support systems for rural development are not favourable to social enterprises. Maybe some other type of organisation would work better here.

Further steps and ideas in the implementation of the practice

Regarding the steps to make the practice come true also here, several suggestions were made. The most common points were widely shared among the participants.

First, some **local nests** are needed. At least a small community is needed and a place, a hub. Many things can be incorporated to this nest, e.g. facilities to make studies.

Second, there are **several alternative ways to make a start**. In Ireland, the founders of Grow Remote were already working in the local development affairs. Such people exist here, too. Some existing organisations could take over this task, for example the local development company Kehitysyhtiö SavoGrow (<https://www.savogrow.fi>). This type of activities could be included in the reorganisation of the employment services where the local municipalities will play a major role in the future. Regional or national development projects could be an option, also. The Ministry of Education and Culture has the Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment that could take the initiative (<https://okm.fi/en/service-centre-for-continuous-learning-and-employment>). The local municipality development group (elinvoimaryhmä) could take the lead.

Third, a **campaign** or education slot **for the executives** could be beneficial. They should understand that by opening the job for all (outside the current location) could attract talented people that do not want to move to the specific job location. Making the benefits of remote work visible requires still a lot of work. An umbrella organisation is also needed for this.

Fourth, the **existing hubs** should be placed on a common **platform**. Their services could be described and they could be rated with stars. This could make the idea of remote work more visible and serve people who are looking for a place to settle, at least for a while.

Lessons learned and recommendations

Grow Remote practice was considered to have a great potential in this context. The critical factors for the replication included identification/recruitment of the organiser and setting up of the community plus the 'nest' (e.g. a hub). Communality was more in demand here than the connections and the practice was considered helpful also in tackling the current labour shortage in the region. A wider systemic change is needed to make the new practice work. Three steps could be useful toward this aim. First, setting up a **project** to plan for the adoption of the practice could be feasible. Making a connection to the original Grow Remote organisation would be beneficial (now there is this connection). Second, **local cooperation** is needed between the existing remote workers, the municipality (the hub), the broadband providers (the missing connection in some parts of the region) and the local communities (the network and labour potential). Third, as social enterprises are not very widely used in this context, some other **type of organisation** might be more feasible here (e.g. a co-operative or an association).

Contributors

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Appendix 3: Dolnoslaskie (Poland, NC3)

Organising partner:	University of Wroclaw	Innovation Type
Practice:	Cultural festivals: Creating a more No positive image for peripheral regions (Netherlands, NL4C)	
Practice context:	Netherlands - Various intermediate	
Confrontation context:	Dolnoslaskie (NUTS2, PL51) - Rural	
Workshop location:	Leszczyna, Lower Silesia	
Date:	21st October 2021	

Summary

Cultural festivals are an important element of rural development strategies. The practice of cultural festivals in Oldambt proves how a grassroots initiative of rural newcomers can organically grow into established festivals that successfully combine endogenous and exogenous dimensions of rural development. This confrontation workshop has shown that there is a significant scope for Organising similar events in rural areas of the Lower Silesia region, a comparable region that also underwent the loss of agricultural functions, has many unused cultural heritage objects, and is also partly peripheral. The results of the brainstorming sessions and a focus group organized in Leszczyna indicate that there is a general acceptance and interest in cultural festivals, albeit the desirable scale and character of the events is discussed with respondents leaning more towards lower scale but more frequent and even more rooted events. Indeed, local communities had already organized numerous festivals but with mixed results – in some cases successfully, in others (unexpectedly) without success. Key issues in this context are: (1) leadership, (2) identifying what would be attractive for residents, and (3) scale and character of the events. A number of individual issues such as logistics, funding sources as well as thematic scope are also considered important. In conclusion, it seems that local communities have been inspired by

the practice but will adapt it to their vision and current resources, with an eye to how they could be upscaled sustainably in the future.

Context

The confrontation area for this practice is the NUTS2 PL51 region of Lower Silesia (*Dolnośląskie*). Lower Silesia is a region located in South-Western Poland and it borders Czechia to the South and Germany to the West. While the region is of course internally differentiated, many of its parts are nonetheless well comparable to the area where the confronted practice takes place, i.e. the Oldambt municipality in the Netherlands. We find four general reasons for this: first, Lower Silesia is a region of high quality soils (in comparison to Poland in general) and thus it has a tradition of agricultural production similar to that of Oldambt. This production, however, has been undergoing profound changes in the last decades – as a consequence of globalization, neoliberal policies, technological development, and urbanization – which resulted in a comparative decrease of the importance that agricultural production had for the region. A symptomatic aspect of this history, coupled with the rise and fall of manufacturing in the 19th/20th century, is a relative abundance of abandoned or degraded architectural heritage, similar to that of Oldambt – which is an important element of the promising practice confronted in this case. Correspondingly, Lower Silesia is a region with the highest number of listed heritage objects in Poland both in absolute numbers as well as per area unit and per inhabitant (NID, 2017). Second, the location of Lower Silesia renders several parts of this region geographically and functionally peripheral to the region or country as such. Third, many peripheral parts of Lower Silesia are currently witnessing partial socio-economic renewal that stems from arrival of newcomers (permanent or part-time), as exemplified by the Klodzko Valley case (Sikorski et al., 2020). At the same time, the region does not seem to be a place for cultural festivals of the type showcased in Oldambt. Whenever festivals are organized, they are limited to a local scale (e.g. traditional festivities related to agriculture) or happen in cities (e.g. movie festivals). A handful of individual events – such as the “Forest festival” (LAS Festival)⁸ or the “Castle Party”⁹ – are located in rural areas of Lower Silesia but they are rather focusing on music, and its specific genres (electronic music in the former case, gothic rock in the latter). Hence, there is significant scope for more broadly convinced cultural festivals that try to relate themselves closely to the local identity – e.g. former agricultural character of the area, architectural heritage, local environment – in the way that Oldambt festivals are doing. In conclusion, while many specific criteria could be drawn here too, it is these four broad phenomena – historical similarities, peripheral areas, some signs of socio-economic renewal, and a lack of similar events – that generate fruitful conditions for a confrontation of this

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/events/638711750642287?ref=newsfeed>

⁹ <https://castleparty.com>

practice in the Lower Silesia region (or, more precisely, many locations within the Lower Silesia region).

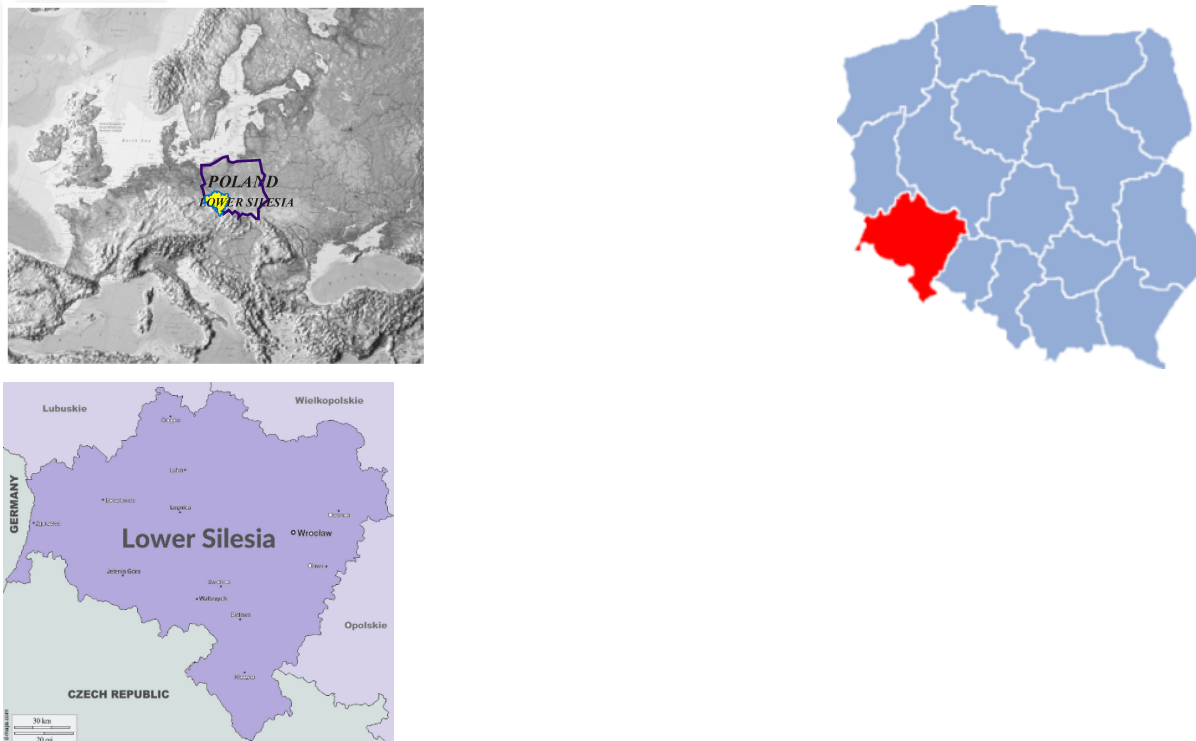


Fig. 1 Location of the Lower Silesia region in Poland

(source: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/14/2601/htm>,
<http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc/files/Lower%20Silesia%201.png> and
<https://wikitravel.org/upload/shared//thumb/d/d1/Dolnoslaskie.PNG/250px-Dolnoslaskie.PNG>)



Fig. 2. Location of the confrontation workshop in Leszczyna. Traditional furnace used for metal production is an example of cultural heritage that can be found in the region (source: Robert Skrzypczyński).

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The participants of the workshops in Leszczyna generally voiced their acceptance of, and interest in, Organising cultural festivals in their respective localities within Lower Silesia. Festivals are considered by them as an important element of both regular rural life as well as broader, strategic development of rural areas. The indirect role of the practice in attracting rural newcomers is also recognized. In fact, many participants had already had some experience in Organising such festivals, albeit at a lower scale (i.e. with fewer participants, shorter duration, lower budget); nevertheless, these events already contributed to a few newcomers moving to the areas where the events had been held. The experiences of participants also provided interesting insights into potential shortcomings of cultural festivals that gather visitors mostly from other parts of the country, potentially mostly from upper income classes, and with demand for a particular type of events or activities. Therefore, while the general idea of festivals is broadly accepted, there was also a discussion as to how exactly should the community frame and organize them. For instance, some participants clearly stated that they are not interested in festivals of large scale and audience (associated in their view with a particular type of urban-based middle class) but prefer to have more low-profile but frequent and locally-based events, not least due to a preference for more 'intimate' interactions rather than larger gatherings – which often had been the reason to move to a particular rural area in the first place. Some strands of this discussion also shed light on the already experienced barriers for Organising various types of festivals, which in consequence translate into lower eagerness to engage in such practices in the future, as they have proven to be demanding and not always successful in the past. In conclusion, while the respondents are interested in the practice, there are also some signs of distance, possibly even reluctance, that stem from earlier difficulties in successfully Organising similar practices (although events at such a large scale had never been organized) as well as stated preference of lower-scale, more local events.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

A number of factors were considered as critical in the implementation of the practice in the context. First, the issue of leadership was brought up: a balance between collective organisation (with appropriate division of tasks) and strong leadership (often embodied by individual leaders) needs to be struck in order for the practice to be successful, especially in the long term when it is organized e.g. yearly. Second, the issue of public perception of festivals in rural areas: the experiences of participants have shown that some types of events

unexpectedly gather wide audiences, while others that had been expected to – do not. The process of recognizing what the communities would like to participate in might be therefore demanding and people who have insight into these aspects – what the trends are at a given moment – are very beneficial for the prospects of the initiative. Third, the scale and character of the events matters: it has been argued that low-scale but frequent initiatives might yield better results for the community due to being rooted in their locality; on the other hand, smaller festivals might have less visibility and external recognition that could translate into more visitors from other areas. Furthermore, the participants observed that recurring events tended to gradually lose people's interest, and in consequence it was difficult to keep them running for longer periods. Therefore, it has to be clearly established what the purpose of these events is: is it to attract visitors from outside once per year, or rather to provide a regular meeting place for local residents? Can these two aspects be combined? These three broad factors – leadership, recognition of needs, as well as the scale and character of the events – constitute the main axes of consideration that occurred during the workshops, although more individual issues will be also discussed below.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

- Dividing responsibilities within strong leadership

The first barrier, related to the issue of leadership, lies in the appropriate division of tasks between the group that organizes the event. The events can be organized in many ways, either more as bottom-up (community groups) or top-down (local administration) initiatives, and mostly as a combination of these two. In any case, it is crucial not to overwhelm leaders with the challenges of Organising such events, as it will not be sustainable in the long run. Hence, there is a need to simultaneously divide tasks horizontally but also to provide space for leaders to act and take decisions so that the momentum of the organisation work is not lost.

- Motivation

Importantly, the original case of the festivals in Oldambt was started by newcomers who felt an internal drive to bring something – cultural festivals, in this case – to their new place of residence. Such motivation should be of course fostered by local communities but it is not always the case that an area has residents that have this internal drive – and such an internal motivation is considered by respondents as an important factor of success. Hence, a lack of newcomers who have an internal motivation to introduce new initiatives can constitute a barrier in the initial periods of trying to establish the practice.

- Knowledge and recognition of needs

Also, in the Oldambt case the knowledge about the demand for such cultural festivals present in urban areas of the Netherlands came from new rural residents who had personal relations with urban dwellers and thus were able to have direct knowledge of what would be attractive for such audiences. Furthermore, they were also able to directly promote the festival via links that might be missing in locations where there are no such newcomers yet. Therefore, a lack of knowledge and communication or promotion channels was considered as a crucial barrier for implementing the practice by the participants of the workshops.

- Prices and overall class-related character of the event

An important barrier for the uptake of the practice is, in the view of the respondents, also the possibility of their 'gentrified' character, best reflected by a simple factor: prices of food provided at similar festivals known by the respondents. In short, food is often provided by food trucks (that might even come from the same place as visitors) at prices that are very high for local residents in comparison to the prices that local sources could provide. However, the demand is such that local sources risk being simply not what the audience wants. Therefore, the barrier is that on the one hand, food trucks do not suit the needs of local residents, and on the other, local food may not suit the needs of external visitors. The same concern has been voiced more broadly, in relation e.g. to entrance fees but also the entire offer and class distinction (to use Bourdieu's term) of a festival and its visitors: it might be simply an event where local residents might not feel 'at home'.

- Space and logistics

Another barrier brought up by the participants is the necessity to find an appropriate place for larger events and provide infrastructure and the logistic support for the entire event. While the role of e.g. local firemen in traffic management is recognized, it is nonetheless a challenge that so far had never been faced by most communities in small, remote rural settlements. Safety regulations are an additional concern since if the event is organized in a bottom-up, informal manner, then there might be a lack of appropriate expertise in terms of how it should be organized. Facilities such as sanitation points, accommodation, access to water or emergency health care etc. can also pose significant challenges for communities that had never had any experiences with Organising such large events.

- Budget and access to funding sources

Apart from spatial and infrastructural demands, there is also a need to secure budgets for larger events such as those organized in Oldambt. Local municipalities usually have insufficient funds to organize such events and building up the audience that could cover the costs from the fees is a long process (and self-limiting too, because when there is no audience, there is no income from fees, which in turn reduces opportunities for attracting broader audiences by Organising a larger event). All in all, the respondents prefer Organising more local events with local (smaller) funds rather than supralocal events with supralocal funds.

- Maintaining the interest in recurring events

An important barrier is also the difficulty in maintaining constant interest in the recurring event over longer periods. So far, there have been several initiatives in the respective rural areas of participants that seemed successful and yet ceased to exist after a few editions. It is

not clear why and what could be done to prevent it; perhaps the offer should vary between years to a sufficient extent, and maybe thinking in terms of thematic editions could help in delivering that goal.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

- Cooperating with local LEADER group in order to access funding sources

Since members of a local LEADER group participated in the meeting, it was explained that the LEADER group has significant knowledge in terms of possible funding sources and can help local activists in Organising events such as the ones discussed within the practice. There are plenty of possible sources here, ranging from local authorities' budgets for cultural events, through regional funds up to European grants – and the LEADER group has a lot of experience in applications as well as project management. Hence, one of the clear measures identified is to turn to the LEADER group with ideas for events, which can overcome three obstacles mentioned earlier: lack of experience in organisation of events, task division as well as (perceived) difficulties in access to funding sources.

- Planning with a realistic but far-reaching vision

The process of organic development of the festivals over the years is crucial – organizers should 'be patient' and have in mind that it might take a long time before the festival becomes established and 'self-supporting'. Therefore, a realistic long-term plan needs to be conceived first, with phases indicating what could be done and what actors can be engaged at what point.

- Making the effects last longer: location, themes and scale

A solution to the problem of dissolving interest in recurrent events was also proposed – first, to differentiate the theme of the festivals in consecutive years, and second – to organize subsequent editions in different locations of the area (e.g. around different villages). In this way, the leadership could also shift, thus helping in maintaining energy for the organisational work. Finally, it was also suggested that a series of regular, even smaller-scale events could have more long lasting effects as compared to one large event that lasts a few days and does not necessarily have broader effects in other parts of the year.

- Engaging local actors to help with logistics: fire squads, landowners, schools

The problem of significant logistic challenge of Organising cultural festivals can be resolved by e.g. cooperating with local, voluntary fire squads who are well prepared to handle similar issues as they are usually performing this function at local events (security, water provision, waste management, traffic management etc.). Similarly, finding farmers or other landowners who would be willing to lease the land for the location of festivals is considered crucial. As for issues such as accommodation, it has been also suggested that local schools could be used for this, although significant barriers remain in terms of legal regulations on where can

people be accommodated (it would be probably challenging to accommodate people in schools due to e.g. access to sufficient sanitary facilities or fire regulations).

- Providing local food and services at the events

Given that the prices – and broadly, class distinction – is a symptomatic barrier in attracting local residents to some cultural festivals, it was proposed that the food at the festival be provided by local initiatives such as the County's Women Club, albeit with an eye to what would be popular among visitors. Prices would be much lower, local communities would be drawn into the organisation more closely, and visitors could taste local food. There remains, however, the barrier related to logistics (how large could the event be if the food was to be provided in this way? Can it be combined with other sources of food?).

- Making local community integration an explicit goal of the events

Finally, the participants also emphasized that such events can balance the external and internal focus – e.g. attracting visitors from outside but also integrating local communities (and in this way also creating opportunities for future community cooperation on e.g. organisation of events). To do so, the organizers of the festival should keep an eye to the programme, both in terms of concrete programme elements as well as broader framing of the festival by e.g. emphasizing cultural or natural heritage of the place. It seems that Oldambt festivals manage this aspect very well and it is hoped that it can take place in a similar way in Lower Silesia, having the differences in e.g. the presence of active, engaged newcomers in mind.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

- Local food

The importance of local food was often brought up in the discussion on how festivals could help with rural development. Examples from nearby regions show how local communities were successful in establishing festivals, markets and events centred on high quality food which attracts both local and external visitors. Workshop participants agreed that it is a key theme to be explored in the context of festivals.

- Returning migrants

The discussion about the promising practice also opened up a motif of attracting not only newcomers but also returning migrants who had been born and raised in the region but then moved elsewhere, e.g. to study. It was argued to be much easier to attract returning migrants than newcomers *par excellence*, and thus programs that identify promising ways of doing that should be developed.

Lessons learned and recommendations

A general lesson learned within the confrontation process is that repeating the success of the cultural festivals in Oldambt will probably depend mostly on creating possibilities for organic development of similar initiatives in other places (such as Lower Silesia). It is very challenging

for most areas in Lower Silesia with their current resources to skip the early points of development and try to start already from the point where Oldambt festivals are now, i.e. after more than a decade of functioning. The attention of policymakers should be therefore focused more on earlier steps of the process, i.e. creating opportunities for similar processes to occur in other areas – organic development from smaller initiatives led mostly by motivated newcomers to larger festivals organized in cooperation with local authorities. In this way, the promising practice will not only bring the benefits that cultural festivals provide, but also improve community integration within the process of establishing the practice itself. However, it is not always the case that local residents are willing to organize events of that scale and character. Although Oldambt festivals are definitely not of the type of the largest music festivals in Europe, they were still considered as big events in comparison to local resource availability and the vision of what kind of events local inhabitants would like to participate in. While the idea of festivals was very much appreciated by respondents, they were also emphasizing that smaller festivals could work too, and if organized regularly, possibly in rotating locations within the area, in a healthy work division, could yield more benefits for local communities.

What seems crucial in the case of Oldambt is that there were active, engaged newcomers with a will to create something in their new place of residence and the knowledge of what would be attractive for visitors. Although implicitly, the discussion during workshops revolved around the question of whether there are such persons in the confronted rural area, and how they can be encouraged to undertake similar activities. In other words, there always needs to be a subject who is willing to take on the role of a leader. By definition, the LEADER group is one such subject, but it is also important to harness the energy and knowledge of newcomers on new types of initiatives, who can then be very much supported by the LEADER group. In consequence, attracting newcomers is an important element of this virtuous cycle of “newcomers – new initiatives – more newcomers”, which is indeed a cycle and should be supported from both ends.

As for further steps to be taken in the context, one particular benefit of the workshop was to show that the local LEADER group is very well prepared to support initiatives of local residents. Although the workshop did inspire local action, it will probably take the direction of smaller events revolving around food, with possible developments in the future. This will mostly involve the local LEADER group, as it is a strong actor coordinating many local actions, although the discussion about identifying and encouraging newcomers to share their vision and resources in common work seems to have sown a seed of new approach to the problem. It remains to be seen how this process develops in the future.

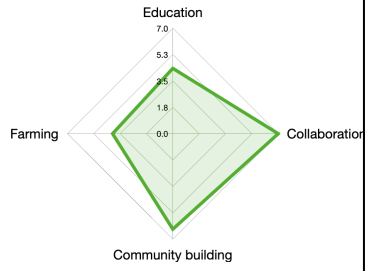
Contributors:**Workshop Facilitation:** Sylwia Dołzbłasz, Krzysztof Janc, Robert Skrzypczyński (UWR)**Reporting:** Sylwia Dołzbłasz, Krzysztof Janc, Andrzej Raczek, Robert Skrzypczyński (UWR)

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Appendix 4: Cosenza Province (Italy, NC4)

Organising partner:	UNICAL	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Castel del Giudice: Municipality as an active agent of territorial marketing and economic initiative voicing community needs (Italy, IT5C)	
Practice context:	Isernia Province (NUTS 2)- Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Malito, Cosenza Province (NUTS2), Intermediate	
Workshop location:	Malito	
Date:	November 24th and December 15th 2021	

Summary

The practice “Castel del Giudice: Municipality as an active agent of territorial marketing and economic initiative voicing community needs” located in the Province of Isernia (Nuts2 level- prevalent rural region) has been discussed in the context of Malito, a small municipality of Cosenza Province (Nuts 2 level- intermediate region). Depopulation and aging, problems on which the Castel del Giudice practice has worked by implementing initiatives to attract newcomers and stop youth emigration, are issues that the municipality of Malito must face.

This context was chosen for the confrontation as there are many geographical, social and economic similarities among them. Malito has a population (748 inhabitants in 2021) more than double of Castel del Giudice (314 inhabitants in 2021) and the confrontation is useful to understand if the critical factors of the promising practice could be inspiring for small municipalities under 1000 inhabitants.

Main results of the confrontation are that some factors of the model of Castel del Giudice are similar in the context of Malito and that some of the activities can be adapted and replicated. The context of the abandoned land and building is quite similar, and the valorization of local products

(partially initiated with some De.Co.¹⁰ labels) is a concrete opportunity. What emerged is that the citizens are not used to have a common vision and projects for their community, so the consultation organized by RURALIZATION offered a first step toward a process of collective planning which in Castel del Giudice relies on an informal mechanism due to the limited extension of the village. While initiatives undertaken so far on personal capacity have failed, the opportunity to have a collective design of the initiatives, based on local identity as De.Co., with an active role of the municipality has emerged. Also the reintroduction of ancient crafts and services with the support of national programs for immigrants and refugees emerged as a feasible way forward to attract newcomers in the village. The needs for training on the job and other forms of capacity building using different programs have been clearly affirmed. The municipality can play a central role in promoting a participative process which can activate youths and more generally the citizens and favor a collective project planning to enhance local resources and to have common perspective on the use of the local infrastructures such as the swimming pool, the gym and the theatre.

Context

The practice “Castel del Giudice: Municipality as an active agent of territorial marketing and economic initiative voicing community needs” located in the Province of Isernia (Nuts2 level) has been discussed in the context of Malito, a small municipality of Cosenza Province (Nuts 2 level).

Castel del Giudice and Malito are located in two provinces of the South of Italy. Cosenza province is located in Calabria (Nuts 3 level) – that is classified a less developed region by the Cohesion policy 2014-2020 criteria while Isernia is located in Molise (Nuts 3 level) – a transition region.

The main demographic indicators related to the median scenario 2020-2030 shows a similar structure of the population among the two provinces. Both suffer from an ageing trend even if Isernia, despite having a 3.1% higher percentage of the over 65 population in 2020 compared to Cosenza, in 2030 should have a less accelerated growth of this part of the population compared to Cosenza (Tab1.)

Tab.1. Main Demographic Indicators, 1st January 2020/2030, Median Scenario

Year	Province	Mean age of the population	Population aged 0-14 (%)	Population aged 15-64 (%)	Population aged 65 and more (%)
2020	Cosenza	45.5	12.5	64.9	22.6
2020	Isernia	47.5	11.1	63.2	25.7
2030	Cosenza	48.5	11	60.5	28.4

¹⁰ De.Co. is a municipal denomination attribute to those products considered in some way "typical" or historically linked to a place, and which have no other awards, such as PDO, PGI, TSG. It is not a European trademark, but it is a municipal recognition that is therefore attributed by the municipal administration. The De.Co brand was created following the Italian Law n. 142 of 8 June 1990, which gives the Municipalities the power to regulate the promotion of traditional agri-food activities

2030	Isernia	49.6	10.1	59.5	30.4
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Source: Geo demo.ISTAT (<https://demo.istat.it/previsionicomunali/download.php?lingua=eng#>)

The median scenario per 1,000 inhabitants referred to years 2020/2030 indicate a negative net migration rate in 2020 in both provinces; an improvement of the rate is foreseen in 2030 but it should become positive only in Isernia Province (1,4). The growth rate in 2020 is negative in both contexts but in Isernia it is even worse (minus 3.5 points compared to Cosenza), in 2030 it should remain negative, but the rate would be aligned in the two provinces. (Tab.2)

Tab.2. Vital and migration rates, years 2020/2030, median scenario, per 1,000 inhabitants

Year	Province	Birth rate	Death rate	Net migration rate	Growth rate
2020	Cosenza	7.1	11.5	-3.1	-7.5
2020	Isernia	6	14.4	-2.6	-11
2030	Cosenza	6.5	11.8	-0.8	-6.2
2030	Isernia	5.9	13.4	1.4	-6

Source: Our elaboration on data Geo demo. ISTAT

Castel del Giudice is a small mountain municipality 800 meters above sea level, the total area of the territory is 14,81km². The town is near the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise¹¹. The population counts in 2021, 314 inhabitants (149 female).

Malito is a small mountain municipality 728 meters above sea level, the total area of the territory is 16,92 km². The municipality is near the National Park of Sila. The population in 2021 counts 748 inhabitants (381 female).

The total resident population by age classes in the two municipalities indicate a population over 65 that is approximately 4 percentage points higher than the corresponding regional data (Nuts 2)(Tab.3).

Tab.3. Castel del Giudice and Malito- main demographic indicators 2021

	Total Population	% Female on total population	% Population 0-14	% Population 15-64	% Population over 65
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¹¹ <http://www.parcoabruzzo.it/>

Castel del Giudice	314	47,45	10,83	58,60	30,57
Isernia Province (Nuts2)	81415	50,48	11,08	62,68	26,24
Malito	748	50,93	9,63	62,83	27,54
Cosenza Province (Nuts 2)	676119	51,18	12,63	64,09	23,28

Source: Our elaboration on <https://demo.istat.it/popres/index.php?anno=2021&lingua=eng>

Considering the last ten years, it can be highlighted that although the ageing index is much higher in Castel del Giudice, this is decreasing (-59.1 percentage points between 2011 and 2021); on the contrary in Malito the ageing index, in the same years, increases (+54.5 percentage points). The same tendency is shown by the dependency ratio trend.

Tab.4. Castel del Giudice and Malito Ageing Index and Dependency ratio 2011-2021

Municipality	Years	Ageing Index (percentage values) on 1 st January	Dependency ratio (percentage values) on 1 st January
Castel del Giudice	2011	386,7	69,9
	2021	327,6	66,0
Malito	2011	224,7	48,7
	2021	279,2	58,3

Source: <https://www.tuttitalia.it/statistiche/indici-demografici-struttura-popolazione/>

In 2018, the resident population income of Castel del Giudice was higher compared to that of Malito but they are both under the medium Italian level of more than 21.000 €. The Index of Social and Material Vulnerability¹², calculated by the Italian Statistical Office (ISTAT), that measures the exposure of certain groups of the population to risk situations, understood as the uncertainty of their social and economic condition is aligned.

¹² The social and material vulnerability index (IVMS) is an indicator constructed through the synthesis of seven indicators referring to the dimensions of the phenomenon considered most relevant for the formation of a national ranking of municipalities. The selected indicators describe, with almost equal weight, the two dimensions of "material" and "social" vulnerability.

Tab.5. Castel del Giudice and Malito Income 2018 and Index of Social and Material Vulnerability (IVMS)

	Income 2018	IVMS
Castel del Giudice	16,543	102,29
Malito	13,335	102,00

Source: https://politichecoesione.governo.it/media/2792/20210923_comuni-svantaggiati_allegato-a.pdf

Depopulation and ageing, problems on which the Castel del Giudice practice has worked by implementing initiatives to attract newcomers and stop youth emigration, are issues that the municipality of Malito must face.

This context was chosen for the confrontation as there are many similarities among them, although the first is located in a prevalent rural region (Isernia) and the second one in an intermediate region (Cosenza). Malito has a population more than double of Castel del Giudice and the confrontation is useful to understand if the critical factors of the promising practice could be inspiring for small municipalities under 1000 inhabitants.

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The large and active participation of people from different age groups and with different roles (business owners, young people, local administrations officers and local politicians) indicates the strong interest of the Malito population and of the Municipality in a moment of consultation and participation that is a pre-condition and constitutive of the promising practice of Castel del Giudice.

Many participants recognized these brainstorming and the focus group as the first opportunity for a collective discussion on the development of the town promoted by the Municipality. The actors were particularly interested in the itinerary that led the Castel del Giudice practice to be successful, identifying in the discussion the links that could be activated to systemize the resources already structurally present in the context of Malito. During the presentation of the practice as well as in the brainstorming sessions, various interventions by both the mayor and the participants underlined the similarities between the territory of Malito and that of Castel del Giudice.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

The practice of Castel del Giudice was presented according to the following critical factors that were relevant for the successful results.

a. Use of Abandoned land for agriculture

The context of Malito is quite similar to the one in Castel del Giudice for what concerns the fragmentation of the property of land and the abandonment of agricultural activities. Differently from Castel del Giudice, there are some typical local products such as oregano, honey and fava beans that were often mentioned during the brainstorming sessions, even if there was no attempt to install a business and a value chain around these typical products. The municipality supported a De.Co label for local honey and oregano, but no private investment was interested in developing a production and processing value chain for typical local products.

The only business idea that some entrepreneurs tried to put in place to use the abandoned land was a training camp for hunting dogs: indeed, it seems that local hunters usually are investing some thousands of euros to reach the areas in Poland and Croatia that are offering this service at competitive prices. This business proposal was not realized since the owners of the land refused to rent their land to others, due to the risk of permanently losing their ownership.

b. Recovery and use of abandoned buildings

While in Castel del Giudice the rehabilitation of abandoned buildings started with the abandoned municipal school and the stables outside the village, in Malito there are many buildings of historical value in the center of the village. The municipality activated a policy to attract newcomers making available three small flats for families willing to move and live in the village.

c. Migrants supports and Refugee and Asylum seekers National Programme

The international acknowledgement of the 'Riace model' as a good practice for Calabria resulted in the citizens of Malito considering immigrants as a resource for repopulation of the village. However, the reception of asylum seekers and refugees through participation in the National Programme SAI-Reception and Integration System needs preventive awareness-raising and communication work with local society.

d. Community Cooperatives

The community cooperative of Castel del Giudice offers a portfolio of services to the village, based on the needs and opportunities emerging from an informal mechanism of consultation. In the case of Malito, the brainstorming sessions were one of the first opportunity to have a collective discussion with the citizens.

e. Food Policy Pact

Due to abandonment of the land and of most of the agriculture activities, in Malito at the moment there is no discussion on how to build a public procurement scheme to support the development of a sustainable agriculture. The municipality registered local De.Co.s, but there is not discussion on a value chain strategy.

f. Pro-active role of the Municipality and fund-raising capacity:

So far, the proactive role of the municipality has been limited. The new mayor took office in 2018 and the new initiatives taken have been slowed down due to the pandemics. In the current context, the municipality has operated by trying to solve individual problems and listening to suggestions from individuals (such as the training camp for hunting dogs, finding housing for the foreign family with 3 children, or planting fruit trees instead of cypresses, etc.). No prospect of designing a collective development trajectory based on citizen consultation was considered. During this consultation, the mayor clearly expressed the willingness to dialogue with the citizens, to the extent that at the end of December 2022, the municipality organised a meeting with the citizens for the first time.

In recent years there has been an attempt to reactivate the existing infrastructure in the village: the municipality of Malito used to have about 15 staff to manage the municipal swimming pool, which has been idle for ten years and is currently understaffed in terms of quantity and quality and too energy-intensive. The municipality submitted a project to the region which envisaged a contemporary redevelopment of the swimming pool, relating to its social function linked to various rehabilitative functions, with an orthopedist and a physiatrist, also in view of a fairly large catchment area covering the Savuto valley. Unfortunately, the funds received were barely sufficient for a redevelopment of the pool facilities, despite the innovativeness of the project. The same applies to the sports pitch, which was put back into operation by a private individual and supported by the municipal lighting in order to reduce the operative costs.

g. Economic activities jointly managed by local municipality, entrepreneurs and citizens

In Malito there are no public-private partnerships ongoing. There was an attempt to assign the management of the swimming pool to a company with the expertise but it didn't work out. The municipality tried to support the business idea of training camp for hunting dogs mediating with the owner of the land, but also in this case there was no positive result.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice(s) in the context.

The slow depopulation stems from the lack of job opportunities, both related to the education undertaken and to the opportunities for a decent income from employment opportunities.

The absence of an economic environment capable of remunerating existing economic activities is one of the critical factors influencing any innovative initiative. The main factors are: lack of private initiatives and inability to activate cooperation.

Many young people expressed distrust in starting their own/collective economic businesses while older participants stressed that young people should overcome their skepticism and actively commit to achieve their goals.

For what concerns the:

a) *Use of Abandoned land for agriculture:*

The main obstacles to implement an innovative practice similar to Castel del Giudice are:

- Conservative mentality on using or renting land due the fear of permanently losing possession or ownership. This mentality is certainly more tempered in the new generations.
- Lack of infrastructures and processing facilities; for instance, an hare breeder was forced to use the processing facilities of another province of Calabria (Catanzaro) since there was no other option in the province of Cosenza.
- Presence of wild boars near farms, whose destructive work on crops tends to be an obstacle both for those who already work in rural activities and for those who intend to focus on agriculture. The temporary intervention of dedicated 'selectors' for culling outside the hunting season has not been conclusive.

b) *Recovery and use of abandoned buildings:*

In the case of Malito, the fragmentation of the properties and the difficulty in contacting the owners - often emigrated elsewhere – have made it difficult to activate urban regeneration activities. The high costs of urban regeneration are also a barrier to possible initiatives.

c) *Migrants supports and Refugee and Asylum seekers National Programme:*

No specific barrier has been identified for the integration of migrants in the social and economic activities of Malito.

d) *Community Cooperatives:*

Also with reference to the possibility of creating public-private partnerships or new forms of social shareholding such as community cooperatives, a cultural factor was identified as a barrier, i.e. the difficulty of networking that is perceived as rooted in the mentality of Southern Italy. In the experience of the participants, the forms of cooperation that have been set up in Malito have not succeeded in consolidating common paths due to differing practical motivations and stimuli (lack of time, lack of economic prospects) that define unequal commitment, contributions and strengths of individual investment in collective work.

e) *Food Policy Pact*

The obstacles inherent in the design of a food plan and the activation of a public intervention aimed at public procurement for local agri-food chains are essentially found in the procedures linked to food safety (handling of the product in a suitable environment, certification, packaging, labelling, etc.) and agreement on food quality specifications supporting food procurement: all these procedures are costly and time-consuming. However, the actors agree on the possibility of exploring processes linked to local food cultures and crops. Starting from a registry of what already exists on which to build further coordination projects to enhance local typicalities.

f) Pro-active role of the Municipality and fund raising capacity:

A factor limiting the steps that the municipality is taking in the territory concerns the widespread perception that the public institution is considered as an employer and not instead a possible partner for joint action. There is the need for fundraising for small municipalities that have been progressively impoverished by the various national reforms, which do not allow them to manage the available real estate and in-house activities. In Malito, there is a low capacity in accessing public funds, since the actual administrative officers have limited skills in submitting project proposals.

g) Economic activities jointly managed by local municipality, entrepreneurs and citizens

Regarding the proactive role of the municipality in public-private partnerships, a number of obstacles are identified in the possible activities to be set up. Firstly, the idea that, while continuing to act as a catalyst, it is not the municipality that should take steps towards local entrepreneurs, but, on the contrary, that it is private entrepreneurs or the territory that should be active in asking for specific support, including information on calls for tenders. The actors, however, agree that the circulation of information and a practice of co-planning could push many actors towards a common action of valorization of the territory with favorable outcomes for the general interest of each and all.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice.

Despite the mistrust shown in the dominant and widespread mentality of the population, even the most skeptical participants recognized that a possibility of collaboration and of implementing the activities promoted in Castel del Giudice would be possible if the municipality (or other public institutions) would be able to facilitate community dynamics.

Social innovation laboratories and territorial animation could be instruments that the Municipality can use to facilitate community activation. The actors that should primarily be involved are youths, the local LAG and more in general the citizens of Malito. These activities could also favor the establishment of a community cooperative.

To improve the administrative capacities of the employees of the municipality and to support the local politician in implementing innovative actions (such as promoting economic activities jointly managed by the local municipality, entrepreneurs and citizens or community cooperatives or even enhance the fund raising capacities of the municipality for the recovery and re-use of public buildings) it would be useful a regional support through a creation of a center/office/digital platform where they could find easily information and support for implementing participative project planning.

To overcome the barrier of access to land it was suggested that the municipality could have a role of guarantor for the rental of land for organic cultivation.

The main obstacle, that is landowners' fear of losing their land through usucaption, could be also overcome creating an *"Associazione Fondiaria"*. This is an association between owners of public or private land with the aim of grouping agricultural areas and forestry, abandoned or uncultivated, to allow an economically sustainable and productive use of them. It is not for profit and is governed by a Statute. Each member joins on a voluntary and free basis and retains ownership of the land, which could not be appropriated by usucaption. Usually an *"Associazione Fondiaria"* manages the properties conferred by its members; identifies the best technical and economic solutions for each land plot; lease the land to members of the association itself or to external parties who undertake to conduct them in compliance with good agricultural practices. This instrument has been already promoted in other Italian regions, for example in Piedmont where the regional law provides legal and financial support for the creation of this kind of association.

The idea of creating an *"Associazione Fondiaria"* in Malito requires for its implementation the involvement of at least the municipality and the landowners. The local LAG or the Calabria Region may also support with specific economic funds the activities of this kind of association.

The promotion of typical crops, such as a variety of fava beans that grows in the area, has been identified as a possible destination for the abandoned land, moreover social and educational farming was also mentioned as one opportunity that could be supported.

Apart from facilitating access to land, the role that the municipality could have in the recovery and re-use of important noble inhabited palaces and buildings in the center of the village has been recognized. The assignment of these restored buildings to local and migrants families and the use of them to favour certain practices such as the opening of crafts shops, or the reception of refugee and asylum seekers through the activation of a project within the national Programme named SAI-Reception and Integration System (<https://www.retesai.it/english/>) would be welcomed by the population.

The reopening of some important facilities such as the swimming pool, the gymnasium and the cinema, which are currently closed as they need to be restored, is a relevant point that has been raised in the discussion. The Municipality should find the funds to restore them and then the management could be entrusted to a local association/community cooperative.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context.

Apart from the role of institutions, the opening of commercial activities (e.g.: pizzerias, pubs) to socialize and meet seem to be fundamental for local young people. Also the idea of renting e-bikes and enhancing nature areas through itineraries was enthusiastically received by the young people who participated.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The brainstorming sessions and the focus group indicated that all the critical factors (*Pro-active role of the Municipality and fund raising capacity, Economic activities jointly managed by local*

municipality, entrepreneurs and citizens ; Use of Abandoned land; Recovery and use of abandoned buildings; Community Cooperatives; Migrants supports and Refugee and Asylum seekers National Programme; Food Policy Pact) of the practice may be theoretically implemented in the context of Malito and that these activities could either stop youths emigration or attract newcomers.

The first step however is the necessity to re-activate the community relationships. What has emerged is that actually there is, especially among youths, a lot of mistrust on the opportunities of becoming active actors of collective initiatives. The Municipality has a relevant role in this process.

A territorial animation is required, for example promoting public discussions, stimulating youths in realizing their dreams, informing on opportunities coming from multifunctional spread hospitality, eco-tourism).

Social innovation laboratories could also be an instrument that can favor youth activation as actually what seems to be lacking are youth aggregation centers where they can discuss, exchange ideas and ideate initiatives that can be implemented in the town.

In the meantime, so that the Municipality can become an activator of the innovation process, its employees also need support to strengthen their fundraising capacity and their project planning capacities. To favour a better knowledge on the opportunities of rural development a better circulation of the information - on funding available, on new instruments that could be locally promoted (for example favouring access to land; promoting a community cooperative), on administrative procedures that could be followed (for example promoting local circuits for the supply of the school canteen) – is also required.

The enhancement of local resources seems to be the starting point on which to build and develop this collective process. As in Castel del Giudice, the recovery and re-use of public/private buildings (Palazzo Santelli, swimming pool, gymnasium and cinema/theatre) and the recovery of traditional crops such as oregano and fava beans are proposals that emerged in the focus group.

An information desk to support youths for accessing public funds, solving bureaucratic issues and informing on farming opportunities connected to multifunctional farming has also been mentioned as a useful instrument that should be created.

The practice is founded first of all on a wide participative process that involves citizens; the municipality has a proactive role in this process and in all the initiatives implemented in Castel del Giudice. This seems to be possible only in small municipalities. The confrontation shows that this kind of participative process could theoretically be implemented in a town of more than 700 inhabitants.

Another point that should be considered is that in Castel del Giudice the mayor has specific competencies in fundraising and project planning, thanks to his work as a business consultant. It is relevant that small municipalities should have support on these issues. The easily access to information on new instruments and support on the bureaucratic procedures (as for example, *associazioni fondiarie*, administrative procedures to activate school organic canteen supplied by local products, community cooperatives) is fundamental as most of the employees of this small municipalities don't have the competencies and the capabilities to support the local politicians in

implementing these innovative initiatives. A dedicated regional office, or digital platform, or local development agency could be very helpful to overcome these problems. For this the youths, LAG, Municipality, local entrepreneurs/local farmers need to be involved.

Further consequences for the context

In order to better define a way forward it would be crucial that the Municipality promotes a participative process to activate youths and more generally the citizens and favor a collective project planning to enhance local resources.

Further innovative ideas to foster the presence in rural areas of newcomers; new entrants into farming and successors.

The support to artisan professions (e.g. blacksmith, tailors) through training courses aimed at both young people and migrants have been mentioned.

The re-activation of services in the town, as for example the re-use of sport (gymnasium, swimming pool) and cultural (theatre/cinema) facilities or the creation of a nursery, could also contribute to create an environment that can attract newcomers.

The Municipality has just received national funds to restore public buildings and made them available for opening business activities, for granting the startup of commercial, craft and agricultural activities and for economic contributions (5,000.00 euro per beneficiary) in favour of newcomers for the purchase and renovation costs of properties to be used as the principal residence. This national policy (Marginal Municipalities Fund) would be an opportunity for small municipalities affected by depopulation and with a low-income level of the resident population to attract newcomers and new entrants into agriculture.

Contributors

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Appendix 5: Zabkowicki County (Poland, NC5)

Organising partner:	University of Wroclaw	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Newcomer artisans (Hungary, HU10C)	
Practice context:	Hajdú-Bihar County and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	Zabkowicki County (LAU1 5020324)- Predominantly urban	
Workshop location:	Nowina, Zabkowicki County	
Date:	November 3rd 2021	

Summary

Zabkowicki County is a LAU1 unit in the Southern part of the Lower Silesia region. While it is smaller than NUTS3 regions where the Hungarian case study was conducted, and slightly more rural in its character, it faces a similar phenomenon as the Hajdú-Bihar County and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties – negative migration rates with some nodes where nonetheless rural newcomers move to. One of these locations in Zabkowicki County is Nowina, where this confrontation workshop was organized. Participants expressed interest in the insights gathered in the Hungarian case and complemented this view with their experiences. A key issue they brought up is the role of early newcomers in paving the way for subsequent persons to move to a rural area. Other issues cover: pooling the limited resources of individual villages in the area in order to gain critical mass for e.g. markets or fairs organisation, access to broadband, nurturing connections with urban areas, and securing access to markets and land for artisanal activities. Future actions of the participants will therefore be focused mostly on these issues.

Context

The confrontation area for this practice is the LAU 1 (5020324) Zabkowicki County located within the Lower Silesia NUTS2 region. Zabkowicki County is a predominantly rural area, with a level of urbanization at 45%, population density of 80 persons/km² and more than 70% of its area devoted to agriculture (CSO, 2021). Being a LAU1 unity, it is obviously smaller than the Hungarian NUTS3 regions where the practice was studied – i.e. the Hajdú-Bihar County and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties –

and slightly more rural (45% urbanization rate compared to 54% and 80% for the Hungarian regions and the slightly lower population density of 80 persons per km² compared to 85 and 93 for Hungary). Nevertheless, it shares important migratory characteristics with that of the Hungarian regions: the net migration of the county has been consistently negative in the 25 years (Fig. 1), but, as in the case of the Hungarian case study, there are individual villages and areas that do not suffer from negative migration rates. Therefore, the confrontation region of the Zabkowicki County provides an opportunity not only to inspire local communities to follow the promising practice, but also to actually confront experiences of better faring localities in the regions against the background of the less successful region.

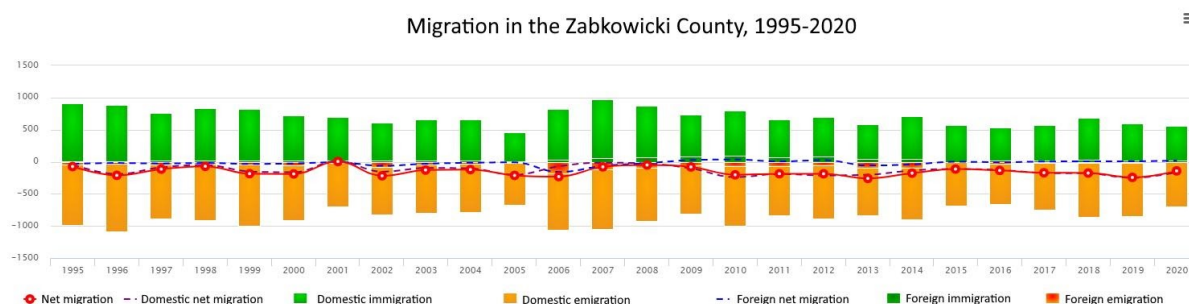


Fig. 1 Migration in the Zabkowicki County, 1995-2020 (source: https://www.polskawliczbach.pl/powiat_zabkowicki, based on the data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, GUS)

One of such locations where there are some signs of immigration amid a depopulating area is Nowina, a small village with ca. 70 residents where the confrontation workshop was organized. In the village, there are already several newcomers, some of them engaged in crafts; an experimental theatre operates in the village and a few guesthouses that also sell local food. Nonetheless, the local community was very interested in the Hungarian case study and expressed their will to join the workshop, which in the end attracted 14 persons (mostly the residents of the village and newcomers) out of the approx. 70 who live in the village.



Fig. 2. The village of Nowina and announcements of the local experimental theatre (source: own)

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The participants of the workshops in Nowina, some of whom were newcomers themselves, expressed clear acceptance and interest in implementing promising practices related to how newcomer artisans settle down and develop their activities in a new rural place. The role of newcomers in rural development, both in terms of social and economic impacts, and especially by means of engagement in local crafts and free professions, was recognized and in fact sparked enthusiasm among some of the participants since it was the path that they themselves had chosen. Other residents were also keen to understand how the arrival of newcomers takes place in other, promising regions, and how to harness this potential for rural development of their area.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Although many issues related to how newcomers can take roots in a new place were discussed, there is one that was considered especially important for the residents of Nowina: there always needs to be someone who starts the process. By this it was meant that a process of immigration of newcomers into a specific place is benefitting from a snowball effect, whereby early newcomers pave the way for other newcomers who then can more easily join the new community. The most important reason for that process is that early newcomers are necessarily in the position of showcasing why and how new residents can bring benefits to the local community members, which is often a difficult process due to possible misunderstanding and tensions that newcomers can face. If early newcomers are able to overcome that, then they create easier conditions for the following migrants to be accepted more easily; and they can also directly help new newcomers as “guides” within the community who introduce them to the local context. This was clearly emphasized as a key factor in that process; other issues are discussed below.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

- Maintaining connections with earlier place of residence

The Hungarian case study has shown how the bonds that a (potential) newcomer has with their earlier place of living hinder the decision to move to the countryside. This barrier was also brought up in the confrontation, although in this case the newcomers explained the connections they had had with urban areas as a factor of *success*. Most businesses run by newcomers are based on these links: for instance, guesthouses that are visited mostly by

urbanites; workshops that are joined by urbanites too; crafts that are sold in the city, since this is where most demand for such products is. In other words, while connections with a city can be a barrier, they can also be decisive when someone has already moved and is trying to find ways to support oneself from the new type of work.

- Access to markets for artisanal products

A related issue is the overall access to markets for artisanal products and services (e.g. workshops). The experiences of newcomers show that it is mostly, although not exclusively, visitors from outside who purchase such products. The issue of access to markets is therefore a crucial factor: without it, the prospects for artisanal production are bleak. However, simultaneously the potential of local residents in purchasing e.g. artisanal food should be explored too.

- Limited resources in a single village

Artisanal newcomers in villages such as Nowina face significant barriers due to the small size of the community (ca. 70 persons). Many initiatives are not able to sustain themselves on the basis of such limited population size. For instance, Organising fairs in the village (in order to improve access to markets) just on the basis of its produce would be probably unsuccessful. Hence, there is a need to combine resources with neighbouring communities and e.g. organize one, broadly promoted by all communities' food market that would shift its location e.g. monthly or yearly.

- Broadband internet connection

A key limit for many newcomer artisans is access to broadband internet connection needed for e.g. selling products on-line, promoting and Organising subscription to workshops or providing accommodation reservation tools. Most newcomers agreed that even if the production is local and traditional, sale and communication channels are not.

- Early reception of newcomers in the village

How newcomers will be received in the early stages of the process of moving is considered by respondents as crucial for their capability of successfully blending into the local community. A person moving to the new place faces significant challenges, and hence there is a significant role to be played by the local community and authorities in supporting newcomers at this point. Several strategies are possible: for instance, providing a 'starting kit' with basic information and contacts, Organising welcome events or simply visiting the new neighbour might often help in unexpected ways.

- Value and worldview gap between newcomers and residents

A significant barrier to the integration of newcomers occurs when there is a clear ideological split resulting from the prevalence of conservative vs. progressive values. Although this should not be generalized, residents argued that newcomers are usually more progressive, which can cause tensions to occur. Poland is especially relevant here as these tensions began occurring more and more even between those newcomers that had already been living in the village for years and other local residents with more conservative views. Hence, this process is problematic also when there are in fact no new newcomers.

- Access to land

Finally, access to land poses – expectedly – a significant barrier to those newcomers who need land (especially: farmland) to undertake their projects. Residents mentioned that land is difficult to buy, regulations as to required conditions for being able to purchase farmland often unclear, and prices – high.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

- Establishing and promoting local markets for artisanal products

As it was already alluded to, local fairs or markets for artisanal products, (co)-organized and promoted by local and regional authorities (including within urban audiences) would be of significant help for the newcomer artisans to support themselves. At the same time, authorities can try and help in reaching on-line markets, for instance by helping in setting one, centralized local portal with artisanal products.

- Supporting early newcomers and their subsequent help for next newcomers

Local authorities and, more broadly, communities, should also establish ways in which newcomers would be welcomed and encouraged to integrate with the local community (which they often are willing to do but might not know how to best do it). A welcome meeting, a starter's kit and a symbolic gift, or similar initiatives would help in overcoming that barrier. Actors who can engage in that process could range from individuals through local businesses and NGOs to representatives of local authorities.

- Enabling better access to land for newcomers

More broadly, local, regional and national authorities should improve access to land for newcomers, especially those who need land for the activities (and food production has been shown to be an important aspect of artisanal production with significant potential). Other types of infrastructures that support access to less tangible issues related to land (knowledge, networks, etc.) should complement access to physical land itself.

- Broadband connection

Local, regional and national authorities should provide broadband connection and infrastructure that could help artisan newcomers in their sales, communication and promotion. This can take place, for instance, in rural hubs that would simultaneously help entrepreneurs and provide other services that would be of help to local residents. (An inspiration can come e.g. from the GrowRemote project examined by the Irish team as one of the promising practices in WP5).

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

- Local food and other trends related to the quality of life as bases for artisanal work
As in the case of the other confrontation, the importance of local food was often brought up in the discussion on how artisanal produce can help in regenerating rural areas. Perhaps food is not innovative, but high quality products are clearly more and more demanded, and therein is the potential for artisanal newcomers to find a solid foundation for their rural life. Other trends broadly related to the quality of life also provide possibilities for artisanal production to flourish.

Lessons learned and recommendations

A couple of lessons and recommendations can be drawn from this confrontation. Generally, even in areas with negative migration rates there can nonetheless be nodes that concentrate newcomers to the area, as is the case in Nowina. Such newcomers that intend to engage in artisanal work face numerous barriers, and local authorities do possess tools to respond to most of them. It is especially important to provide support for early newcomers, who can then use their experiences to guide subsequent immigrants, and also to support newcomers at early stages after they come to the new place, since this is when the support is needed most. Again, there are several ways in which local authorities can do it (described earlier).

The residents of Nowina have clearly used the confrontation workshop as a means of reflecting on their own community. The discussions in brainstorming groups and the focus group were intense, and helped the participants to plan their next steps. Especially the idea of pooling resources with other villages seems to have caught traction and might be exploited in the future. Moreover, joint reflection on the role of early newcomers have contributed to even more integration within the community. One problem that remains unaddressed and pressing, however, is a growing gap between conservative and progressive residents of the village. This, however, is a problem common throughout communities in Poland, both in rural and urban areas and seems to be deeper than the newcomers/resident division.

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Appendix 6: Fejér County (Hungary, NC6)

Organising partner:	CSS	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Landwege e.G. - A producer-consumer cooperative enables regional and ecological food supply (Germany, DE8C)	
Practice context:	NUTS 3 region - Lübeck - Intermediate area	
Confrontation context:	Csákvár, Fejér County (NUTS3), Intermediate area	
Workshop location:	Csákvár	
Date:	November 3rd and 29th 2021	

Summary

The promising practice of Landwege has been confronted by a small, less successful shopping community practice situated in a small town Csákvár and its micro-region in Fejér county, which is an intermediate region in Hungary. The confrontation case, the VÉKA shopping community is located in a relatively small town and its micro-region, so the development of the community is very limited. The VÉKA shopping community was founded in 2018, so they are at the beginning of the process, they are in the starting phase. The size difference is one of the crucial aspects of the success in comparison with Landwege practice. Another important difference is the organisational form which is also a crucial aspect in the success. The legal and organisational form of VÉKA hinders and limits development. The stakeholders of the VÉKA community (participants of the workshops) focused on the organisational form of Landwege as they wanted to learn about how to develop and how to manage a successful consumer-producer community. They found Landwege practice very inspiring.

Context

Csákvár micro-region is situated in the north part of Fejér County at the Central Hungary region 60 km from Budapest and 26 km from Székesfehérvár (county center). Csákvár is a small town with around 6000 inhabitants and the population of the whole micro-region is around 10.000. The micro-region has become more and more popular in the last decades. Families from Budapest and Székesfehérvár bought houses and settled down here. The natural characteristics of the Zámoly basin and Vértes hilly

are very attractive, providing the rural idyll for urban newcomers while the big cities with their services can reach easily from the micro-region.

The Vértesi Kamra (Chamber of Vértés -VÉKA) shopping community was founded in 2018. Two friends, both are newcomers from Budapest and their wives initiated the shopping community. They invited and involved others from their friends and they organized a starting meeting where 7-8 persons, mostly urban newcomers of Csákvár and one local producer participated. One of the initiators is a human ecologist and he planned to build a small community with ecological goals, some of the core group members also demanded the community, while others demanded access to good quality local food, and there are members who focus on ecological aspects, their demands met in the idea of a shopping community. They organized the first pop-up market after three months at the end of the summer in a nice place, the garden of the church in Csákvár. On the first occasion, only five producers provided their products. Now after 3 years the shopping community has 14 producer members.

Vértesi Kamra (VÉKA) operates in a relatively small region, it is unique in Hungary because most of the shopping communities are in a bigger city and involve its regional producers. The size of the region and the limited number of potential consumers result in several limitations. The VÉKA shopping community cannot make profit, they manage the shopping community in a kind of voluntary way, they do not have profit from the organisation, and they also do not ask for any financial contribution from the consumers. In the beginning they did not ask for a contribution from the producers either, but after some cases, for example when a chair broke and the organizers had to pay the damage they started to ask for a contribution from the producers which can cover the organisational costs. In the beginning they organized the pop-up markets in free public places, now, because of the covid they moved to a private place, to a garden of someone.

All of the farmers and producers in the VÉKA shopping community do ecological friendly farming even if they do not have organic evaluation. The organizers, the core group with seven members, visit all the producers and control the quality of the products in an informal way. There are now 14 producers in the shopping community, but there is some fluctuation among them, but there are 10 stable producers. Most of the producers are newcomers in the region, some of them are also new entrants in farming too or moved to the region to start farming for example after university.

Because of the small size of the region, the number of consumers is very low, and it is very difficult to involve more people. The prices are higher and the purchase is not stable, so many locals could not be involved. Only the core organizer group and 10 so-called stable consumers order goods every week. VÉKA organizes a pop-up market once a week and some temporary consumers also appear at these events but mostly the stable consumers are the only buyers.

VÉKA has an online platform where the consumer can order the products from the producers, but the producers bring some extra for the markets for temporary consumers and impulsive buying. They tried to start a campaign via Facebook to access consumers and create a stable group of consumers but they have not had too much success and it is not easy for them especially during the Covid-pandemic.

It is important to emphasize that they do not get any external help e.g. bids to develop the community. The organisational form which is a civic association does not fit the bids and also they do not get credit for development.

Their limitations and difficulties are rooted in the small size of the region, which results in a limited number of consumers and hinders the development of the community.

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

Local stakeholders see that Landwege practice is inspiring, both the starting point and the goals are very similar with Landwege case while the area and the local, regional and national context is very different. Some of the obstacles are strongly connected to these differences.

Almost all of the participants both in brainstorming workshops and also in the focus group emphasize that the organisational form and management methods are the most interesting and important application and implementation aspects of the Landwege practice. They found that the twofold structure and related goals are implementable in their context too and it is very inspiring for them. They are very enthusiastic about the Landwege practice, they want to learn more about it and they feel they can adopt many aspects even if the local context is very different. To develop to the stage of Landwege would be the desirable goal for them. Some of them were very skeptical about being able to do it because of the social and economical circumstances.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Most of the participants emphasise the size difference between the regions. Csákvár micro-region is a very small region compared to Lübeck, which can limit the growth of both consumers and producers. They are sceptical whether a local shop, even only one in the centre, could be economically viable. They are afraid that a small shopping community can not provide a stable market for the producers, and the producers do not see the potential profit of the shopping community membership. Now it is very difficult to find farmers and producers who want to join. Even if they do not know the German rural development context, they think that Germans have several subsidies to help with that kind of initiative. There is no effective subsidy for the consumer-producer communities in Hungary.

They see that brand management is very important and the practice of Landwege is very inspiring for them. They also try to develop a kind of brand, but it is difficult because there are very few potential producers and they are not sure about the motivation power of the brand, but they would like to develop something. They think a kind of competition between producers could help the motivation and commitment to the community, as the Landwege has. They like very much the strong quality control of Landwege practice, they think it is very important to have quality control, they also try to select and control their producers and the products. It is very difficult because most of the producers are very small and they do not do official organic farming, the shopping community does not have a legal tool to control the products, only trust, and personal relationships can guarantee the quality. Inequalities of land structure result in potential limitations for this shopping community, there are not

enough small or medium-sized farms in the region and most of them can not grow because of the lack of land. While big farms do not want to produce organic or more environmentally friendly products, they prefer industrialized agriculture. It is an important critical factor by the context, which is strongly related to the size and not only the specific circumstance.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context.

Mostly the barriers were emphasized by the participants. One of the key issues is the demand for a better quality of food and for a strong and small local community. Mostly the newcomers have that kind of demand and they initiate the shopping community but it is important that some locals also want to join. It is also important that the area became more and more attractive for newcomers, so the demand for local and environmentally friendly food could grow.

The following barriers were discussed during the workshops

- There is a little importance of ecological factors for most producers in the region, so it is **hard to find suitable producers**
- Shopping community is **not competitive with big chains** (especially pricing and convenience)
- **There is a little demand** for organic products by local inhabitants, only a weak group of locals, mainly newcomers, have this demand.
- **Mostly processed products are marketable in the shopping community (honey, jam, etc.)**, but finding local artisans and producers is much more difficult than to find farmers (which is also difficult), shopping community do not have legal framework and capacity to process the raw materials and create own products with own brand as Landwege has it now (e.g. bakery, and kitchen)
- An important barrier is the **legislative problems**: shopping community only can work as a civic organisation, they can not buy and sell directly, they are only an intermediate actor, so they have no legal tool to control and manage only to facilitate (this is why the organisational form of Landwege is so innovative and inspiring)
- **Tender requirements don't match reality**, there are no effective development funds for the consumer-producers communities. There are some bids for producers, there are some for civic organisations but never for both or for especially the demand of shopping community
- Supply problems (risk) It was strongly emphasized by the participants that a small shopping community **can not provide stable and predictable stocks**, the low number of joint farmers can cause supply problems, so **the risk** is much more bigger than in a big food chain with stable stocks.
- The **lack of information** is a very important problem. Most of the local inhabitants are not aware of the shopping community, they do not understand the principles and goals, they have no information about the advantages and opportunities of a shopping community membership. Local farmers and food producers also do not have enough information about the advantages and disadvantages of ecologically friendly farming and about the shopping community membership. There are very few successful practices in Hungary. Education and learning for consumers and producers would be very important
- One of the most important problems is the **lack of trust**. Producer and consumer communities should be based on trust. The trust is very weak even between community

members, because of it the fluctuation among both producers and consumers is very high.

- The **problem of access to the land** also appears in the context of a shopping community. It is very hard to start farming activities in the region because there is no available and salable land. The land price is extremely high, there are very big landowners in this region. This can be an obstacle for new entrants and for the development of small farmers.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice.

- Increasing the commitment and trust of shopping community members
- A more suitable organisational and legal form is needed, now they are in the beginning but for the development they have to change from the civic association form to something better, the practice of Landwege and the cooperative can be an option.
- Membership should be more organized especially in the case of producers.
- Marketing activities should be developed even if they are very small and they are in the beginning.
- Consumer recruitment is needed
- Strategy and tools for consumer retention are very important. Community development and learning could be important tools for it.
- Maintaining identity – building trust both within the community and local society.
- Legislative support and subsidies needed
- More suitable calls for tenders
- Promoting & educating people both at local as well as national levels would be effective.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context.

Community building and related trust building could be an important element for rural regeneration through the good life feeling in rural areas. Shopping community is only one potential tool for it, but the development of the civic organisation and building local networks between small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs, locals, and civic organisations are crucial. Small communities could be and should be the base and starting point for a more sustainable way of life of societies.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The dual structure of Landwege, the linking of environmental education and the producer-consumer cooperative, is definitely an element that is worth introducing elsewhere. There is a good chance to introduce it in Hungary in the long run. However, this requires a change in the legal and funding rules.

Strengthening environmental education is feasible. The cooperative form and the store network selling organic products cannot be realized in the short term, but maybe in the long run.

Environmental education is becoming more and more important in primary and secondary education so that successes can be achieved in this area. On the other hand, producer-consumer cooperatives that connect farmers and consumers are more difficult to set up and operate. This is partly due to the low demand for expensive organic products. At the same time, the cooperative form is stigmatized because under socialism it was a widespread form in agricultural production. This makes it difficult to implement it nowadays. Therefore, there is currently no legally secure form of cooperation that would ensure the long-term operation of such a dual structure. In addition, the legal environment in Hungary and the structure of the agricultural support available for small farms do not facilitate the creation of such an organisation.

An important basis for the success of the Landwege model is the geographical location, which provides a fairly large number of farmers and grocery chains with a large number of customers. In Hungary, and also in Csákvár region which has a relatively favourable location this is difficult to imagine, because even the largest rural cities are much smaller than in Germany. Therefore, the number of both farmers and consumers is much lower. In today's support structure, large companies enjoy an economic advantage that makes it unattractive to join such a cooperative. The form of organic farming is too expensive for smallholders, and obtaining organic certification involves a lot of bureaucracy.

Successors and new entrants, or newcomers can only be successfully involved in building a network if they have an organisation or cooperative in which they can easily and quickly join. Since such a cooperative has not worked so far, every farmer has developed their own sales strategy. This most often means selling through purchasers and the smallest farmers can sell their products at local markets and fairs. In addition, it may be less interesting to participate in the formation of a cooperative. However, they would be more likely to join a good functioning cooperative.

At the same time, we have also found examples of newcomers looking to join forces and investing in building a producer network. However, these initiatives are likely to fail. This is due to the lack of an appropriate organisational form. So there is no good practice for organisational form at the national level that can be adopted.

Our case study indicates that small farmers are looking for an opportunity to build a well-functioning consumer-producer community. That is why they were so interested in Landwege's operating principles and regulatory system. The next step, therefore, is to prepare for the formation of a cooperative or a very similar organisation with the involvement of some active and interested farmers.

An overview of the Hungarian legal regulatory environment is needed, which requires legal advice. In addition, market research is needed. To map all the farmers near a big city who are willing to join such a cooperative. In addition, mapping purchasing power, looking for consumers who are willing to pay for more expensive than average organic food. There is a need to find local politicians or professionals with adequate lobbying power to foster the introduction of effective development funds and to help to find local supporters.

Following actors to be involved:

- An organizer (kind of professional leader) who is at the forefront of creating a cooperative or similar effective organisation form.
- A professional who is aware of tender constructions that provide support to smaller farmers.
- A legal adviser who helps to form the cooperative/ proper organisation and shape the way it operates.
- Some/more enthusiastic farmers want to belong to such an organisation (which is not only an open network).
- Some enthusiastic consumers, preferably those with experience in one of the shopping communities.
- Local decision-makers who are willing to support such an initiative, either financially or otherwise.
- A professional with adequate lobbying power to foster the introduction of effective development funds for the consumer-producers communities.

Further innovative ideas to foster the presence in rural areas of newcomers; new entrants into farming and successors.

Strong small communities at local level who can articulate their interests and demand for sustainable farming can be inspiring for farmers to change for sustainable farming and even to start farming activities. Local communities can foster innovative ideas at the local level as the case of Landwege demonstrates.

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Appendix 7: Germany (NC7)

Organising partner:	KultLand, ILS	Innovation Type
Practice:	Landwege e.G. - A producer-consumer cooperative enables regional and ecological food supply (Germany, DE8C)	
Practice context:	NUTS 3 region - Lübeck - Intermediate area	
Confrontation context:	Germany (NUTS 0)	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 16th 2021	

Summary

In November 2021, Kulturland and ILS held an online event in collaboration with the Bundesverband der Regionalbewegung, with the participation of 32 people. The workshop's objective was to present the case study Landwege eG and to discuss the transferability of this approach to other regions in order to favour rural development in Germany. After the presentation of the case in the plenary session, we split the audience in 3 areas of interest to explore the topic from a diverse point of view. The groups representing the consumers, farmers and public authorities made extensive contributions to the enrichment of the case, adding critical factors, barriers to the implementation as well as proposals to facilitate the removal of the barriers. The process was concluded with a focus group discussion, concluding that while such an example of cooperation could be highly suitable to foster the development of any intermediate rural region in Germany, the presence of the right set of human skills and personal characteristics of the initiators as well as the respective impacted community need to be carefully considered.

Context

For this confrontation we selected participants from all over Germany (NUTS 0 Level). The case study addresses a very actual topic, which can be relevant and interesting for every region in Germany. For this reason we decided to open the discussion for the whole country.

There are 10 consumer-producer associations (CPA) in Germany, which were mostly funded in the late 80s but there are currently a many-fold initiatives aiming to create one. Germany has a strong tradition of building networks and Organising collective structures to align around a common aim. For example, one participant mentioned: "cooperative as a legal form has a good reputation and is well suited and established in Germany" (DE3-NC7 02). In the beginning only few people are necessary to establish such a collaboration, so many connect it with very little effort. Due to the extended

national geographic area such organisations also make a lot of sense, since they create a sense of security in a smaller regional market within the national boundaries. The trend for more transparency in the food system¹³ strongly supports the drive to regionalisation. This can be specified by the increasing wish of consumers to know the “origin of their food” (DE3-NC7 02) as one of the participants stated, and the wish for fresh products from the neighbourhood. Cooperative regionalisation also creates the necessary structure for learning and knowledge exchange, to potentialize positive results through bundling of energy and the creation of synergies.

In partnership with one of the organisations promoting the regionalization and collaboration of producers - the Federal Association of the Regional Movement¹⁴- the regional team developed the workshop aiming to reach a broad range of participants from different stakeholder groups as well as different parts of the country.

The trend for collaboration seems to be very strong, and to even be reaching partnerships across borders, as one of the participants stated: in the triangle D, NL, Belgium “there is an initiative promoting regionalisation and the creation of alternative food systems” (DE3-NC7 07). This network of players in the agricultural and food sectors - in this case Foodhub - engages in the development of new propositions and future-oriented solutions on how to move food from the field to the shelf.

Many of the current trends identified in the rural trends analysis¹⁵ support the diversification and specialisation of the agricultural and rural economy, as well as the increasing willingness to cooperate with other players in the food system. Consumer-producer associations could therefore be a powerful instrument to promote the desired changes that result in more transparency, food-production alternatives, as well as security and sovereignty in the food system.

But within this fertile environment it rests one important question: how can consumers and producers be brought together for a long lasting cooperation?

Results

First impressions

The interest in the case study was very high since Landwege eG is a well known and established consumer-producer cooperative (CPC) in Germany. All different stakeholder groups mentioned several advantages that such a system can offer. Starting with the human and social effects such as the (a) ability to connect a broad range of people with similar interests, but from different target groups - namely ecological food production - , (b) the valorization of the customers as individuals as well as (c) the contribution to the development of a higher consciousness and self-confidence of consumers through knowledge transfer and consumer-producer binding. Furthermore the

¹³ Trend card 60, ruraltrends.eu

¹⁴ Der Bundesverband der Regionalbewegung eG, <https://www.regionalbewegung.de/aktuelles/>

¹⁵ Trend cards 2, 23, 24, 25, 60, ruraltrends.eu

participants mentioned advantages in the spectrum of more obvious business and financial advantages, such as: joined forces that enable the operation of larger investments, longer-term planning, enhanced direct-marketing reach, market proximity via the cooperative shop, possibility to add an additional sales channel to the direct selling, financial stability, resilience and independence. Under this perspective, independence from the market structure was highlighted: the cooperative enables the creation of “a separate market that enables members of the cooperative to act more independent from the global market prices” (DE3-NC7 10). This is one specific aspect that was mentioned across all stakeholder groups, for example one participant of the stakeholder group public authorities mentioned: “for farmers it would be attractive to be in a cooperative, because they can guarantee an outlet market” (DE3-NC7 09) and “the broad range of products required in food retailing (e.g. farm shops, village stores) secures a sales market for member farms” (DE3-NC7 04). Through the increased brand awareness achieved through collaboration, closed-loop production, processing and distribution as well as the fact that “each coop member acts as a multiplier” (DE3-NC7 02) a certain market growth can be organically and sustainably generated.

The participants many times highlighted the advantage of cooperatives, if compared to (a) associations, due to its capacity to better steer growth and act in a more entrepreneurial form, as well as to achieve greater commitments from partners and members when “compared to the coming and going of people in associations” (DE3-NC7 14) and (b) to solidary agriculture¹⁶ for its capacity to reach a broader target audience.

Critical factors

Participants were very positive towards the case therefore the critical factors identified were limited. Interestingly, the authorities made most contributions regarding this topic, and they were mainly related to the availability of an appropriate demand. Participants mentioned that the transferability should be evaluated from the customer base view, e.g.:

- a. in regions that have a high purchasing power and high education,
- b. regions where there is an old “organic scene,” and
- c. very rural regions, where community-supported agriculture is being run by young people.

If these conditions are not available, it would be necessary to educate and increase the awareness of the population and the producers of the new forms of agriculture such as cooperative community-supported agriculture, as well as about the culture and responsibility towards regional and organic food.

Key issues and barriers

Participants identified a big set of barriers, some of them shared among different stakeholder groups, some of them were only mentioned by a specific stakeholder.

The participants broadly agreed that it is difficult to recruit new and motivate existing consumer-members. This activity could be cost intensive, “spin the drums to recruit people, recruit members is costly” (DE3-NC7 11). In general consumers are interested and suitable, but often do not

¹⁶ SoLaWi, Solidarisches Landwirtschaft, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/>

make active contributions for a long time , as it needs “years of commitment and stamina from consumers” (DE3-NC7 05) which “most of the time only want to procure their food cheaper” (DE3-NC7 05). Actively engaged members , who gain interest and commitment to voluntarily dedicate time to manifold activities (liabilities like general assembly, etc) are rare (DE3-NC7 06). Another common topic was the government subsidies policy. Both sides, farmers and consumers, mentioned that those policies are too strict from their point of view, because both existing subsidies and trading agreements create incentives in the wrong direction and “set fatal pricing signals” (DE3-NC7 02). Too restrictive rules do not leave room for pioneering and innovation. Farmers with their strenuous working day “go to the tooth” (DE3-NC7 05), at some point the strength is over to work in the honorary office. This effort should be honoured.

Additional barriers identified by the different stakeholder groups were as follows (stakeholder group mentioned in brackets):

1. financial means for the initial investments to diversify their offering (farmers)
2. cost of hiring administrative staff (consumers)
3. Marketing capability to (a) effectively communicate genuine regionality to the outside world and (b) to differentiate from existing ones (consumers & farmers)
4. Lack of contact persons in the administration on the subject of nutrition (public administration)
5. Consumers' contradictory desire for low price and high convenience: only with a widespread interest in regional and/or organic food is it possible to create more demand in that sector and therefore initiate a change in agriculture (public administration).

Proposed measures to overcome the obstacles identified

Solutions proposed by the participants covered a variety of topics and are listed below irrespectively of which stakeholder group has created it:

- a. Marketing
 - i. Taking consumer needs into account, e.g. via an intermediary between farms and members, a person who involves the customer group in the operational planning at an early stage.
 - ii. Innovations in direct marketing, broader exchange of information on the range of goods on offer as well as expanding the range of goods offered with complementary products, even if sometimes it happens at the costs of those products coming from other regions. “But we identified mushrooms were in high demand and we therefore searched for local producers to start the mushroom business in Bayern” (DE3-NC7 04).
 - iii. Storytelling and contemporary marketing, e.g following the trend on veganism “for new/young target groups not the price is decisive for vegan consumption, but the story behind the product” (DE3-NC7 02).
- b. Financial support for innovation

- i. Encourage bottom-up initiatives and not the ones demanded top-down, “an innovation fund, with money and trust” (DE3-NC7 12).
 - ii. Financial support to farmers for the long period of conversion from industrial/ intensive to organic farming.
- c. Human capital
 - i. Besides money, members also need to participate to feel that they are a part of the organisation. But it is important to achieve this objective without transmitting the feeling of an obligation (for members) to "join", but that they can do so voluntarily.
 - ii. Identify pioneers, “draft horses¹⁷” (DE3-NC7 15) that have the power to drive development. If there aren’t enough available in the region, culture in the countryside (festivals, art cafes, etc,) could be created, to make rural areas more attractive for those types of pioneers and creative personalities.
 - iii. Specific targets, for example seniors, e.g. “senior academy” (DE3-NC7 02) for their time availability and engagement, as well as well connected people for their multiplier effect.
- d. Policy and administration
 - i. Create a “nutrition council” that supports political bodies and administration better and transmits knowledge about agriculture and the real producing-conditions of farmers.
 - ii. Public policy for access to land: public sector to purchase agricultural land.
 - iii. Nationwide data-collection to evaluate the current development of organic agriculture, clearly demonstrating in which segments there is a shortage of organic supply and therefore more organic farmers are needed.
- e. Community building and education/awareness building
 - i. Village stores as social meeting places (multi-functional houses) offering social activities and events to recruit members among other educational and awareness building objectives.
 - ii. Contacts with the population through farm visits.
 - iii. Regional and/or organic food in schools , KiTas, canteens.
 - iv. Actively seek cooperation within the community to approach and convince people.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The confrontation confirmed that human capital is crucial as the key factor for the success of the Landwege best practice. Financial resources, a favorable political, structural and social environment are important as well. But without the endurance and idealism required to build long lasting partnerships only average results will be achieved. A group of people with a lot of idealism and engaged over a long period of time, highly motivated to create a new and sustainable form of bringing farmer products to the market, willing to engage in meaningful activities is the key skill set for promoting innovation in the rural environment. The cooperation of several self-motivated people who supported each other, and through voluntary commitment are able to surpass the initial lack of financial resources which leads to a long lasting positive outcome. Fairness and solidarity can be

¹⁷ “Zugspferde” is a German expression to designate people highly self-motivated and with great stamina to pursue an objective.

promoted and rewarded, but cannot easily be subsidized. These are human characteristics that should be fostered.

The positive impact of collaboration that is achieved through the cooperative offers through size and diversity an improved capacity to deal with the increasing complexity of global markets. The horizontal collaboration of various producers creates not only the obvious advantages of security and stability through pooled financial resources, but also a more attractive and broader offering for consumers. In order to be successful the collaboration has to be lived all the way up to the supervisory board, which should be set up with members of all stakeholders involved such as producers, retailers and consumers.

Even though the topics discussed and the results brought by the different stakeholder groups were quite aligned, there were differences in opinions related to representatives from urban versus rural areas: the buying power, the size of the demand for organic products, the costs for implementing certain activities such as awareness campaign, educational and cultural events can vary significantly between different regions. Not only are the costs higher in urban areas, but the availability of trained and qualified people is scarcer in rural areas.

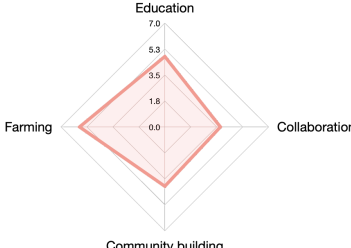
Due to the complexity of the process to establish a consumer-producer cooperative from scratch, we come to the conclusion that a “Consumer-Producer Cooperative Academy” would be a highly suitable way to provide the interested groups with a network and platform for learning and exchange. The documentation with a how-to phase model, with step-by-step recommendations and offering tools for each phase would add effectiveness and efficacy to the initiatives, speeding up the process and increasing the probability for success. From the creation of the cooperative all the way to the different phases of operation, this knowledge-base - nested within a network of like minded experienced people - would systematically lead newbies to the ideal approach, by walking the steps of the pioneers. Such a network, with experts offering support, could be created in collaboration between educational institutions and the regional agricultural associations.

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Appendix 8: Sancraiu commune (Romania, NE1)

Organising partner:	Ecoruralis	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Farma Martynika: an ecotourism farm showing that changing from urban to rural life is difficult but possible (PL2A)	
Practice context:	Legnicko-glogowski sub-region (NUTS 3), Intermediate	
Confrontation context:	Alunisu village, Sancraiu commune (NUTS 3) - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Alunisu village	
Date:	November 25th 2021	

Summary

Exploring the replication of the Farma Martynika as a new entrant settling good practice in a predominantly rural north-western Romania proved an appropriate confrontation due to its background and typology of local stakeholders, on a similar journey and facing similar hurdles with the example case. The main difference consists in the level of community involvement and diversified activities that are much lower in the confrontation region. While at Farma Martynika the newcomers are engaged into various agro tourism, farming and community building activities, Sancraiu commune, while rooted in tourism based on folklore and biodiversity, still lacks more social cohesion and the development of more holistic approaches connecting different isolated but growing initiatives.

Context

Sâncraiu commune is located in the western part of Cluj county, Romania, in the immediate vicinity of Huedin town in a historical-geographical region also known as Tara Calatei (RO) or Kalotaszeg (HU). In the vicinity of the commune there is an European road, respectively the national roads linking several communities. The commune is composed of Sâncraiu village, as a commune centre, respectively the belonging other villages: Alunişu in the western part of the commune territory, Brăişoru in the northern part, and Domoşu and Horlacea in the eastern part. The distance between Sâncraiu and Huedin, the nearest town, is 6 km, and between the commune and Cluj-Napoca, the county seat, is 56 km.

Sâncraiu commune has an area of 5714 hectares, of which the largest area (4448 hectares, 78% of the total territory) is agricultural land. According to the form of ownership, the agricultural land is owned in proportion to over 83% by private owners, 16% is property of the commune and less than 1% of the agricultural land is public property. The non-agricultural land ownership is by 54% private owners, 21% owned by the commune and 24% is public property.

The total agricultural area consists mainly of pastures and hayfields, arable land and vineyards and orchards in a smaller percentage. This distribution of agricultural land is related to the poor quality of arable land, compared to soils with increased agricultural productivity, so animal husbandry is a more suitable agricultural activity for soils and climate. from the commune.

The forest fund covers 922 hectares, occupying the second place in the structure of the administrative area of the commune (16% of the total administrative area) and is represented by forests and other lands with forest vegetation.

The commune counts almost 2000 inhabitants, the majority of them belonging to the Hungarian ethnic group (90%) and the Romanian one (9%) most of them rooted in farming and agro-tourism but with an age average of 58, also targeted in the last few years by new-comers with different origins (Dutch, Belgian, UK) and coming mostly from an urban backgrounds. These newcomers started to engage into innovative agricultural practices like permaculture and peasant agroecology but also setting up agro-touristic enterprises, diversifying their activities by holding practical workshops, artisan activities and building restoration.

One of the villages of the commune, Alunisu, has become an informal hub for newcomers and new-entrants into farming. The Provision Transylvania farm is located here: a farm, a living and learning centre in agroecology rooted in regenerative practices and nonviolence, offering training and workshops. Thus, this area was chosen to confront the Farma Martynika case study due to the similarities that the two contexts hold, but also due to the perspectives and inspiration that the case can offer to local stakeholders.

Results

Organized as a workshop in the village of Alunisu and hosted by Provision Transylvania, this confrontation involved three brainstorming sessions and one focus group. The participants were very diverse, from local farmers and artisans to rural development experts, local authority representatives and citizens.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The stakeholders found the case of Farma Martynika very inspirational and many of them recognized similarities with their “life journeys”, especially in leaving behind the urban landscapes and setting up activities rooted in rurality. The case managed to generate a lot of interest as it successfully related with the stakeholders, either through the farming, training or community building examples that it holds. Participants found very useful the multilateral approach that Farma Martyninka took, recognising that in both contexts this approach would offer more economic and social stability as well as resilience. There was a widespread acceptance that the case can be replicated successfully in the commune and promoted as a success story that has a lot of potential to inspire.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

The brainstormings highlighted a strong factor in *available infrastructure* that is needed at an affordable price. While being an attractive destination for newcomers, Sancraiu commune is a very expensive one to settle and start a project like Farma Martynika.

Also, *cooperation with different stakeholders* was identified as important: having a constructive dialog with local inhabitants welcoming an idea as such, even if not actively supporting it from the start. Setting up *local community networks to support social life* also seemed important in the discussions, especially like the Rural Housewives circle exemplified in the Farma Martynika case. Female participants especially recognized the importance of social connection and mutual inspiration and support when being a newcomer in the rural space.

Synergy of actions was referred several times too. While different initiatives set up and are running independently in Sancraiu commune, from Provision Transylvania to a network of agroturistic guesthouses and farming activities, more coordination and synergy would ensure more economic possibilities securing larger tourists groups, producing more local food and planning events around a commonly agreed timeline.

Institutional support was mentioned as crucial, from support in identifying available land and facilitating transfer, official promotion and highlighting opportunities in accessing EU funds to upscale the activity.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

Stakeholders mentioned several key issues that revealed strong barriers in developing the case practice in this specific region:

Geographic and historic Location

From a macro-regional perspective, it has been outlined several times that though both contexts come from Eastern Europe, the social and economic development backgrounds are very different. It was observed that generally in Romania, the concept of “complete life-change” mostly refers to moving away from rurality not to embrace it, thus it only still appeals to a niche society (nonetheless observed as a growing one in the country and recognising that out-migration is still lower than national average in the commune).

Agroecology and regenerative farming

The uptake of agroecology and regenerative farming methods are poor in the region and farmers mostly practice intensive agriculture which generates monocultures and deplete local natural resources.

Access to Land

Access to land was identified as a main barrier by many participants. Land concentration has gotten high in the area of the confrontation, with a few large farmers upscaling intensely their activities. New entrants in farming have a hard time in identifying available land and the local land market is high and prone to speculation.

Access to Market

There are few opportunities in the region to market out agricultural products, though participants recognized that with more synergy in action such cases as Farma Martynika would have stronger chances to take roots. An example was given through making sure – with institutional support – that local agroturistic guesthouses mainly supply themselves with foodstuff from local farms. Given the high number of these guesthouses in Sancraiu, the market would intensify.

Ageing population but expensive housing

Several times throughout the conversation this factor was brought forward. Given the aging population and lack of extra-family farm succession, housing possibilities along with land are locked in the property and inheritance rights.

Transit-tourism

The issue of transit-tourism was identified by local experts and authority mostly considering that many tourists don't plan for longer stays in local guest houses but rather just visit for a couple of days as a layover towards their final tourism destination.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

- Local social networking
- Development of farming cooperatives and mixed cooperation with agrotouristic guesthouses;
- Creating transparency and access to local land and property registry to facilitate access to land and housing;
- Limiting large monocultural farming and land concentration through a more holistic and inclusive local authority strategy in attracting newcomers and new entrants in farming;

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

- Promoting agroecology as an overarching concept in food production and landscape management;
- Exploring more and making best use of the local commons (mostly pastures);
- Facilitate networking of local agro tourism initiatives and linking them with initiatives like the Global Ecovillage Network.

Lessons learned and recommendations

While the discussions revolved a lot around the aspects of agro-tourism and how to overcome local barriers in setting up initiatives like Farma Martynika, the aspect of financial planning for such an endeavour were not sufficiently covered. Some participants highlighted the opportunity of accessing European Funds through Local Action Groups.

Also, brainstorming about marketing ideas that would attract events, tourists and food consumers alike, were not sufficiently learned.

Further consequences for the context and next steps

Inspired by the debate and by the positive action and energy behind the Farma Martynika, stakeholders have put the basis of an informal network having its scope to take local action in promoting the region especially in the lines of potential new entrants.

Also, channels of dialog were opened up with the local authority to support transparency around access to land opportunities and creating a new strategy for the commune based on

several targets: biodiversity enhancement, social revival and upscaling economic opportunities for new entrants.

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Appendix 9: England (NE2)

Organising partner:	Shared Assets	
Practice:	Farms with strong citizen participation (Netherlands/Belgium, NL_BE3A)	
Practice context:	Netherlands and Belgium (NUTS 0) - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	NUTS (0-1) England - - Predominantly urban	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 4th 2021	

Summary

In November 2021, Shared Assets held an online event with the Landworkers' Alliance attended by around 16 people to discuss whether the 'Herenboeren' model of community farms from the Netherlands (as researched and presented by Dr Marjolein Spaans from Technische Universiteit Delft) could also be useful in England, particularly for supporting new entrants into agriculture. Both the break-out room 'brainstorming' and the main room 'focus group' sessions hosted lively discussions of the opportunities for and barriers to implementing such a model in the English context, as well as more general conversation about rural regeneration. Overall, participants thought that while the Herenboeren model was interesting, there would likely need to be adjustments in cost and structure for it to be applicable and accessible in England, but that there were potential ways to take it forwards if there was an enthusiastic and concerted effort to do so across the land and food movements.

Context

We chose to confront the Herenboeren practice from The Netherlands with the English context due to a number of similarities between these countries. Both areas have similar demographic profiles, with ageing populations (Lewis, Barton and Cromarty, 2021, Statista, 2018). This includes farmers - in England, around a third of all farm holders are over the typical retirement age of 65 years, and just 3% are under 35 years old (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs et al., 2021: 22), in the Netherlands, over 64% of all agricultural workers are aged 40 years and above (Eurostat, 2017).

The temperate, maritime climatic conditions of both countries are also comparable (Met Office, n.d., Wintle, 2021), particularly in the flatter East of England, which is the most geographically proximate to

the Netherlands, meaning similar forms of agriculture are potentially possible, although in practice, there are differences in the main sorts of produce cultivated. Both countries have a relatively high proportion of agricultural land as a percentage of land area (54.11% in the Netherlands [World Bank, 2019], and 69.54% in England [calculated based on statistics from Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021 and overall land area from WorldAtlas, 2021]), but horticultural production makes up a higher proportion of agriculture in the Netherlands (Eurostat, n.d.) than in England, where livestock and arable farming dominate (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2019). In the past, a higher proportion of fruit and vegetables consumed in England were produced here, and there is now increased interest in reviving this sector due to the experience of food shortages during the early COVID-19 pandemic (Wheeler, 2020), and the ongoing climate impact of importing so much food (Wong, 2016).

In both countries, intensive, industrial, export-oriented agriculture is now the norm - with just 2.6% of England farmed organically and only 3.7% of the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2019). However, movements for smaller scale, agroecological practices which supply local communities also exist, supported by groups such as the respective national organisations for Community Supported Agriculture, and there is considerable interest from younger people in entering this sort of farming (Oppedijk van Veen et al., 2019, The Landworkers' Alliance, 2020). In both countries though, high land prices make starting out in farming difficult for new entrants. In the Netherlands, due to its smaller and more densely populated land area, average price per hectare is very high at €69,632 (Eurostat, 2021), whilst in England it is still high at an average of £17,287 per hectare for the equivalent time period (Knight Frank, 2021).

Although the Dutch new entrants 'promising practice' research for Ruralization under WP5 concentrated on the Herenboeren model in a particular municipality - Weert - where a Herenboeren farm had been established, and the equivalent UK research looked at the Farmstart Network across England, Scotland and Wales, for the confrontation activity we chose to focus on the English and Dutch contexts at a national scale, since in each country this is the level at which we felt the essential infrastructure might need to be developed in order for the Herenboeren model to function. In the Netherlands, the national Herenboeren organisation is responsible for training and employing the farmers, supporting with farm set-up (including issues such as insurance and land leasing), and also undertakes research and communications work, funded by an annual service fee paid to them by the member farms (Herenboeren, n.d.). In England currently, there are some organisations (such as the CSA Network, Landworkers' Alliance, or the Ecological Land Cooperative) which contain elements of, or have similar aims to, the Herenboeren approach, but we were interested in seeing what more could be learned from this Dutch model to support new entrants and community farms in England. In particular, regarding the Herenboeren farms' aim of meeting 60% of household food needs (Spaans, 2021), we were interested in what a similar approach here might mean in terms of boosting local economies and resilience, improving people's health, and strengthening their connection to farming and their food in rural and peri-urban areas.

Results

After presentations from the Landworkers' Alliance on their recent work on resilient local food systems, and Dr Spaans on the Dutch case study of the Herenboeren model, there was a question and answer session to begin the discussion. This was helpful as it highlighted what was clear or needed more explanation for participants. We then moved into four break-out rooms to allow everyone a good amount of time to speak. The following questions were given as prompts to guide the brainstorming discussions:

- What opportunities are there for this sort of model happening in England? Would it be useful here, especially to support new entrants in farming?
- What might some of the barriers be? How could these be overcome? Who would need to be involved?

After the brainstorming sessions and some reflections on these, we moved into the focus group discussion with all the participants in one (digital) room. The results of the event discussions as a whole are summarised in the sections below.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

There was considerable interest in implementing the Herenboeren model, illustrated in the number of people who signed up for the event (close to 50) and the enthusiasm of the participants who turned up on the day of the discussions. Participants recognised the similar demographic context in England to the Netherlands, with lots of people living relatively near farmland, potentially meaning that such a model could work here. Attendees also noted the similarities in some elements of models already in place in England to the presented model. For example, the Ecological Land Cooperative seeks to buy land and offer long term leases to small-scale agroecological farmers (Ecological Land Cooperative, n.d.), and the CSA Network UK supports a range of models of community involvement in farming (CSA Network UK, 2021). Neither of these organisations have the full structure or exact objectives of the Herenboeren model, but awareness amongst participants of how these existing organisations work in England meant there was a general level of acceptance of the practice presented.

Critical factors for and barriers to implementing the innovative practice in England

A key barrier to implementation of the Herenboeren model in England highlighted by participants was the cost of becoming a cooperative member, stated to be €2000 for a household or €1000 for a single person. It was thought that another model of funding the start-up expenses could be needed as many people would struggle to put in this amount of money up front, meaning participation in the model would be inaccessible for most people.

Access to land, particularly the 20 hectares suggested as needed in the Herenboeren model, was also noted as a major barrier. Participants said that while there is a perception that land and housing is easier to come by in some parts of the country, such as the North, it is still expensive and difficult to access

there, sometimes driven by demand for second/holiday homes purchased by more affluent people who mainly live in major cities (a trend which has seemingly intensified during the pandemic) (Angeles Fitton, 2021). Securing land for a suitable length of time for long-term agroecological techniques such as agroforestry, or achieving the desired biodiversity outcomes were suggested as making access to land even more challenging.

Another barrier to the implementation of the Herenboeren model in England was around transport. Due to the different complexity of terrain and elevation in some parts of England, compared to the flatter Netherlands, and the potentially greater distances between settlements in England as a larger land mass, participants thought people might have to travel further to pick up their produce shares and wouldn't necessarily be able to cycle as recommended.

Measures to overcome barriers and actors who need to be involved to ensure success

One measure that participants came up with to help overcome the cost barrier for cooperative membership was to seek out external funding. In the Herenboeren model no grants or other outside funding is sought as the shares are designed to be enough to cover all set-up costs. While this is potentially good in terms of sustainability, seeking grants or other sources of funding to subsidise or replace shares was suggested in an English context to be a way to open up the model to people with a range of income levels. One way to do this suggested by participants was through a 'paying it forward' or 'solidarity' approach, where people who can afford to pay extra for their shares do so, so that a cheaper price can be paid by less affluent co-op members.

There was a strong feeling in the discussions that not only do the demographics of the cooperative members matter, but those of the farmers themselves too. Participants thought cultivating opportunities to support people of all ages, ethnicities and experience levels to participate in learning to farm was vital. This might need to be proactively considered during recruitment processes and training programmes organised at the national level, as, for example, currently farming is the least ethnically diverse sector in the UK, with 98.6% of farm managers and owners identifying as White British (Asgarian, 2020), and specific action is needed to address this and other aspects of structural inequality within the farming industry.

Engaging with planning professionals and policy at national and local levels was also thought to be essential by participants to overcome some barriers and ensure success. For example, areas designated as 'Green Belt', where construction is limited to restrict urban sprawl and protect the countryside (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2012) can be hard to get planning permission on for farm infrastructure or accommodation for farmers, which participants felt was critical to have in place. Although buildings for agricultural purposes should be allowed within the Green Belt (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2012), in practice planning permission for these structures can be difficult to secure. From Shared Assets' experience, people can get into a 'catch-22' situation

where their planning application can be rejected if no evidence of agricultural activities can be provided for the site, but these farming activities are hard to initiate without the construction of infrastructure, which requires planning permission.

Engaging with existing landowners was also thought to be a potential route to overcome the issue of land access; some participants thought there were increasingly large numbers of landowners interested in making some land available for community farming initiatives. Participants also thought 20 hectares was quite a large amount of land for a community farm, and perhaps by seeking smaller amounts of land (for example as part of another estate) there might be more opportunities to establish such projects.

Finally, due to the current lack of an equivalent umbrella structure for community led farms in England, participants also felt that setting up a national body (similar to the Herenboeren national organisation), but perhaps also more focused on land acquisition, was important. However, participants thought having regional and local structures as well as one central national body would be helpful in maximising democratic participation within the organisation, increasing collaboration and flexibility, and ensuring credibility amongst local communities and with funders.

Further ideas to foster rural regeneration in the English context

The event discussion naturally broadened into a wider one about how to foster rural regeneration and development in England. Participants suggested a number of ideas to further these processes.

Firstly, participants suggested it would be useful to have more guidance available for business planning for agroecological and community farm initiatives, so people interested in setting these up wouldn't have to start from scratch each time, but could have templates to draw on and adapt. These documents might include information on topics such as set-up costs and understanding potential markets, amongst other things. This might be something a Herenboeren national or regional-style organisation could research and put together to support farms to set up in a particular area, in addition to providing more tailored one-to-one advice where needed.

Secondly, and related to the work Shared Assets and partners are undertaking on council farmland (partly under WP6 of Ruralization), event participants raised the issue of how to gain access to more council land. At the moment, only a relatively small number of opportunities to take on individual farming tenancies come up each year on this land, and many councils have sold off, or are considering selling off, large portions, if not their entire farmland estates due to budgetary pressures (Graham et al., 2019). However, if different, potentially more collective or cooperative approaches to tenancies, and a more holistic purpose of council farmland could be considered, this public asset could offer land access opportunities for many more people, whilst also meeting council objectives. This might include access for Farmstarts (indicated by participants as something they would be interested in setting up) and for community farms in the vein of the Herenboeren model, but also for a much wider public to have a connection with their local farmland and where their food comes from, and experience the health benefits of more time spent in green and natural spaces, and locally produced, organic food. Part of this

might also be space for cultural events which participants felt were important for bringing people together and helping build relationships, as an element of rural regeneration.

The specific power dynamics in rural areas where agroecological farms might want to set up would also need to be taken into account. In the Dutch example, the Weert farm had not yet been able to include livestock as part of the farm due to concerns about this from neighbours, and event participants mentioned that more affluent rural residents in England also often don't want the infrastructure associated with organic farming near their homes. The question of how to productively challenge ideas of the countryside as purely a space of recreation, and the particular aesthetics which come along with these, needs to be addressed as part of rural regeneration, so that rural/peri-urban areas can also be recognised as working environments, especially for small-scale farms which often seek to attract a local customer base to reduce food miles.

Another issue raised by participants, related to the previous one, was around accommodation for farmers. In the Dutch model, having a place for farmers to live on site wasn't a prerequisite of the land acquired, and in the Weert example, the farmers lived on site at first, but more recently two young people in tiny houses had played a concierge role for visitors, whilst the main farmers lived elsewhere. Participants in the event felt the issue of providing adequate accommodation for farmers and their families on site should be seen as a priority, not an optional extra. As mentioned above, restrictive planning frameworks in rural areas of England can mean building a farmhouse or other essential infrastructure for a working farm on agricultural land is very difficult. Participants felt tackling this issue was critical, not only for setting up community farms, but to nurture the regeneration of rural areas more generally, so living there is more affordable. They also mentioned examples of how providing more affordable rural housing for communities has been facilitated in other contexts without compromising the natural environment, such as through the One Planet Development planning policy in place in Wales (One Planet Council, n.d.), which participants thought we should look to replicate in England.

Lessons learned from the practice

Through the event, it was useful to understand more about the interaction between the local farms and the national Herenboeren organisation, particularly around issues such as land access and funding. Learning about the toolbox for the whole process of setting up a farm, from the initial idea, to community organising, design, finding land and farmers, and eventually managing it as a cooperative on a day to day basis, was also very useful, as often various aspects of this lengthy timeline of actions are hard to find out about. In addition, participants were curious regarding details around the share structure, whether shares could be transferred, and if there was any biodiversity monitoring going on in the farms. Not all of these issues had yet been encountered in the Dutch case study practice as the farm was set up relatively recently, but they pose interesting questions for the future, both in the Netherlands and were a similar model to be set up in England.

Most aspects of the practice presented are probably applicable in a general sense in England, given the similar circumstances in the Netherlands and England, as outlined above, such as the movement for more local, agroecologically produced food, and the potential for comparable types of agriculture in some parts of England to the Netherlands. However, there are undoubtedly different policy and legal frameworks specific to each country which would need to be looked into in more depth and adapted to if a model equivalent to the Herenboeren was to be established in England. This is because these would likely have an impact on things like land leases, funding, the governance structure of the farms and their wider national network. Participants also noted that a similar approach in England might work better if it was slightly less prescriptive and/or ‘top-down’, but that taking the broad principles and adapting them could be possible.

Participants in the event also mentioned several additional issues which would need to be taken into consideration were the Herenboeren model to be successfully initiated in England, as well as being relevant to promoting rural regeneration more generally. One of these issues raised by participants and not yet mentioned in this report, was around the prevalence of unpaid work in the agroecological sector in England, which they felt needs to be addressed. In England, many routes into agroecological farming rely upon people’s ability to undertake voluntary traineeships or work on farms without compensation, meaning these pathways are inaccessible to people with less financial security, and ultimately results in less diversity in the agroecological farming sector. Whilst in the Herenboeren model, the main farmer(s) is/are employed and thus paid reasonably well, as well as being eligible for sick leave, holiday and so on, it would still remain important to consider the role of volunteers in the model, and whether this is appropriate, or if Herenboeren farms could find other ways to support more new entrants into farming, for example by offering paid traineeships or free horticultural courses through educational institutions (as suggested in Shared Assets’ WP5 Farmstart Network promising practice case study research).

Taking things forward

In order to take forward the Herenboeren model in England, there would likely need to be a two-pronged approach. First of all, existing organisations and stakeholders interested in promoting agroecological food and farming would need to come together to work out what suitable national and local structures might look like in England, what adaptations (e.g. around funding or governance) might be desired, and what a way forward to potentially create a new organisation to manage these community farms, without duplicating the work of existing groups, would be.

Secondly, there would probably need to be a concerted and joined up effort from across the agroecological food and farming movement to lobby for changes in the planning system and to create environmental and agricultural policy and subsidy frameworks which support and prioritise community farms at scale as opposed to industrial agriculture. This work is ongoing, for example through the recent DEFRA Environmental Land Management Scheme consultations and pilots (Landworkers’ Alliance, 2021), and there is a need to build on this momentum. This more supportive environment could facilitate a paradigm shift in England, where agroecological, community-rooted farms are able to access the best land and not have to make do in the margins, or be reliant on philanthropy to produce good food which is accessible for everyone, as some event participants noted.

Whilst this will not be a quick process, there is clearly enthusiasm for this work; several participants in the event were interested in continuing the conversations around community farms and deepening the connections made with each other after the event had finished, and a Slack channel was set up as a first step to help facilitate this.

Contributors

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Appendix 10: Catalan Western Lands (Spain, NE3)

Organising partner:	XCN	
Practice:	Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino (Italy, IT4A)	
Practice context:	Andrano, Lecce Province (NUTS 3) - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	Catalan Western Lands, Lleida Province - Intermediate with strong rural character	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 24th 2021	

Context

The «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» is confronted in the context of the Catalan Western Lands (CWL). CWL is a proto-political region with no current effective public administration, but partially matched with the official province of Lleida. It is formed by six counties characterised by a strong rural and agricultural character, especially Garrigues and Noguera, compared to the rest of Catalonia. It presents some heterogeneities in terms of farmland use and economic value, but grains, fresh fruit, poultry and pig farming generally prevail. A few big food business corporations, but also smaller cooperatives, drive and control a majority of these production processes through contract farming, and ecological practices seem to be relatively less extended than in other Catalan regions. Family farms are the most common management setup, and ageing is evident, thus succession and successors are key to understanding the dynamics of the food system in the region.

The CWL has an extension of 5586.0 square kilometres, representing 17.4% of total Catalan area. The CWL has a population of 367,016 inhabitants, representing 4.7 % of the total population of Catalonia. The county of Segrià accounts for more than half of the population of the area, being the population quite fairly distributed among the rest of the counties (between 20,000 and 40,000 inhabitants approximately in each county, divided in between 15 and 30 municipalities each). When matched with the total area, the resulting population density is 65.7 inhabitants per square km., much below than the Catalan average. Segrià and Pla d'Urgell are the counties with the highest density, but still well below the

Catalan average. The density clearly differs from the 205 inhabitants per square km in Apulia (NUTS 2), the regional setting of «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» case study¹.

The CWL doesn't match exactly with the current official administrative province of Lleida (NUTS 3 region), which qualifies as an **intermediate region** according to the official EU territorial typology (EU, 2018), and which could roughly be applied as well to the CWL. This qualification is very much conditioned by the role of the city of Lleida, the provincial capital. Excluding the city of Lleida, its suburbs and surrounding towns, **the CWL have a rather strong rural character**. Indeed, up to **three Local Action Groups**, in the framework of the EU Rural Development Programmes, act in the area.

Unlike the demographic trends in the context where the promising practice takes place, the CWL have not been losing population during the last two decades but quite the opposite. **Population has grown 23.3%**, with similar figures to the Catalan average (24.2%). While many counties' figures are around the average, the **demographic trends for Noguera and Garrigues are more negative**. In a similar pattern to the findings in the promising practice context, these two counties are characterised by a **depopulation phase in the last decade**. Unlike the high percentage of migrants in the municipality where the promising practice was born, both Garrigues and Noguera counties have a **negative internal migration rate** (residential variations to and from the rest of Catalonia and Spain), much higher than the -0.2 for overall CWL.

Finally, in line with the case study context, there has been an ageing process when looking at the last decade's figures (from a lowest 17.6% in 2010 until current figure close to 20%).

The area is in general made up of plains, since almost 77% of the area has slopes less steep than 20%. The share for the total in Catalonia is almost 45%, hence the Western Lands are relatively flatter than the average, providing in principle a good setup for the practice of agricultural activity. In relation to the Catalan average on land use distribution, CWL have a much higher share of farmland (58.2%) -in strong contrast with the high number of abandoned fields and farms reported in the promising practice context- and approximately half of the share of forest area (33.5%). Unlike the low diversification of crops, with dominance of olives and cereals distinctive of the case study context, there are important heterogeneities in the CWL area, indeed, this explains the characteristics of the agri-food production systems developed. While in Pla d'Urgell (83.3%) and Segrià (49.8%) the irrigated farmland is by far larger than dry farmland, this is not the case in the rest of the counties, in which the latter is more important, especially in Segarra (63.5%) and Urgell (49.5%). Agricultural production in the CWL is oriented to arable crops (70.5%), particularly in Segarra county (98.9%) and to a much lesser extent in Garrigues or Segrià counties (around 60%), where permanent crops prevail. Horticulture production is residual, but it has the strongest share in Noguera county (more than 2%). Figures in terms of agricultural land used by the main crop group are very similar, except for Garrigues county, in which the share of land by permanent crops is much higher than its production share, probably signalling a singular low productivity case.

Barley is the prevalent arable crop in the CWL in terms of land used, with maize and fodder being particularly relevant in those counties which have the most irrigated land. For the same reason, but in terms of permanent crops, fresh fruit trees prevail in these counties, while nut trees and olive trees are predominant in the rest of counties of the CWL, being olive trees singularly relevant in Garrigues county, almond trees in Segarra and vineyards in Urgell.

Regarding livestock, **pig farming is the most common activity** in the CWL, with more than 2 500 holdings involved in the activity, representing a bit less than 50 % of total activity related to livestock. Economically, **farming activity in the six counties of the CWL is relatively much more important than the average in Catalonia**. Garrigues, Segarra and Urgell follow the Catalan pattern in that livestock farming has a higher economic weight than land farming.

Food industry is also economically more relevant in the CWL than in the rest of Catalonia, twofold specifically, with Segarra particularly standing out, with an extraordinary industry share of 71.1%. This is mainly explained because an important food business corporation ("Grup Alimentari Guissona") is established in this county. The company is an example of the **prevalence and dynamics of the conventional food system** in the CWL, since it has established during the last 50 years a strong regional network of farm suppliers through **contract farming**.

The importance of farming activities and food industry in the CWL context stands in contrast with the high economic value produced by tourism in Apulia, amounting to 13.6% of the total regional value.

From the point of view of employment, more than 7% of the employment in the region is concentrated in the agricultural sector. This figure is much higher than the Catalan average (1%), and **CWL can be qualified as the most agricultural region in Catalonia**.

The CWL has in total a **lower share of natural protected areas** (21.6%) compared to the Catalan average (31.9%). While Noguera, Segarra and Urgell levels are around this average, the share of natural protected area in Segrià and Garrigues is far below (11.4% and 8.8% respectively), and almost non-existent in Pla d'Urgell (1.5%). Obviously, the limited natural protection in an important part of the CWL has favoured the development of an intensive agricultural production system. This may be particularly true in Pla d'Urgell and Segrià, in which irrigated farmland has contributed as well to the intensive development. Pesticide-intensive agriculture is also standing out in the Salento agricultural landscape, which today looks like an expanse of dried olive trees, desiccated by the Xylella bacterium.

While in the promising practice context, the agricultural sector has been characterised by a high fragmentation and very small farms, the CWL **farm holdings are in general larger than the Catalan average** (according to figures from 2009). This is particularly true for Segarra county, with almost 60% of holdings with a size larger than 20 hectares, but also for Noguera county, to a lesser extent, with a 40% share. This is associated with the prevalence of arable crops, as shown above. The majority of farm holdings are managed by owners themselves (around 60%, with minor differences among territories),

being leasing agreements more prevalent than partnerships. Conversely, in the promising practice context, more than 79% of farms in Andrano municipality have minus than 2 Ha, in line also with the Lecce Province data (78%).

Results

Acceptance and interest

Attendees in the Brainstorming Sessions (BSS) indicated their level of interest or acceptance regarding each of the different actions that unfolded in «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» through an online tool (see Figure 1 as an example).

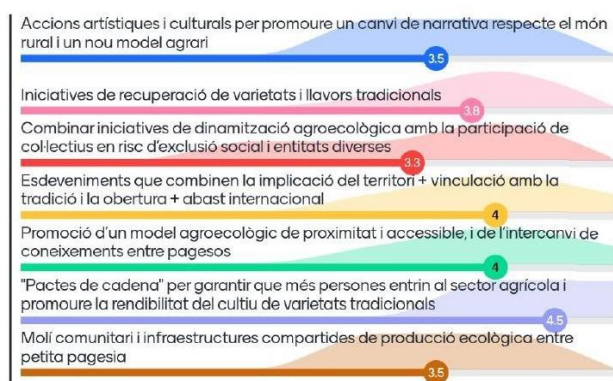


Figure 1. Chart showing the level of acceptance towards different aspects of the practice (BSS 1)

The participants expressed that most of the actions and initiatives that characterise the case study «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» could also be applied in the CWL context. Indeed, some of these are **already taking place** in the context and the ones which are not present should be promoted, as many participants noted. However, it was commented that, even if most of the actions presented are already taking place, the general feeling is that they are **not succeeding in terms of promoting rural regeneration processes**. Particularly, long-term consolidation and impacts expected are not finally achieved. In a similar line, a participant also highlighted the fact that indeed all actions are potentially interesting for the CWL context, but that the **complexity** arises when actually implementing those in practical terms.

Interestingly, when assessing the relevance of the practice, attendees wondered about the actual impact in terms of job generation and referred to the economic dependence on public aid. This might indicate that there is a concern regarding the long-term potential of innovative practices.

Critical factors

Therefore, even if the practice confronted was considered interesting, there was a **reluctance towards the actual success it could have** if implemented in the CWL. Being so, the next step in the BSSs was to assess the existence of critical factors in the local context. That is, whether the elements, circumstances

and resources that were very important to make the practice successful are also present or not in the CWL context.

«Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» critical factors were presented as a list¹⁸ and ultimately assessed by each of the attendees through an online tool (see Figure 2 as an example).

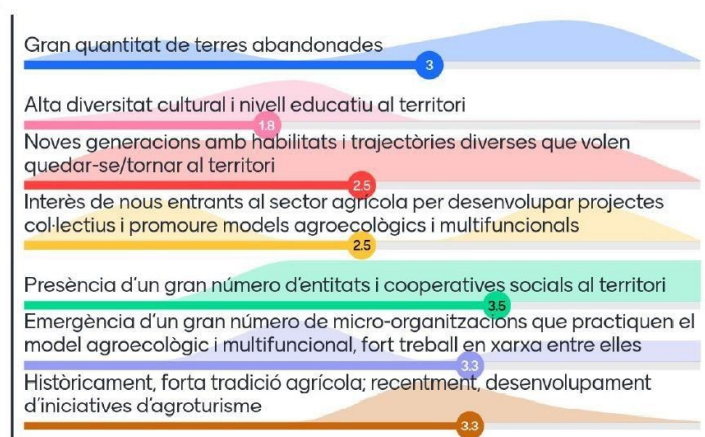


Figure 2. Chart showing the assessment of critical factors made by participants (BSS 1)

Participants in the different BSSs dug into the fundamental differences of the two contexts, which have an impact on the existence of the critical factors in CWL context.

Farmland abandonment is occurring in some counties within CWL, although it is not conceived as a generalised pattern. The plain, irrigated farmland in Segrià County is far from being abandoned. Meanwhile, the farming activity in steep dryland with olive groves or nuts trees has indeed decreased over the last decades while the farmland in the outskirts of the main city is also increasingly abandoned. Anyhow, farmland abandonment is not seen necessarily as a critical factor. In some areas, farmland abandonment may indeed turn out to be an opportunity to access land easily, while in other cases the lack of land management can be seen as a deterrent because it increases the costs of setting up a productive project.

The presence and relevance of high cultural and educational diversity is difficult to assess. In the farming sector, there is indeed a cultural diversity stemming from the presence of seasonal workers during harvest campaigns (mostly from Romania and Morocco). Yet, cultural diversity or cultural capital is not ultimately unfolded, because seasonal workers do not remain in the local context and do not fully get

¹⁸ As presented in the chart: Farmland being abandoned / High cultural and educational diversity / New generations with different skills, knowledge and backgrounds that wish to remain or return to the local context / New entrants are interested in developing collective farming projects and have an agroecological and multifunctional approach to farmland / Many socio cultural organisations are present and active in the local context / Many small agro ecological initiatives are emerging and cooperate amongst them / The traditional farming background is now being complemented with agrotourism initiatives.

integrated in it. An important reason would be the poor employment conditions offered to seasonal farming workers.

As represented in the chart, there are different opinions regarding the new generation's attitude. Some participants consider that new generations with different skills, knowledge and backgrounds do not generally wish to remain or return to the local context. Therefore, the innovation and human capital described in the «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» case study might not be present in CWL as a whole. Meanwhile, other participants highlighted that this is changing (due to COVID and other factors) and that new generations are increasingly interested in developing their life projects in the local context. Interestingly, those participants who were more optimistic were also significantly younger, showing that indeed there might be a potential for change in this regard.

Disparity is also encountered when assessing other critical factors. For instance, some participants consider that new entrants are really interested in developing collective farming projects and have an agroecological and multifunctional approach to farmland. Meanwhile, other participants had the feeling that this type of renewal is not happening at a significant level in the Catalan Wester Lands context.

By the same token, the perception expressed by one of the participants was that cooperative systems do not operate as well in the Catalan context as they do in other countries: the prevailing individualistic way of working amongst agricultural cooperatives hampers the success of many of these innovative solutions which have a collective breath. Namely, as seen in the «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» case study, initiatives aimed at the construction of shared infrastructures, such as a community mill to process cereals directly, have not succeeded in the CWL context. Such initiatives have resulted in the abandonment or selling of community mills, particularly those built in small villages, as pointed out by one of the participants.

Finally, even if tourism did not have a positive impact on the local context where «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» was established, it was a clearly present factor and the source for the development of many agritourism activities. Therefore, the strongly seasonal model and negative tendencies derived could be addressed and countered by some of the case study initiatives, such as the Green Night, an event with international openness which takes place outside the high tourist season and fosters a strong link with the local community, its identity and traditions. In this sense, back to the CWL, participants pointed out that tourism and agritourism activities in the context are not as significant and impactful as in other regions.

Key issues and barriers

Once the presence or absence of critical factors was assessed, BSSs focused on identifying possible barriers for implementing a similar innovative practice in the CWL. Debate dynamics were organised so that two levels of barriers could be differentiated: exogenous and endogenous¹⁹.

So as to trigger the debate, some barriers found in the context analysis of the case study «Cultures Trobades» report (T 5.2 Spain Case Study Report) were presented as a list²⁰ and ultimately assessed by each of the attendees through an online tool (see Figure 3 as an example).



Figure 3. Chart showing the assessment of barriers made by participants (BSS 1)

Important exogenous barriers or obstacles relate to the land system. For instance, there was a general consensus concerning land mobility, since most of the participants agreed on the fact that high quality land is seldom available for agroecological projects. Moreover, the increase of a number of big companies investing in the acquisition of large land extensions is leading to **land concentration**. However, this tendency depends on the area and type of farming practised. It was mentioned by a

¹⁹ Exogenous barriers are the local and national contextual features that may hamper the development of the innovation (land structure, geographic, economic, social, legal, policy features...). Meanwhile, endogenous barriers are the possible weaknesses or shortcomings identified in the ecosystem of partners potentially interested in developing the innovation (forces, financial capital, human capital, social capital, etc.) as well as in the local community in general.

²⁰ As presented in the chart: CAP direct payments are not designed to foster sustainable food systems/ Some international treaties have a negative impact on the local products' potential for commercialisation/ the promotion of big irrigation projects/negative dynamics derived from the pig industry/negative dynamics derived from truffles cultivation/the animalist narrative, which has a negative impact on the social perception of some projects/the positive impact of tourism is not as significant as it is in other areas of Catalonia.

participant that dry farmland areas have attracted big farming companies who have invested in the production of nuts, therefore acquiring big extensions of land. The cultivation of truffles, which may **decrease the chances of accessing high quality land**, is not perceived as predominant in the region as to be a constraint to the further development of the agroecological model. However, another participant pointed out that for the truffle cultivation case, the productive dimension takes hold of all the value, leaving aside the natural heritage or the biodiversity value of the area. As such, for the sake of greater economic interests, huge extensions of ancient olive trees have been destroyed and transformed into truffle cultivation. It was highlighted that there has been an effort to sell this practice using an ecological discourse, stating that the truffle is a noble and indigenous crop which does not need nor use chemical inputs for its growth. Yet, these dynamics do have a **negative impact on local natural, landscape and cultural capital** and thus in the potential of rural regeneration in the context assessed. Access to land is a big constraint for rural regeneration in the CWL context, but some participants pointed out its strong link with the problem of access to housing. The fact that the initial inversion required to start a personal and professional project in the area is extremely high (due to access to the obstacles of accessing housing and land) makes the option of establishing a life project and starting an agricultural activity too risky to be considered by many, especially by newcomers.

Big irrigation projects and pig industry dynamics have a strong impact on the land system. For instance, pig industry dynamics decrease the chances of new agro ecological projects on accessing land, since it uses loads of land for manure dejection and it makes land prices higher. However, the negative impacts go beyond the land system. Being so, the pig industry in CWL also has negative environmental impacts in terms of habitat and landscape diversity and water and soil quality, as pointed out by a participant. Moreover, it severely hinders the wellbeing of the local community and also decreases the potential for agritourism initiatives.

A representative from «Trenca», an environmental organisation, also highlighted that **big irrigation projects** have a negative environmental impact on the CWL context. Particularly, he noted that it has had a direct impact on the decline of autochthonous wildlife and environmental heritage. Endangered species such as the lesser grey shrike (Trenca's work focuses on the conservation and rehabilitation of such species) are now almost non-existent in the region due to the shift from dry farmland to irrigated farmland. Farming practices in the CWL context have historically been based on a dry farmland model. The fact that it has suddenly changed to other models perceived as more productive has severely affected and degraded some habitats that are key for autochthonous fauna and other natural values. Finally, it was pointed out that these practices (big irrigation projects, pig industry) are not only great constraints to the promotion of biodiversity in particular but to diversity in its broader sense; it does not let different people, projects, products and landscapes interact and succeed in this context.

CAP direct payments are seen as a very relevant constraint for the promotion of sustainable food systems both from a social and environmental perspective. In the CWL context, some participants highlighted that instead of promoting the production, transformation and diversification of certain local varieties, these policies were oriented to encourage farmers to produce certain crops which were being overproduced. Similarly, another participant recalled that on the local level, institutional policies have

never sought to promote the local product. Therefore, beyond the broad food policy dynamics, there is a lack of political capital at the local level.

Some other concerns regarding exogenous barriers relate to the Catalan organic certification system. Beyond representing a bureaucratic and economic burden, the criteria that this certification uses could be improved. For instance, a participant stated that this certification should also take into account the origin of the production, and so the impact of the supply chain.

Finally, in terms of social tendencies, animalism or veganism are not reported by the participants as causing a negative impact on the development of certain agroecological initiatives based on extensive livestock farming. However, a participant pointed out that the **misleading ecological discourse is not fostering an agroecological transition but the opposite.**

As for endogenous barriers, participants mentioned some related to **local and broader community values**. For instance, according to the information gathered, consumers are **not aware of the impact of the predominant food consumption model** and there is a **lack of agricultural and food education in the local society**. Certainly, it may be the case that food products regarded as of high-quality are more appreciated in big cities than in the smaller towns, characteristic of the CWL context. This might go along with the fact that the gastronomy **sector has low willingness to and/or finds difficulties in using new food products regularly.**

Also, in terms of values and mind-set, participants reported a **rather conservative attitude of some inner rural local communities**, which echoes with a **skeptical attitude towards innovative projects**. The fact that small landowners also show a skeptical attitude hinders the new entrants' chances to access land. Particularly, on the openness of the local community to newcomers, a participant reported that the focus is very much placed on fostering the remaining young people in rural areas. Yet, newcomers, like him, seeking new opportunities in the CWL context face many obstacles and are neglected by the local community (**lack of hospitality and trust**) as well as **left behind by institutional policies aiming at rural regeneration.**

A **generalised productivist approach** is viewed as a barrier for rural regeneration. Participants debated on whether the **lack of cooperative values and mutual trust** as well as a **strong individualism** were actual barriers for the development of collective regenerative projects. There were very different opinions on this regard. A similar response was encountered when assessing the actual **lack of articulation, coordination and cooperation among independent regenerative actors** in the CWL. Once again, those participants who were more optimistic were also significantly younger, showing **that indeed there might be a potential for change in this regard**. Yet, participants did agree on the fact that local initiatives are **insufficiently connected with other Catalan regenerative initiatives** (in terms of coordination, knowledge exchange, etc.).

Besides, the lack of familiarity expressed by a social organisation representative with other agroecological initiatives similar to the Italian case in CWL context could be an indicator of the poor knowledge and synergies between different actors working on similar issues in the context. On this matter, it was noted that while there is a wide array of social cooperatives, associations and federations working on social and rural development issues in the local context, networking remains an issue amongst the social and agricultural sector.

Additionally, in terms of governance, endogenous barriers are detected when it comes to conventional farming cooperatives. According to the participants, most **conventional farming cooperatives are very conservative in terms of values and ways of working**, which hinder their capacity to overcome barriers, to innovate and contribute to rural regeneration. For instance, in general their marketing or selling strategy is based on a maximum-volume approach. Moreover, these organisations are aging, in the sense that the average age of their boards is usually above 60. The added value of agroecological products or the impact of local cooperation are not seen as strategic lines by this type of actor. Some participants that are working in regenerative innovative initiatives consider that indeed it is very **difficult to engage with conventional farming cooperatives**. Hence, collaboration with conventional farming cooperatives has been very poor so far.

Along the lines of the obstacles identified in the Salento context that were successfully addressed by the «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» case study, a **negative narrative around countryside life and farming activities** is widespread amongst the local community. Therefore, remaining in the territory is not valued and choosing to build a professional career as a farmer is not considered as successful as other professional paths by many people from the local community. Likewise, some participants agreed on the fact that the local community has a poor self-esteem and a low surety of the value, identity and potential of their territory. Related to lack of tourism in the region, a participant highlighted that it is not the low attractiveness, limiting possibilities and less favourable location of the area (tourism in inner rural areas tends to be lower in the Catalan context) but the **negative perception about the potential and worthiness of their region** by the local community and institutions, leading to a lack of efforts on tourism policies.

Some of the endogenous barriers directly relate to human capital. For instance, a loss of knowledge on agrobiodiversity or on certain farming practices is reported.

Next steps for practice implementation and rural regeneration

The participants in the Focus Group (FG) identified possible measures and key actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice. The topics range from product distribution and valorisation to governance amongst actors, and some of the ideas are tailored to foster rural regeneration and development in the context in general.

In terms of governance, efforts should be made so that innovative regenerative initiatives effectively engage with **conventional farming cooperatives**. Plus, the latter should change some negative patterns in terms of governance and values. Some attendees recall that **environmental associations** in the area have been particularly hostile against farmers in general, making it difficult to collaborate and establish interesting synergies among actors. Being so, **improving the relationship between environmental associations and farmers with an agroecological sensitivity** might be an interesting measure. **Environmental organisations** can play a key role in terms of raising awareness and providing a deep narrative on natural values and on the ultimate goals of sustainable farming.

According to some participants, Ponent Coopera²¹ has played a key role in **fostering cooperative values** and **enabling the consolidation of emerging regenerative initiatives**. The perception is that their presence in the last years not only has supported the social and economic development of rural regions like the CWL, but it has also helped in changing the mentality associated with this type of region. Thus, **Ponent Coopera is considered a key actor** for the next steps to be taken in CWL, especially in terms of improving governance amongst key actors.

In practical terms, one of the main barriers for the successful implementation of some agroecological projects relate to the commercialisation of added-value products. Specific effort and support should be given to **facilitate the process of defining a business model, a market target and a channel to commercialise**. Some participants suggest the implementation of a **new hall-mark** for those farming projects that go beyond an organic certification and that undertake other impactful measures in environmental and social terms. This could be fostered by local third sector initiatives but should be ultimately fostered by public authorities, in order to make official the overall mechanism. This might open new markets for added-value products and improve its prices.

As mentioned by some participants, there are already some innovative ideas taking place that revolve around local food systems. For instance, in order to improve the distribution process of agroecological products, the **“Rutes Compartides”**²² (shared journeys) platform will be launched soon. This will enable farmers and elaborators to share the means to distribute their products. When effectively implemented, this initiative will reduce both distribution costs and negative environmental impacts. In a similar line,

²¹ Ponent Coopera is the “Cooperative Athenaeum” in CWL. “Cooperative Athenaeum” are the local reference organisation that promotes learning, collective reflection, cooperation and social transformation, towards a sustainable and people-centered socio-economic model. They are the result of a public-private collaboration project, within the framework of the Aracoop program, between the Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia and the sub-Department of Social Economy, the Third Sector and Cooperatives. Cooperative Athenaeums usually develop the following lines of action: Observation, research, diagnosis and territorial monitoring in social and solidarian economy (SSE)/ Training for the promotion, creation and consolidation of SSE projects / Support for the creation and consolidation of SSE projects / Dissemination, awareness and knowledge generation / Facilitation of intercooperation, networking and territorial revitalization

²² RutesCompartides.cat

the initiative “**Obradors Compartits**”²³ enables the existence and shared use of food transformation infrastructures. **These new initiatives, which are still at a pilot stage, should be further encouraged and promoted.**

In terms of public role, participants in the FG indicated that local and regional public policies should promote the coexistence between the conservation of biodiversity and farming practices, which is also linked to the question of which type of tourism, landscape and culture the local society aims to build.

Some attendees report that non-productive outcomes of agroecological farming are not recognised and remunerated. For instance, **hedgerows and paths maintenance should be fostered and remunerated** by both the market and the public policies. Of course, public policies should also **halt some of the barriers identified, such as big irrigation projects and pig industry dynamics**, which hamper rural regeneration.

The local authority in the Garrigues county is setting up a land bank, with the ultimate purpose of fostering the entrance of new entrants and minimising the negative impact of land concentration by big companies. Yet, some of the land has a very low agronomic potential and is not a suitable context where new entrants could succeed. Different innovative solutions should be found in order to render those low agronomic value lands more economically viable. For instance, the **payment for the services farmers provide in terms of wildfire prevention** in key strategic areas. Similar concerns and proposals are also mentioned by other participants, who stated that **nature conservation and agroecological farming** in mountainous olive groves should be encouraged through different mechanisms. Otherwise, this farming activity can't be as viable as olive grooves in plain areas, where mechanisation is implemented.

As suggested by some participants in the FG, the public administration should **explore green public procurement**. That is, it would be interesting if the public administration bought the production of new entrants that have an agroecological approach, and channel that food towards public uses such as schools and hospitals. In general, public entities should be more proactive by ensuring that **public spaces consume local and organic food**.

Some measures need to be implemented in order to improve the employment conditions of seasonal farming workers, so that this collective is fairly treated and its cultural capital unravelled and available for rural regeneration processes. Therefore, public authorities should ensure the **regularization and work and residence permits for migrants working in agricultural campaigns**.

²³ www.obradorscompartits.cat

Lessons learned and recommendations

Additional aspects should be considered when trying to implement the practice in CWL or reinforce the existing initiatives. For instance, building a **shared identity**, which can unite young people and encourage them to remain in the territory. This shared identity is present in the Andrano context (“restanza”) but not quite in CWL. **Transforming the negative narratives** is key to unfold the potential of CWL. Especially, **the narratives around newcomers and people returning** to CWL; both collectives should be able to share a common narrative that responds to different needs and expectations. Just as it is explained in the Italian practice, it is important to expand the view: even in the face of their own individual problem, newcomers, new entrants and other actors need to find an innovative solution that has a **collective breath**, involving and offering support to other realities of the context (greater networking and synergies).

In this regard, «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» promising practice offers some hints. Initiatives such as the collective sowing (as a means to fostering intergenerational knowledge and know how, allowing children and adolescents to experience work in and with the land), awareness raising initiatives, building on the idea of ‘restanza’ (this idea of staying on the land not with a conservative approach but with a view that binds together past and future, tradition and modernity and builds real alternatives for the young men and women who want to stay).

Similarly, the Italian promising practice includes the organisation of collective events also linked to farming, unhinging the individualisation process that characterises the industrialised agricultural model. The following sentences are paradigmatic: “We have tried to collectivize all the events, all the work done in the countryside, which until now was practically individualistic: everyone looked after his own garden, there was no exchange of ideas” and “These collective moments ... During sowing, at the concerts or the presentation of books make it possible to create a community of reference, which is the one that participates in these initiatives, with which we always have the ability to dialogue and question ourselves on the things that need to be done... on a series of other issues, not only strictly ... agronomic issues, but also on ... political ones”.

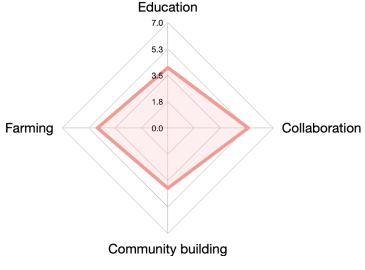
Noticeably, when comparing to «Casa delle agricultura Tullia e Gino» promising practice, it becomes evident that in CWL there is a lack of coordination and acknowledgement amongst social initiatives and agroecological ones. It is also noted that more support should be allocated to emerging initiatives based on the agroecological model, practising multifunctional, natural and organic agriculture, etc. In order to have the expected impact, these should have a collective breath. Before the establishment of relationships with local associations and different collectives there should be a mapping of local actors or a way that they get to know each other.

Contributors

Workshop facilitation: Clara Blasco and Anna Carol (XCN)

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Appendix 11: Toulouse metropolis (France, NE4)

Organising partner:	CNRS	
Practice:	The Versailles Plain's Association and peri-urban agriculture diversification (France, FR5A)	
Practice context:	Versailles Plain, Yveline department - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	Toulouse metropolis, Nouvelle Aquitaine - Predominantly urban	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 25th 2021	

Summary

The confrontation made it possible to confront two metropolitan contexts where the issues of land pressure and the installation of new farmers are important. In Toulouse metropolis, initiatives have been taken (with an objective we could call “rural regeneration”) but no facilitation structure has emerged as in the case of Versailles Plaine Association (VPA), i.e. an associative organisation structured in three colleges which brings together all the stakeholders of the plain and builds a space for exchange between actors of the city, the agricultural sector and the countryside. This confrontation highlighted several critical factors: agriculture diversification for new installations; scale up; organisation of collective and multi-actors works with common projects and representations; support of political actors at different scales. But it also underlines main barriers and issues as the metropolitan context, long-term vision, financial means, organisation and dialogue between very different actors. Finally, we identified several key measures and actors: involvement of political actors and search for funding; a space to meet; actors with facilitation skills; collaboration with researchers.

Context

We choose to confront the Case study “Versailles Plain Association” (FR5A), located in the Ile- de-France region, with rural Toulouse Metropolis context. Toulouse Metropolis, as Ile-de- France region, is a very urbanized context with a relatively high population density but still with agricultural and natural areas. In this context, agriculture is under strong land and economic pressures, and new generations of farmers have difficulties accessing land. Nevertheless, if the issues are comparable, the confrontation was a challenge, because the two contexts do not offer the same forms of ruralities and the same specificities: they have two different settlement systems. On the one hand we have a well-structured and

geographically delimited association (the Versailles Plain Association) and on the other hand various associative actors who do not yet have a fixed and organised structure.

Toulouse metropole is an area that brings together 37 municipalities where 756,000 inhabitants live; it has a density of 230 inhabitants per km². It has an UAA of 11,000 hectares where mainly field crops are grown, which represents 24% of its territory, a figure that has been decreasing sharply for several years. Agricultural areas only allow 3% of the population's food needs to be met, as food crops and livestock farming are not very well developed. Solagro study²⁴ showed in 2015 that the proportion of land used for arable farming is double the national proportion and there is four times less land than at national level for fruit and vegetables. Conflicts of use are very strong, since the metropolis hosts many industries, particularly in the aeronautics sector. As in the Ile-de-France region, daily work migration is significant, with 30 to 40% of the metropolis' employees living in neighbouring municipalities, which contributes strongly to the urban sprawl and to the disappearance of agricultural land.

This geographical context led us to the hypothesis that it was interesting to compare this situation to the context of the Versailles Plain Association (VPA) promising practice, since the same land pressure and strong land competition are observed. However, the department where the Plain of Versailles is located (the department of Yvelines located west of Paris) includes 50 municipalities for 145,000 inhabitants. Thus, even if the Ile-de-France is largely more populated (18% of the French population), the local context of the Versailles plain offers a more preserved and lower population density context. Furthermore, the plain of Versailles is an agricultural and landscape area that extends into the west of the Greater Paris metropolis, whereas the agricultural area in question for Toulouse metropolis is located all around the metropolis. And, while in the plain of Versailles, urbanisation seems to be partly controlled (through VPA actions and creation of a landscape charter etc, as previously analysed in our case study), the metropolis of Toulouse is still very dynamic with constant demographic development and the conflict over its development is relatively tense insofar as the PLUI (Local Intercommunal Urban planning Plan) has just been cancelled (in May 2021) by the administrative court (which were referred by local associations) because the analysis of the consumption of natural and agricultural areas and the justification of the objectives for moderating this consumption were inadequate.

In the rural Toulouse context, local political actors and associations began to mobilise several years ago. In 2004, a joint working group was set up by the Greater Toulouse Region and the Agriculture Chamber to develop a peri-urban agricultural policy. A year later, the two partners joined the Terres en villes network: this membership accelerated the process. In 2015, the inter-municipality set up a group of elected officials dedicated to agriculture to monitor the progress of the metropolitan agricultural project. That same year, the Solagro consultancy firm carried out a diagnosis of the agricultural situation in Toulouse. It showed that in addition to the disappearance of land, there was a decline in agricultural employment: in ten years the region has lost 50% of its agricultural work units and currently there are 346 farms that employ 1.15 full-time jobs on average. In 2018, a Territorial Food Plan (Projet territorial

²⁴ <https://solagro.org/index.php>

alimentaire in French)²⁵ is signed but it now faces reluctance from neighbouring farmers and rural political actors to commit to collaborating with Toulouse stakeholders.

So, Toulouse is an interesting context where challenges of preserving agricultural land and generational renewal of farmers are particularly important. In this context, the promising practice of the VPA may be interesting, since despite several types of practices, the Toulouse context has not seen the emergence of a facilitating structure such as VPA.

To remember:

- Toulouse and Versailles plain face similar rural-urban and agricultural issues but specific situations, so the confrontation was a challenge (successfully met).
- Toulouse has serious agricultural land and renewal problems but no real facilitation structure (as in Versailles plain), although there are many actors who wish to be mobilised on these matters.

Results of the confrontation

In the rural Toulouse metropolis context, there is a group of 6 associations with complementary skills that operates as a cooperative called “Nourrir la ville” (“Feed the city” in French). This collective would like to disseminate its expertise by addressing other actors, in particular local elected officials, in order to offer support modules for farmers who want to set up in business, but also for the growing number of municipalities that now want to set up farmers on their territory in order to meet the objectives of the Egalim law (which wants school canteens to be supplied with 50% local and quality food products by 2022). In this perspective, stakeholders met during the confrontation are interested in the VPA's approach, which has a very original internal organisation with 3 colleges and which makes it possible to bring together very different actors on the issue of agricultural land protection and which has succeeded in creating a dynamic allowing new entrants into farming installations since 2012. Indeed, in brainstorming and focus group Toulouse stakeholders underlined the need for more structured organisation and more human resources to carry out their actions. Thus, they were very interested in the VPA promising practice.

Critical factors

The confrontation highlighted several important and critical factors. The first factor is the definition of local agriculture's functions and fundamental characteristics, which in the Versailles plain is reflected in the promotion of the agriculture's diversification. In fact, diversification is one of the common causes for concern of all the stakeholders who participated in the confrontation. It is well developed in the case of the VPA promising practice, but it is conditioned by the availability of land, and therefore by the sale of farms, but also by the goodwill of cereal farmers (very present in the Versailles plain and also in

²⁵ Territorial Food Plans (TFP) are territorial policies implemented in France from 2014 to promote territorialized food systems and short food supply chains. These territorial food plans are structured, first, at municipal or regional level, second, based on a shared diagnosis of agriculture and food in the territory between the stakeholders concerned; third on a quality objective in terms of ethics, environment, health, nutrition, etc., and, fourth, on its interconnectedness.

Toulouse) who can sell or rent small areas on the fringes of their farms in order to establish market gardeners or tree growers. In order to allow this diversification, several factors are therefore crucial: the availability of land for small farms, with specific needs and practices that differ from those of cereal farmers; dialogue between organic and conventional farmers; dialogue between cereal farmers and market gardeners; dialogue between the agricultural world and local elected officials; a common vision of what agriculture is and what are its objectives. In fact, agriculture is often perceived as a private matter for farmers (who rent or own land) and local authorities often think that it is not within their jurisdictions to get involved in agricultural issues.

In order to stimulate a real dynamic of diversification and the installation of new entrants into farming, it seems essential in Toulouse to think about how to work as a collective. Several associations are already working together, but the question arises of the collective organisation of actions: what types of co-construction and exchange of know-how are possible between different associative structures that all have different habits, specificities, objectives and representations. Thus, it is also a question of knowing what expertise can be shared. For the moment, the actors participating in the confrontation do not know exactly how to move forward with this pooling work.

Furthermore, although actors in Toulouse claim that they already have one or two examples of successful installations of young farmers, the question of the leverage effect and the change of scale arises. It is crucial for them to find an approach, a global operating methodology for all the Toulouse Metropole territory.

Finally, local political actors (mayors, the elected representatives of the region or inter- municipalities, the Agriculture Chamber or the SAFER²⁶) have a key role to play in accelerating a practice and helping to generalise it or, on the contrary, blocking or slowing it down.

Key issues and barriers

The metropolitan context is a strong barrier, as land pressure and land prices considerably complicate the installation of new farmers and encourage the urbanisation of agricultural land, with conflicts of use being particularly important. But there are also a lot of opportunities for farmers to sell their products. The balance is complicated to find.

The change of scale between a successful installation case and a more global policy or dynamic is difficult. Referring to the case of the VPA, it can be said that this scale up takes place over time, when actors have become used to work together and when several key actors, (mobilised farmers or food artisans acting as examples) form a system, a collective dynamic where farmers work together, disseminate information and encourage the installation of others.

There are still "hostile territories" as several stakeholders put it, or rather recalcitrant people insofar as they themselves do not see a solution and are therefore reluctant to participate. What emerged from the focus group is that this *a priori* mistrust is erased when actors show them proof of efficient practices and do not position themselves directly in opposition or conflict.

²⁶ Land development and rural establishment company.

The dialogue between agricultural institutions and political actors is an important issue that raises the question of the legitimacy of local elected officials and urban actors to take up the issue of agriculture and food as their main challenge.

Identified measures and actors to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

In order to overcome the obstacles and to respond to the challenges mentioned above, the confrontation brought out several key actors and interesting measures.

The key actors are the political actors at different levels, in particular at the regional or departmental level, who can become valuable supporters and help to obtain funding and recognition from other local actors. The impetus of national policies, such as the Territorial Food Projects, can also support emerging dynamics and good practices.

However, the support of these actors must also be complemented by the possibility of having more long-term means and human resources, as most of the key actors for the installation of new farmers and for the protection of agricultural land are, in both contexts, employees or volunteers in associations. Thus, in order to have a sustainable and wider impact, it is imperative that actions are supported by financial means while being reinforced by political will at local, regional and national levels.

More broadly, the VPA practice shows that a place (physical as well as symbolic) is needed for different actors to talk to each other, get to know each other and debate on an equal footing in order to come up with common actions. This place needs to be strengthened by people with strong facilitation skills in order to build links between seemingly diametrically opposed stakeholders and thus propose a real common project.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development

An idea was suggested and discussed in one brainstorming and in the focus group: the impact and role of researchers in generating good practices for rural regeneration. In fact, the confrontation was initiated by the research project itself and several actors highlighted their willingness to enter into research partnerships and exchanges in order to have feedback on their practices, to know other experiences elsewhere and thus enrich their repertoire of actions and finally to establish methodologies that could generalize the good practices put forward or, on the contrary, underline things that do not work and determine the positive and negative factors.

For confrontation participants, the involvement of researchers and their role in the dissemination of good practices over time is important, because they allow actors to combine reflection and practices in the field. Several participants in the confrontation also emphasised their recent or long-standing formal (with funded action research programmes) or informal collaborations with several research laboratories at regional level in Toulouse region or in Ile- de-France region.

More generally, the confrontation allowed for a moment of self-reflection of the actors' practices. Indeed, Versailles plain stakeholders present at the confrontation, who were able to make a detailed presentation of their actions, welcomed this exchange organisation because for them recognition is also important.

To remember:

- In order to answer rural regeneration issues, agricultural diversification and dialogue with conventional farmers and political stakeholders are the key factors. To conduct collective actions and reflections and to build relationships between actors who do not talk to each other, stakeholders need a good structural organisation.
- Moreover, a symbolic and physical space is needed to build a concrete facilitation process. This space needs to be planned by people with facilitation skills.
- To go further than the successful case, it is necessary to scale up by building a global methodology. Actors also need political support and financial means in the medium and long term.
- Public policies do not respond to the problems of the actors encountered, which explains their desire to work with researchers and thus to take a step back from their actions.

Lessons learned and recommendations

To some extent, the specific organisation of VPA and its process of facilitation could be applicable in the Toulouse context because this area has an active microcosm of small associations that already link local actors and new farmers. Contacts with some former and/or conventional farmers are also partly made but it remains to better structured exchanges and networks between actors in order to weave more systemic relationships.

However, the VPA has a particularity: the achievement of a common and ancient representation of the plain of Versailles as an important heritage space, which helped to federate the current network of actors and which led to a landscape charter. This specific heritage aspect is not necessarily reproducible in its current state in Toulouse, since the agricultural context and its historical roots are different.

The confrontation of these two contexts and the interrogation of the replicability of VPA practice can provide a more general reflection on the drivers needed for rural regeneration in a metropolitan context. Thus, it can be added that the proximity of the city is not necessarily to be seen only as a danger for agriculture. This proximity implies a growing interest of the urban actors for food and thus for the question of the installation of young farmers and also allows small farms and new entrants into farming to find outlets more easily, as the case of the Versailles plain shows very well.

Further consequences for the context

The next step for Toulouse associations is a more structured organisation of their collective and the definition of the skills that each associative structure can bring. The collective wishes to create a real ecosystem of actors and associations to get out of the position of marginal agriculture. Beyond the few cases of successful farmer installations, it is now necessary to go further to create a global dynamic while knowing the complexity of the territory. In addition, the more social aspect needs to be developed in order to be able to offer quality and local food not only to the wealthier populations but also to the poorest.

In these future steps, the place of political actors and institutions is important, as they can offer political and financial support. Researchers are also central, as they can provide theoretical background, context confrontation and diagnostics to the actions implemented.

To remember:

- Toulouse context has a rich associative microcosm with actors who are already mobilising on the issues of farmers renewal and agricultural land preservation, so a facilitation structure like the VPA could be created there.
- Context specificities must be taken into account so that good practices are properly implemented. The metropolitan context is not only negative, it offers opportunities that must be seized.
- Social aspect has to be integrated in the development of new agricultural projects to be more inclusive.
- Politics and researchers' implications but also allocation of financial means are the next steps to implement VPA practice in Toulouse context.

Contributors:

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Appendix 12: East Flanders (Belgium, NE5)

Organising partner:	De Landgenoten	Innovation Type
Practice:	Farm collectives: a lever for an agricultural and rural transition (France, FR6A)	
Practice context:	Toussaq, Belêtre, Champ Boule - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Zulte, East Flanders (NUTS3) - Intermediate	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	October 18th 2021	

Summary

This report contains the outcome of the confrontation of the promising practice on 'collective farms' that Terre de Liens researched in T5.2 of the RURALIZATION-project. Within their D5.2 case study report Terre de Liens considers collective farms as follows: 'farms where farmers have a common project for agricultural production and partially or totally mutualise investment, labour and, in some cases, marketing and remuneration'.

De Landgenoten confronted Flemish stakeholders with the 3 studied French farm collectives in 3 brainstorm sessions during which De Landgenoten focused on critical factors and obstacles to roll out this practice within the context of the stakeholders. Subsequently we merged the participants of the brainstorm sessions for one collective focus group in order to identify solutions for the obstacles encountered. The goal of these sessions was to sharpen the lessons learned in the case studies and to help identify the key factors of success.

In the following report we go more into detail on the general outcome of our confrontation. We would like to point out that amongst the chosen stakeholders there was a strong affinity with the idea of collective farms.

Context

The agricultural sector in Flanders is characterised by an on-going enlargement and specialisation on one hand, and providing other services ('broadening') that aren't directly related to agricultural production

on the other hand. According to the Flemish biennial agriculture report of 2018 (LARA2018), 23.225 farms were active in Flanders in 2017, of which 78% professionally (which means an output of at least 25.000 euro). In comparison to 2007 this is a decrease by just over a quarter, a yearly decline of 3,2% on average. Mostly smaller farms quit. In that same time period, only a decade, the average surface of cultivated land per farm increased by one third to 26,3 hectares.

The LARA2018 mentions the inflow of new entrants and successors as one of the current challenges for the agricultural sector in Flanders. Due to a lack of inflow and a stable outflow of farmers, the farming population in Flanders is aging and thinning. This loss of social capital is similar to the one described in the introduction of the D5.2 Case Study report on Collective Farms in France.

One of the main obstacles that newcomers encounter is the price of agricultural land, raising up to on average 63.000 euro per hectare (in the first half of 2021). This is not as much due to urbanisation as it is in the French context, but more due to recreational use of agricultural land.

For this confrontation we initially focused on one specific case of a farmer's daughter looking to take over her parent's conventional dairy farm along with her life partner. The farm is situated in Zulte, a municipality in the province of East Flanders. She contacted De Landgenoten a few years ago in her search on how to continue the farm and make a transition to organic agriculture, in close collaboration with other farmers and/or processors.

Zulte counts about 15 000 inhabitants and has 3 sub-municipalities: Zulte, Machelen and Olsene. It has a surface of 32,52 square km (Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur & Statistiek Vlaanderen, 2018). Zulte is part of the arrondissement of Ghent, which is marked as an 'intermediate region' according to the Urban-rural Typology²⁷.

About 55,5% of the total surface of Zulte is used for agriculture, which is just slightly more than the average of the province East Flanders (54,2%). Yet it is less than the actual surface with an agricultural spatial destination within Zulte, which is 66,4% of the total surface of this municipality. In 2020 77 agricultural businesses were active. Which is a decrease of 42,1% in comparison to the number of 2001 (Interprovinciale werking Landbouw). A lot more detailed information on the agricultural sector can be derived from that same source.

We do want to nuance the determining effect of this given local context for the emergence of the researched promising practice. In the D5.2 case study report 3 different farm collectives are presented and compared. All three French collectives emerged in quite different contexts (see chapter 3 of the D5.2 case study report, pages 6 - 10). Moreover this case study report states (page 10): "In any case, we can hardly draw conclusions from our surveys on what contexts that are favourable or unfavourable to the emergence of agricultural collectives. When questioned on this issue, farmers themselves emphasised that the choice of a location to establish had been primarily a matter of opportunity, the presence of a farm to take over and benevolent farm transferors seemed, at least in the cases studied, more crucial prerequisites to the emergence than the wider context. This wider context, as we will see in the next

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<https://ec.europa.eu/statistical-atlas/viewer/?config=typologies.json&mids=BKGCNT,TYPREGURT2021,CNTOVL&o=1,1,0.7¢er=50.97226,4.9278,7&lcis=TYPREGURT2021&ch=TYPREG,TYPREGURT&nutsId=BE234&>

section, does however influence the trajectories of emergence of collective farms and the shape they take."

The importance of an opportunity and of benevolent transferors was acknowledged during the brainstorm sessions in Flanders. Surely areas where for example the pressure on land is (even) higher than elsewhere, may prevent the emergence of collectives. Yet it seemed more relevant to look into the transferability of this promising practice on a larger regional or even national scale. As De Landgenoten is active in Flanders, as are all participants of the brainstorms and focus group, the chosen context is the region of Flanders.

Flanders is a region where agricultural land is typically intensively used, and where parcels are relatively small. Agricultural land is used for permanent pasture (35%), for cereals (23%) and fodder (21%) (source: Kerncijfers landbouw 2020).

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

Amongst the participants of the brainstorm sessions and focus group there is a large interest and affinity with farm collectives: all but one, are farmers who are or have been involved in a farm collective, or are strongly considering starting a collective in the near future.

One of the participants states it is either starting a farm along with others or starting not at all.

"I relate to remarks made about the hardships of working in a collective, yet at the same time, doing this alone wouldn't be an option for me. To me it's important." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 / part. 3).

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice

At different moments within the brainstorm sessions and focus group, references are made to external guidance, know-how and methodologies to help develop the collaboration between farmers on a human and organisational level. One of the participants points out that it is more obvious to call on within non-familial settings.

A certain mentality is required as well. Participants feel there is a more collective spirit in Wallonia, the French speaking southern part of Belgium, in comparison to Flanders. According to one of the participants, more financial incentives are present in the southern part of Belgium, for example subsidies for the collective operation of a farm shop.

In addition, in Flanders the population density is high, in Wallonia the distances to a sales market are larger, so the effect of collaboration is immediately much more perceptible.

Moreover, historically the number of children within families is much smaller within Wallonia, another participant explains. "Peasant families only had 2 children, in Flanders they had 10. You had your collective within the family in Flanders. In Wallonia farmers were larger, with less children, so historically they have always had to rely on others to make it happen." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 3 / part. 4)

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

Access to land

One of the first thresholds mentioned by participants is the **difficulty in accessing land**.

One participant, along with another new entrant, is on the verge of joining an existing collaboration of 2 CSA-farmers looking to expand their farm (more vegetable production, more diversified production, as well as new sales channels and providing care to vulnerable groups).

Whether their expansion will happen, depends on finding additional land within the area and -equally important - within a foreseeable future.

Access to land is indeed a focal point within RURALIZATION and problematic within many European regions, and a very tough challenge within Flanders too. On average Flemish farm land costs about 63.000 euro per hectare (Fednot, 2021) and landowners are the longer the less inclined to lease land for the long-term (LARA, 2020).

Housing

Another barrier that comes up are the strict rules with regard to obtaining a permit to divide an existing farmstead into various housing units. Moreover, it is not legally possible to take up residence in a yurt, tiny house or other type of alternative living space. This makes it challenging to cohabit a farm with more families.

"I assume a difference with France is the scale of farms in general. Out here farms often start with 1 or 2 hectares or even smaller. That makes it more difficult to do something with 3 or 4 people. I assume the projects that we discussed from France were bigger at start and had more possibilities for housing." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 3 /part. 1).

Start-up is challenging

Another barrier linked to starting a farm, and in particular starting a farm collective is the **starting period with lots of (financial) insecurities** that needs to be bridged.

"I wanted to point out the financial aspect of the start-up and the tense period you are in and everyone's individual situation. Who can still get benefits (...) who can get an income as of when. That is a very big threshold too." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 4)

"I assume the context in Flanders is, that a lot of money is needed just to live, plus a challenge to make it profitable. I do believe collectives are promising to start. But it is looking for a way to make it work. I think the reality here is that most CSA-farms start by themselves and then (...) at a certain point grow towards a collaboration." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 3 /part. 1)

It seems to be a deliberate choice, or at least a defensible strategy for some of the participants, not to start with too many people in the collective. "I currently run a CSA along with one colleague. We started with the idea to run a collective farm. In hindsight, I am glad we did not start straight away with 3 or 4 people." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 2 /part. 2).

Agriculture in itself is challenging

An **agricultural setting** is special, with long days, (very) low wages, and many challenges.

"Within agriculture, where to find the time to set up a collaboration?" (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 1).

"Collaborating in the agricultural sector is like a euphemism. I don't think it is something for just any

farm or farmer... There are many people for whom this wouldn't be an option according to me. (...) Surely external facilitation is key, you can't do it alone. But still, you need to talk, think, research stuff, have patience... There are so many aspects (...) Surely context can make it even harder, yet it is inherently very hard and requires many competences, and also some luck in a lot of things you don't control" (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 2 /part. 2).

"You have to cope with four different seasons in a year. It takes time to get to know your business in all seasons. If you start with three difficult years because of extreme weather, a start-up is very hard. In many ways a collective in agriculture does not differ from other commons, but this dependence of external factors, of weather and seasons, make agriculture a difficult business. You are never sure to realise profit, even when you have worked hard." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 3 /part. 4)

Working together is demanding

Working in a collective means that partners are **depending on the efforts of the other**. And that can create tensions. This is especially the case when farmers choose to work collectively in a constellation where there isn't a real hierarchy between wage earners and the self-employed farmers. Thus, the fate of the company and each person's professional career is strongly intertwined and depends on each other's commitment. Collaboration is repeatedly labelled as **challenging** throughout all brainstorm sessions.

"Our societal context is focused on doing things and shaping our lives individually, while we feel there is a challenge, or that there would be so much more possible by collaborating. But we have forgotten how to do that." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 3) Two of the participants are a couple with the offer to take over the parental farm. "We could take over the (large) farm of my parents. But if we decide to do this, we need to let go of our current work-life balance. Collaboration would be ideal for that. (...) At the same time, collaboration is so **demanding**. It is something extra that comes on top of everything else." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 1). Her partner adds: "I was enthusiastic about collaboration. I wanted to take over a larger farm straight away along with several others so to speak. Yet my partner wasn't into that. She feels we first need a good routine within our family before making it more complicated. Collaboration is **complex**" (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 2).

As another participant states: "One of the obstacles is that a collective exists of more people that each want to realize their dream. Someone wants to go in a certain direction, another wants to move in a slightly other direction. In the beginning this will look very similar, but when you start having meetings you will encounter obstacles where there's a difference. That seems to me like an important difference with a family setting. It's a very different process when you want to start something with 2 people and there isn't something yet. You start with nothing. If there already is a company, you continue in a certain direction. If there isn't something yet, there is no context." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 3 /part. 1). "There are so many ways to farm" (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 2 /part. 1).

Need for a (not too) solid base

It is easier to start working together, once there is a **solid base** between the partners."That solid base, that is what everything depends on. You can build this by yourself or with 2 people" (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 1 /part. 4). On the other hand, if the base is **too solid, it can be an obstacle** as well. Stepping into an existing structure can be a barrier for new entrants. One participant testified about the collective

farm where he works for years: "We have been in business for 40 years. We grew from having no rules to having too many rules. That rule-making tendency, like 'something goes astray, we need to make an arrangement' prevents new people from joining. We can all justify why these rules or agreements were made, but this has a very suffocating effect on new people who think 'I want to contribute, but in my own way'. Then you have to rethink everything that has been created in the course of time and rethink how you can give people the chance to enter." (Flanders, NE 5 / bs 2 /part. 4).

A similar barrier exists when farmers from existing farms try to work together as a collective: How to start pooling means when the investments that are already made, may be very different for the producers concerned? One of the participants set up a marketing platform for several sustainable producers within a certain region. As they offer a wide range of products, sharing a marketing channel towards conscious consumers is a way to strengthen the bond with them and allows new producers to launch their business better as the local sales market is already there. There is currently no desire among them to fully develop a farm collective in line with the definition used in the French examples. Their group consists of an existing CSA with land in a separate cooperative structure, a young farmer that leases 9 ha of land in ownership of her parents, a beekeeper and a mushroom grower that are way less soil-bound. Nevertheless, there is a strong solidarity between the producers involved in this particular case.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

Coaching for interpersonal dynamics

Since collaboration and the interpersonal dynamic is such a key issue, it's no wonder measures on this level were mentioned during the focus group. "What I think would be helpful is a sort of **training on how to communicate** (well). Being able to put on the table what is important to you. Earlier someone mentioned how much time you need to get to know one another. I think you can have very long meetings, yet still encounter a first issue on something you didn't discuss or bump into a problem you couldn't predict. Those skills... in general I think we unlearned those." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 7). Inspiration on how to do this can be looked for in other professional settings too. "I wonder how this works in other contexts. Many companies are founded by more people, not only within agriculture. How does this happen in those settings? If you are two people wanting to start a coffee bar, an IT company... or something else, isn't it similar? Those are also separate entrepreneurs that want to start a company together, wanting to do this in a collective way. Maybe we can learn from them. From a context that isn't agricultural. (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 11).

Quite some participants refer to the work of Frederic Laloux 'Reinventing organisations' as a useful and insightful framework to look for ways to better address the organisational aspects of collective work. One of the topics it focuses on is responsibilities and ways to regularly question them and, if necessary, redistribute them. His work also provides tools for decision-making. As pointed out earlier: an **external facilitator** can be an important asset to make the most of a collective. Another idea is to set up a **learning platform** and provide networking possibilities to exchange knowledge and experiences between peers.

Actors that help create a solid base in different ways: land, capital, trust

In relation to the solid base as a prerequisite to make expansion possible, a number of aspects are of importance in this regard. "What De Landgenoten does, facilitating **access to land**, is an important base for that. If you are confronted with matters on **capital** at the beginning, that makes it even more complex. Also, the run-up, how do you start with each other? (...) What time do you take together, **how well do you know each other**? All different pieces that make it possible to build a solid base. That's what it's all about." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 4). "Collaborating sounds fun, but it can only work when you trust each other. And how do you build trust? How much time do you invest to come to a trustful relationship?" (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 5)

Systemic improvements

Other **systemic issues** should be addressed too in order to help succeed the implementation of farm collectives: the pressure on **income** for farmers, the **administrative burden**, the challenging work-life balance, the **extensive regulation**, the **strict housing rules**, to mention the most important.

Paid internship or unemployment benefit during training

In line with the financial challenges many (starting) farmers face, the idea of paid internship is put forward. Currently many new entrants are trained at Landwijzer, the training centre for adults on organic and biodynamic agriculture in Flanders. This training takes 2,5 years and is financially challenging as it is very hard to combine with a regular job, because the trainees do several internships of many hours at several farms. This means that for many trainees, their savings are gone by the end of the training.

One of the farmers clarifies: "Certain interns mentioned to me that if their internship would have been paid by the farm, it would have been more probable and easy to continue working at the farm. Their savings wouldn't have been gone by the end of their training. As a business manager, I find that interesting. I get a trainee that doesn't know much, and I train him. If I pay him, it is most probable that this trainee stays at my farm, if I want him to. If I don't pay him, it is most likely that he needs to build up new savings elsewhere, in a job where wages are better. " (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 11)

A participant adds: "I have been working on our farm with IBO and ACTIVA status for two years now. IBO²⁸ is a paid internship so to speak, ACTIVA²⁹ means that the **salary is partly paid by the employer and partly by the unemployment benefit**. It is partly subsidised work. With two people, we are now employed through this status. So I have been able to learn and work for two years and I have a salary." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 8)

An alternative measure could be to allow an **unemployment benefit** or being **entitled to a minimum wage** during a year or two whilst in the process of starting up a farm collective.

²⁸ IBO stands for 'Individuele beroepsopleiding' or 'individual professional training'. Through an IBO an employer can train a jobseeker within the company during a maximum of 6 months. No wage or social security contributions are required, only a fixed monthly amount. <https://www.vdab.be/ibo>

²⁹ ACTIVA-system in the Brussels region allows an employer to hire someone even if they don't have a lot of financial margin. <https://www.actiris.brussels/nl/werkgevers/activa-brussels/>

Venture capital

Another idea to bridge the financial challenge in the beginning, is brought up by one of the participants: "Perhaps there are also people who would like to put **venture capital** into these young farmers. They might want that capital back one day, but don't necessarily want to make a lot of profit. Suppose they want to finance for three or four years, with the risk of losing it, but on the other hand also the possibility of getting it back in ten years' time. I think many other sectors work in the same way. The idea, however, is that they will make a big profit on it. But there is also a lot of capital that does not necessarily have to make a lot of profit." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 11). Surely the financial threshold is too high, participants agree. Yet one of them points out it can't become too easy either. "Farming requires entrepreneurship, searching for solutions, it demands ruggedness." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 4).

Structures bringing together new entrants and older farmers

Another measure to get **new entrants** started, is to **bring them in contact with older farmers** looking to transfer and/or explore new business options, yet don't want to start new adventures on their own.

Besides linking them, a **safe context** should be provided so a transferor doesn't fear his farm will be taken over by the next generation without his consent. In Flanders, there currently isn't a **structure or organisation** to refer new entrants to. In the case of the French example in Toussacq it was indeed the farm's owner that initiated a farm incubator that eventually led to a collective.

An organisation from abroad that inspires one of the participants of the brainstorm group within this field is 'Landgilde'³⁰: an innovative practice from the Netherlands that was documented by De Landgenoten within the first phase of T6.4 of the RURALIZATION project.

Participants agree that it would be interesting to create a **database** of older farmers and new entrants to try to match them. Several conventional farmers owning land are open to new forms of agriculture like organic or to new sales models. They do not want to start it up themselves, but are willing to rent out land to new entrants. A database could bring them together. But it should come along with coaching, otherwise it won't work.

Recalling common inspiration

A famous farm collective from abroad existing for many years brings a final idea: "A long time ago I asked the people of Dottenfelderhof³¹: What is the secret to your success? I got a surprising answer: they told me they need to see each other at least every fortnight, but preferably even once a week, during a study session. During these, they look for inspiration on how to achieve their goal. That was key for them. Those sessions differ completely from any organisational exchange. Meeting each other, not to make appointments but for substantive work. You then meet each other in a totally different way." (Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 5). Two members of the focus group indicate this practice also exists on their farms and is indeed very useful. A possible tool to shape these sessions is Joke Bloksma's 'Werkboek Gezond Landbouwbedrijf'³² in which the author helps farmers develop their farm into a

³⁰ <https://landgilde.nl/>; Landgilde is a matching platform to inform farmers (to be) about work and learning opportunities on a farm. Landgilde also informs farmers about farms in need of a successor.

³¹ <https://en.dottenfelderhof.eu/>

³² <http://www.jokebloksma.nl/werkboek/>

coherent whole with its own identity. "If you can't find each other in the practical organisation, you can still find each other in the content."(Flanders, NE 5 / fg /part. 11).

Lessons learned and recommendations

What could be additionally learned about the practice?

First of all, we want to acknowledge the thorough research on the promising practice of collective farms performed by Terre de Liens. The report succeeds in capturing the different aspects and dimensions in the emergence and sustainable continuation of farm collectives.

Two out of the three obstacles to setting up a collective that were identified in the French research, were mentioned during the brainstorm sessions: although for different reasons, finding suitable **housing** is an issue, as are the **human aspects** of farming as a group.

One of the subtopics in the case report of Terre de Liens are the **legal models**. Although this topic wasn't tackled in depth during the confrontation, the aspect of legal models came up here and there during the sessions. Quite a few participants are working together within a 'maatschap' which is an agreement between two or more people who bring together their contributions with the idea to share direct or indirect capital gain that may be derived. There's no need for an intervention of a notary to form a 'maatschap', there's a large contractual freedom and no legal minimum capital or financial plan is required. It is therefore considered a simple way to explore a collaboration without having to set up more complex and strict legal entities (e.g. a cooperative), to which it could evolve however, once a certain base is formed.

Terre de Liens mentions the fact that the type of operating structure chosen has many implications for the collectives in various areas. One of the implications in Flanders for instance is that a cooperative, an ideal quite some farmers work towards, is no longer subject to the leasehold legislation if not all the directors of the cooperative have the status of farmers. This means that a lease contract for land brings along less protection for such a cooperative than for farmers or farmers cooperatives.

Another topic we just slightly touched during the sessions yet also came up in the case report is the numerous **interactions** the three farms have **with citizens**, an interest that seems to be shared by the Flemish participants (willing to) engage(d) in collectives. This collective spirit surpasses the limits of the farm itself.

Further consequences for the context

One of the ideas pitched and encouraged by the participants of the focus group was for an actor to look for alternative support from a LEADER-project on the matter. LEADER is a European rural development grant programme and could help support the uptake and further development of certain collective initiatives. Or more broadly subscribe to a grant call that enables to gather existing knowledge, tools, contacts of services, organisations and consultants and that helps disseminating learnt lessons.

Relevant actors to contribute to unlock these matters would be BioForum (the sector organisation for organic agriculture, processing, retail and food services in Flanders), Landwijzer (the training center for

organic and biodynamic agriculture in Flanders), existing facilitators on farm collaborations, De Landgenoten, Innovatiesteunpunt (a support centre that offers consulting for farms on all sorts of innovation), etc.

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Appendix 13: Occitanie Region (France, NE6)

Organising partner:	Terre de Liens	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Farm collectives: a lever for an agricultural and rural transition, (France, FR6A)	
Practice context:	Toussaq, Belêtre, Champ Boule - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Larzac, Occitanie Region - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 4th 2021	

Summary

A confrontation of RURALIZATION case study “Collective farms: a lever for a rural and agricultural transition?” was organised on the Larzac plateau, south-west France (Occitanie region), on November 4, 2021. This event gathered mainly farmers (9), rural development organisations (11), as well as local policymakers (3) interested in supporting the emergence and upscale of this practice. Among critical factors participants identified for the development of collective farms were: access to proper land and farm opportunities; use of specific tools and resources on how to farm as a group; availability of specialised counselling on group farming issues. The barriers, on the other end, often related to financing such critical factors (accessing land and paying for counselling in particular) as well as to the relative lack of recognition of collectives by the farming world and institutions. As a result, farm transferors and public institutions (advisory, state or local services) are key actors to facilitate further development of collective farms. The former must be further sensitised regarding the possibility to transfer their farms to new generations with collective models. Public institutions must be trained to better promote this form of farming and better welcome collective projects. Participants in the focus group also outlined ideas for specific public aid schemes targeted to collective farms.

Context

Held on November 4, 2021, the confrontation event gathered a total of 26 participants (15 female, 11 male). It aimed to discuss how to facilitate the emergence of more “collective farms” as a promising practice for rural development and generational renewal in agriculture.³³

The area chosen for the event, Larzac, is located in the department of Aveyron, Occitanie region. Larzac is a high mountainous plateau covered with natural pastures. It has most similarities with the context of one of the collective farms studied in RURALIZATION named “Champ Boule”. Champ Boule is located in Barjac, Ariège department. Both areas (Larzac and Barjac) are predominantly rural mid-mountain regions where animal raising is the main type of agricultural activity.

However, the RURALIZATION study also looked at two other collective farms named “Belêtre” and “Toussacq”, located respectively in the Indre-et-Loire and Seine-et-Marne departments. These farms are located in rural areas composed of flatter plains where the main agricultural activity is cereal and oil-seed crops. Given the diversity of the three farm contexts studied in the RURALIZATION report, a point-by-point comparison with the area of Larzac could hardly be established.

Nevertheless, some characteristics common to all three originally studied contexts (Ariège, Indre-et-Loire and the Seine-et-Marne) can also apply to Larzac. These are the following:

- declining social dynamics (tendency towards depopulation and ageing of the local population);
- economic contraction (reduction of local jobs, closures of shops in village centres);
- influential agricultural sociology (important place of farmers in political institutions).

Having established these preliminary observations, we should state that contextual factors have a rather reduced influence on the emergence of promising collective farms. During the RURALIZATION case study interviews and focus groups, the question of the context was indeed expressly tackled but no strong conclusion could be drawn regarding its influence on the establishment of collective farms. Rather, according to farmers, the choice of a location to establish had been primarily a matter of opportunity : they settled where they found a farm to take over and farm transferors open to their projects. These factors carried more weight than local features such as social dynamics, type of agriculture, climate, or else.

Consequently, the Larzac area was also chosen for reasons beyond its comparability with the contexts studied in RURALIZATION. It hosts a rich ecosystem of stakeholders, which seemed favourable to supporting and strengthening the development of this promising practice. These stakeholders include rural development organisations such as the ADEAR (Association for the Development of Agricultural and Rural Employment) whose staff attended the meeting. ADEAR is an organisation supporting alternative farming models and was a precursor in accompanying collective farming projects. Local Terre de Liens associations (non-partners in RURALIZATION) also attended the meeting. These associations can play a

³³ The T5.2 case study “Martin-Prével A., Rochette T. and Crequy A. *Collective Farms: a lever for an agricultural and rural transition?*” was chosen as a basis for this confrontation event.

complementary role. While ADEAR's counselling focuses on economic, agricultural, and human aspects, Terre de Liens can advise new entrants specifically on land aspects (how to access it, evaluate it, purchase or rent it...) and support community-funded purchase of farmland for collective farms.

In addition to these organisations, numerous farm collectives originating from nearby locations attended the meeting. The discussions further identified and specified key ways in which farmers themselves can support the development of new collectives. This includes:

- Making known and visible their ways of working and documenting their experience as existing collective farms.
- Welcoming some interns or groups on their farms.
- Connecting with other farms and rural development organisations to be able to advise aspiring farmers who reach out to them about where to get support.
- Contributing with their own voices, experience, and good examples to building advocacy and raising local awareness in favour of collective farms.

Farm collectives is not a new practice and has developed well in diverse regions of France. However, it deserves to be amplified and more widely adopted in its most innovative forms—like those studied in RURALIZATION which include for instance the use of horizontal governance principle or alternative juridical statuses. The Larzac region, which also has a history of hosting alternative agriculture movements, gathers key ingredients of a confrontation context where this practice could be up-scaled.

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The collective farm practices studied in RURALIZATION largely raised interest and enthusiasm from local stakeholders. Before detailing positive feedback, however, we shall cite the doubts or specific questions that this practice raised. These concerned mainly:

- The benefits of the specific/unusual legal statuses adopted by some of the collective farms studied in RURALIZATION. The Belêtre farm chose a cooperative and participative company (SCOP) status while Toussacq chose the cooperative society of collective interest (SCIC). These forms of organisation are considered “non-agricultural” and don't allow benefiting from agricultural subsidies. However, they present other advantages, which were debated by the participants. For instance, the SCOP allows it to enshrine in the company's statuses workers' equal rights and duties regarding decision-making, risks, or profit sharing. It also allows farmers to be considered “salaried workers”, which provides better social coverage (unemployment rights, higher retirement pensions, etc.) and facilitates the entry of new associates in the company as well as later transfer of the farm to new generations.
- The reasons why new entrants may find collective farming models appealing were also debated. In particular, the statement from the RURALIZATION study that collectives can allow easier entry and

exit from agriculture raised questions for some stakeholders. They considered this activity should remain a long-term if not lifetime commitment and a “short-termist” vision of agriculture should not be promoted. Others responded that it is important to take into consideration that many new entrants are career-changers who had prior professional experience and could aspire to have others after farming. They saw a positive side to allowing a greater number of people access and test agriculture, even if some chose to “exit” after a few years.

Regarding acceptance of the practice, it was high due to the fact that, as previously mentioned, the event appealed to people already interested in the matter. Among the motivations farmers expressed to be or become part of collectives were:

- The idea of “creating a business together”, developing businesses with new forms of organisation and “with values of equality”.
- The appeal to “return to the rural” and “gain autonomy” by working as a group and on a diversified farm.
- The fact that collectives can allow to “get out of domination relationships” and “change the agricultural model reduced to setting up alone or as a couple”.

For the rural development organisations, it was important to further develop this practice to meet the various challenges that new entrants encounter to establish in agriculture. This includes the challenge to access land (collectives can allow pooling money from various individuals and/or taking over larger farms), to access appropriate equipment (collective can share investment), but also challenges related being new to the agricultural work and world in general (collective allow overcoming some fears, sharing knowledge and know-how among individuals, mutualising difficult or time-consuming tasks like marketing/delivery of products, etc.).

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

The group identified many decisive factors to support the implementation of the practice. None were specific to Larzac (they can apply to all regions where these elements are found). Yet a specific Larzac asset is the long-standing tradition to welcome new entrants, which stems from a culture of openness and rural innovation.

1) Access to proper land and farm opportunities for collective farms

Although access to land is not a challenge specific to collective farms, looking for land as a group can raise particular obstacles (sometimes fuelled by negative perceptions of collectives as “hippy communities” as well as other barriers detailed in the next section). Therefore, various dimensions are key for a land opportunity to materialise.

- **Willing and open farm transferors.** Testimonies harvested in the focus group emphasized the facilitating attitudes retiring farmers can adopt when transferring land to a group. These include: being open to a different type of agriculture being practised on their land; being amenable to sharing networks, contacts, and knowledge with the successors; and, most importantly, showing willingness to leave the farm and let the group synergies develop on their own after an initial period of mentoring.
- **The farm/land should be suitable for restructuring and diversification.** Collectives can take over larger farms, provided these are compatible with a diversification of activities (e.g. from a family practicing cereal monoculture to a group of people implementing polyculture and animal raising).

Beyond diversification, this often means the farm infrastructure themselves have to be adapted. Such “restructuring” can entail creating new buildings or repurposing old ones, changing the location of some activities on the farm, creating hedges, fences, irrigation systems, etc.

- **The ability to organise collective financing of the land is also critical.** Collectives can be appealing to new entrants because they allow pooling together money to invest in the land. However, proper juridical schemes to share investment and risks are critical. The ability to appeal to external financing also is key, whether through classical bank circuits (which entails finding financiers open to group agriculture projects) or solidarity investment schemes.

2) Leveraging specific tools and resources to support living and farming as a group

Collective farms respond to new entrants’ aspirations to question traditional models of setting up in agriculture as a single farmer or a couple. In this practice, the farm becomes a shared enterprise whose conduct and future are decided among individuals who have equal status and power as associates in the farm. While this is an appealing ideal, it can quickly lead to conflict and failure if groups don’t have tools and resources to support/implement their transformative approach to farm work.

Among critical tools identified to support the development of collectives, we can cite:

- Tools to support dialogue or, as a farmer put it during the event, tools to “know how to discuss, get around the table to advance in these processes”. This means for instance getting informed and trained on how to organise meetings which includes managing type of meetings (in-depth/strategic or just weekly/logistical), frequency, agenda, speech distribution, rotating organising responsibility, etc.
- Tools on governance, to help collectives adopt agreed-upon and operational statutes and value charters, work on responsibility repartition, develop decision-making processes that satisfy the group, create conflict-resolution mechanisms, etc.
- Tools on financial and technical aspects of working as a group (e.g. schemes to collect/count work time of associates; tools to know how to share investment, risk, equipment; juridical tools to use to set up a collective enterprise etc.)

Other important resources to prevent the failure of collective projects are “in kind” resources. For instance, successful collectives emphasised how key it had been for them to benefit from the testimony or mentoring of other collective farms. Furthermore, in building their projects, it was also crucial to forge group dynamics by concretely testing collective work, e.g. by interning on farms or carrying out small projects with future associates. Such “back-and-forth” between project and reality allows seeing how theoretical ideas regarding “working together” hold up in practice. Furthermore, this can be a way for future associates to gain skills, gain more recognition in local agricultural networks, and possibly access farm transfer opportunities.

3) Availability of specialised external counselling on collective farms issues

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of informed counselling to support the development of successful collective farm projects. Farmers themselves revealed how critical this aspect can be:

“The ten of us worked together for a long time, because getting external support required a financial commitment. (...) But now that we have it, we are making giant leaps.”

“The work we did with ATAG [a specialist collective farm counselling structure] was invaluable. In fact, it should have been mandatory.”

Key qualities of a counsellor include:

- being aware of the specificity of farming as a group (both technical and human aspects);
- striking a balance between helping the group define its common values and desires and pointing out possible tensions or problems to take into account;
- preparing groups regarding the concretisation of their project, e.g. making them aware of the difficulties they might encounter when starting to look for farm opportunities (as this is a phase where groups may split because a given farm is found suitable by some but not others and may have to review their project to adapt to the location);
- preparing groups regarding the future evolution of their projects, particularly tooling them up on human aspects to deal with conflict and possible evolutions of the project (e.g. adopt processes to allow the entry/integration of new members).

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

Again, the barriers identified by the participants were hardly specific to Larzac but can apply there too. Among the most important ones, participant identified:

1) Financing and accessing land

In all regions of France, even if land prices are low, there is competition on access to plots to capture subsidies connected to land surface. Furthermore, not all banks are open to finance atypical agricultural projects and solidarity investment solutions remain rare. Farmers also expressed difficulty linked to the lack of data on who owns the land and where land opportunities suitable for collectives may be found.

2) Unwelcoming territories or agricultural networks

Much work remains to be done to sensitise retiring farmers about transferring their land to family outsiders and specifically to collectives. Collective farms can be negatively perceived by the rural and agricultural world as “non-productive”, “sectarian”, “hippy”. This affects groups’ ability to be trusted to take over a farm but also, once they have set up, creates barriers linked to defiance from neighbours, consumers, or other local farmers (e.g. inability to rent additional land, inability to enter equipment-sharing cooperatives, etc.). Connected to this, traditional agricultural institutions such as the agricultural chamber or SAFER land agencies can lack training on how to accompany group projects or also be biased against collectives. This can bear negative impacts on a group’s access to land or agricultural subsidies for instance. Finally, some participants also highlighted a lack of networking opportunities among collectives due to farmers’ reduced capacity to organise solidarity outside of their own farm.

3) Financial counselling

The French VIVEA³⁴ was recently reformed. This led to a drastic cut of funding available for aspiring farmers during the “project emergence” phase. The maximum subsidy is about €2000, which barely covers technical training costs. Therefore, access to more in-depth counselling on juridical or human aspects is difficult to finance. While this is a key barrier for candidate farmers, the difficulty to finance counselling also concerns existing farms. Collective farms need to ensure the availability of external mediation/help to manage social and human dynamics in the long terms. Events like the entry or exit of associates often require support from a counsellor, but money can be difficult to find, particularly if the group is going through a tense period.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

The group identified the following actors as key targets:

- 1) Retiring farmers, who can be sensitised to transferring their farms to collectives and/or trained to adopt facilitating behaviours during the transfer process.
- 2) Traditional agricultural institutions, who are close to retiring farmers and agricultural networks and can lift barriers for collective projects.
- 3) Existing collective farms, who can play a key role as a support network for aspiring farmers and exemplify/fuel positive perceptions of collectives through their successful practices.

Possible measures to support the practice include:

- increase funding available to new entrants during the “project emergence” phase and throughout farm life, particularly to finance external counselling on human aspects of collective farming;
- improve existing legal statuses for group agriculture;
- ensure collectives can and are properly accompanied to receive CAP as well as other forms of subsidies (whatever the legal status chosen);
- deploy other new land solutions: land financing, progressive land transfer...

Most other measures suggested in the RURALIZATION study were also agreed-upon by participants.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development

The development of incubators or “test areas” dedicated to collectives can be an additional idea to foster emergence of this practice. The conditions participants outlined for test periods to be operational and relevant are that: (a) there should be remuneration/allowance that makes the “test” period viable for the individuals taking part in it; (b) the test should be accompanied by strong tutoring all aspects of farming (technical, administrative, marketing, etc.); (c) it should enable trying out different forms of mutualisation or diverse types of collective organisation; (d) ideally, an external counsellor would follow the group on human aspects during this period (pointing out possible tensions or difficulties arising that should be taken into account later).

³⁴ VIVEAA Fund for the training of professionals in the agriculture sector

Lessons learned and recommendations

An important area of additional learning identified during the focus group was the need to better articulate counselling propositions for collectives. Indeed, as previously mentioned, various advisory organisations exist both on the “alternative” and “traditional” agriculture sides. There is a need to better articulate the skills and methods of these structures to support collectives. Inter-knowledge between these organisations should also be promoted so that each one would be able to orient collectives to the other when needed (to receive complementary information or help, or when structure doesn’t have capacity to take on a group).

Furthermore, the participants evoked the fact that brainstorming sessions mainly dealt with how to facilitate the establishment of groups of farmers who are already formed. However, schemes are also needed to facilitate encounters between people interested in farming collectively who don’t yet have a group to settle with. For instance, events such as “meeting cafés”, farm visits, “speed dating” of future associates could be organised.

One of the next steps identified by the group consists in structuring a network of collective farms to further support the emergence of this practice. This could start at a regional Occitanie level and entail the following steps:

1. Documenting existing farms
 - Make a census of collective farms in the Occitanie region.
 - Contact with collectives via surveys to define/document their features and practices.
 - Create a tool to make these contacts and descriptions available more widely.
2. Organising a network of collective farms
 - Define common values of the network and incentives for members.
 - Organise events for the identified farms to know/recognise each other.
 - Connect with counsellors, mutualise knowledge and ways that farms can communicate to support each other and possibly support the emergence of new entrants.

The role of local authorities could also be upscaled at some territorial levels. For instance, at the intercommunal scale dedicated staff to “welcome” the newcomers and direct them to relevant advisory structures would be beneficial. This staff could also have a role of “land watch” to identify possible opportunities.

Contributors

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Appendix 14: Central Finland (Finland, NE7)

Organising partner:	UTU	Innovation Type
Practice:	Rural Professions Association No (Maaseutuammattiin ry) in North Savo (Finland, FI8A)	
Practice context:	North Savo (FI1D2) - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Central Finland (FI193) - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 4th 2021	

Summary

The practice of the Association for Rural Professions (Maaseutuammattiin ry in Finnish) has operated in the province of North Savo, Finland, since 2011. The practice was examined in a RURALIZATION case study (Ruuska 2021). The association was established to promote the education of agriculture and forestry and the availability of new entrepreneurs and professionals for rural jobs as well as to increase the networking of the operators of that field. They coordinate a wide network that commits the relevant actors to the systematic promotion work for the rural livelihoods.

This practice is unique in Finland. In this confrontation study, we examine the possibilities to replicate the practice for rural regeneration in another context, the province of Central Finland. The two provinces are alike in some features, like in land use or demographic development. There can be found similar stakeholders and economic structures of those neighbouring provinces. The bigger difference in rural areas of those two regions can be seen in the structural development of agriculture.

In principle, there are good possibilities to establish the same kind of practice in Central Finland. The workshop and the focus group discussion in this confrontation study proved that in general the regional stakeholders see the practice reasonable and significant. However, some updates for the conceptual guidelines and modifications for the practice activities are necessary when trying to implement the practice in that regional context.

Context

The comparative regions have many similar features but yet some differences too. In urban-rural typology, the both provinces are predominantly rural regions. These sparsely populated regions are

covered mostly by forest areas and inland waters. Farmland covers only about 6 % of the area. The total agricultural area of North Savo is 1.5 times bigger than in Central Finland though (Figure 1).

The population keeps concentrating in the capitals (Jyväskylä, Kuopio) of the provinces and some surrounding municipalities of them (Annex 1). For the regional economy, the bioeconomy, especially the forestry and forest industry are of big significance (Lehtoviita & Tenhola 2021). In Central Finland, the private forest owners, about 33,400 people, own 67 % of the total forest area. The forest sector employs about 5,900 people in that province (Metsäkeskus 2020).

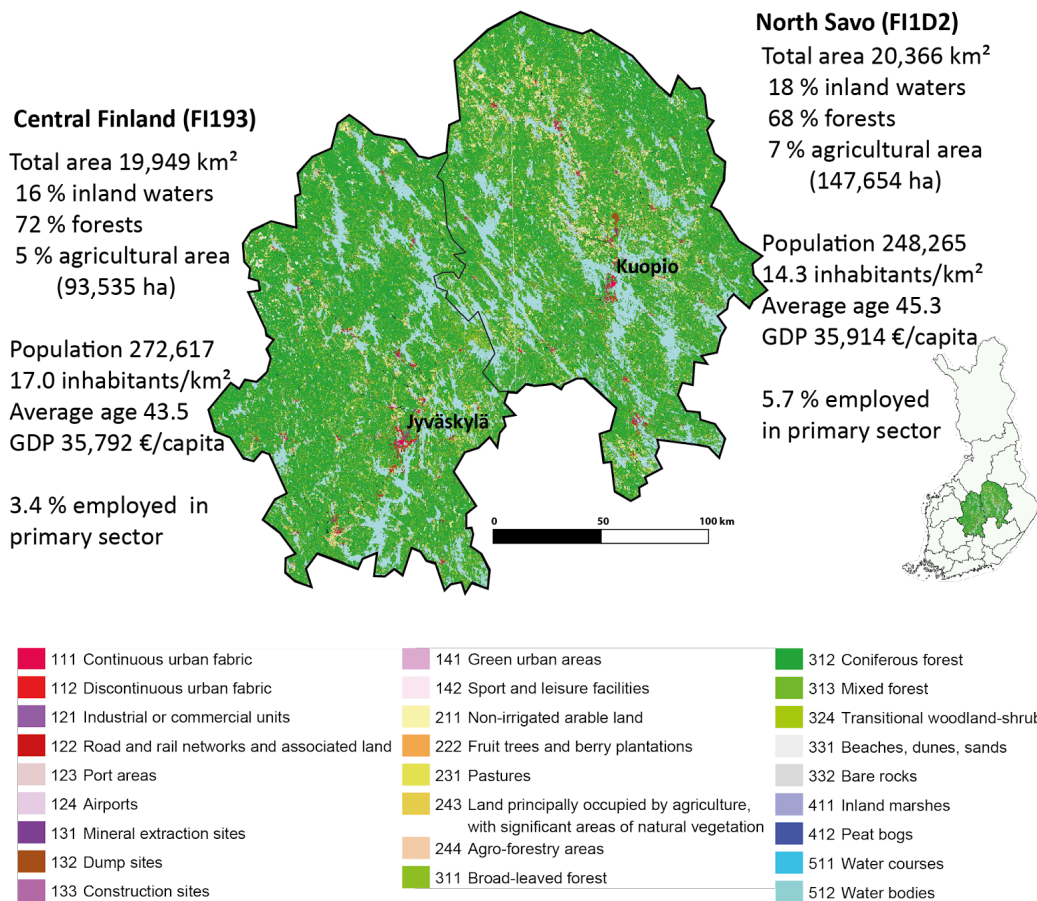


Figure 1. The Corine Land Cover (2018) area of the provinces of North Savo and Central Finland.

Source: Finnish Environment Institute (2018), Statistics Finland, LUKE (2021)

The bigger difference in rural areas of those two regions can be seen in the structural development of agriculture. The share of elderly farmers has grown bigger quite rapidly in recent years (Figure 2; Annex 1: Figure 5). In Central Finland the agricultural structure has been left behind from many other provinces. The future faith of investing in agriculture has weakened. It is difficult to find successors or new entrants to farming who could invest in productive use of farming property and to find new jobs that could compensate for losses in primary production. In both provinces, the main agricultural production sectors by economic measures are dairy and cattle farming. In North Savo, the agricultural product range, including strong production of berries and vegetables, is more versatile than in Central Finland. Entrepreneurship alongside farming is common in Central Finland though.

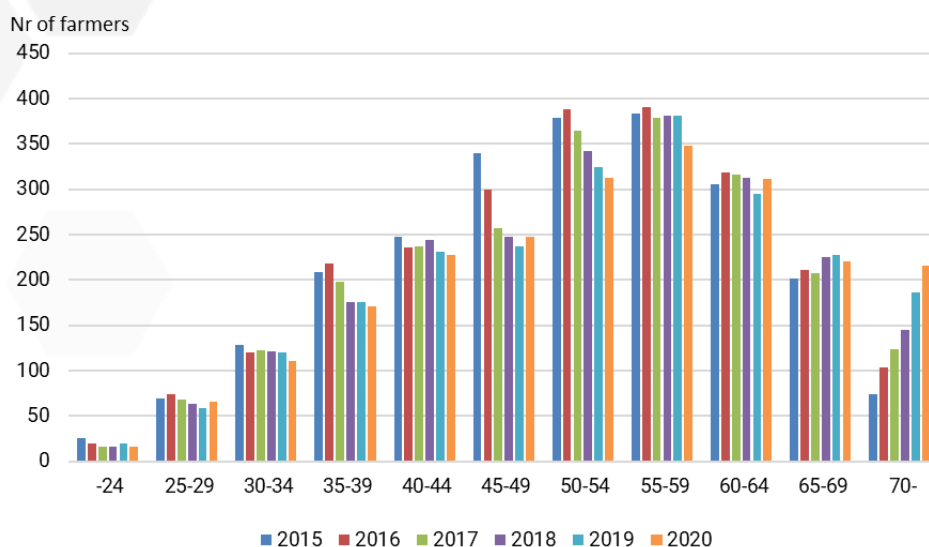


Figure 2. Number of farmers on private owned farms by age category in Central Finland, years 2015–2020.
Source: LUKE (2021)

The number of active farms, especially animal husbandry farms has decreased quite strongly in both provinces but North Savo has managed to maintain or even increase the production of the main farming products, milk and beef, unlike Central Finland and the unproductive, more passive use of arable land has increased (Annex 1: Figure 6, Figure 7).

The negative development seems to be stronger in Central Finland. Agriculture does not have that high status and the volume is lower, even though the natural circumstances for dairy farming or beef production, for instance, are not worse. Investments in animal husbandry in recent years show some improvement though.

The general attitude towards farming is not that encouraging in Central Finland and e.g. the regional administration perhaps does not pay that much attention to the agricultural production as in neighbouring provinces. Those factors may decrease the enthusiasm for farm investments and developing actions. In addition, it might be important to increase the interconnections between urban and rural people there.

On the other hand, there is one vocational school and one polytechnic university that give good opportunities to study also for professions in agriculture and forestry and for professions related to natural resources in some way (bioeconomy). There are manufacturing jobs in the agricultural machinery industry and in the forest industry. The forestry and forest industries are appreciated in that province but the status of agriculture could be better. There might be good possibilities to increase the general awareness and the interest of the youth for agriculture, food production, bioeconomy in all and rural life in the province of central Finland too.

Workshop method and results

Based on the Input paper for task 5.3 of the RURALIZATION project (Goulart & Sivini, 2021), the aim of the confrontation process is to further collect information about the ability of the selected practice to

generate an impact in another context. In this case, the confrontation information with the practice of Maaseutu Ammattiin ray was taken in a workshop and a focus group discussion on November 4th in Saarijärvi, Central Finland.

Workshop and focus group

The practice and the idea of confrontation were explained cursorily in an invitation to the participant candidates of the workshop. The invitation was sent to about 50 people who were seen to represent the same kind of segments of population, experts and organisations that are connected with the work of Maaseutu Ammattiin ray in North Savo, but in this case in the context of the province of Central Finland. The invitation was open so that everyone could deliver the invitation further to relevant experts and stakeholders.

More precise background information about the two contexts and about the actual 5.2 case study was sent beforehand to the participants who had registered for the workshop. The enrollment for the workshop was 25 people. After all, the workshop and the focus group discussion gathered 18 participants representing:

- Advisory and administrative services of agriculture & forestry
- Education (secondary & tertiary level education)
- Farming (full-time & part-time farmers)
- Finance sector
- Local action group (LEADER)
- Public administration
- Rural developers (project specialists etc.)
- Research & development

The workshop was organized as adaptation to one open space method. After the introductory presentations of the Ruralization project, the practice and the task 5.2 case study, the participants were separated into three groups. The issues that each group discussed in turn were:

- Could a practice like Maaseutu Ammattiin ray promote the revival of rural areas and positive development in Central Finland?
- Do you see some problems or obstacles for carrying out the practice like Maaseutu Ammattiin ray in Central Finland?
- Which kind of actions and who should implement the actions to activate people to find their way to rural professions? How to go further with this practice?

The facilitators of the three issues/tasks took notes from the discussions. They also presented the summary of discussions of each task before starting the common part with all participants together about the possible next steps with the practice in question. The composition of the participants of this workshop was seen to represent quite well the key stakeholders for the evaluation of the practice in this context. After the brainstorming in the groups they were able to act together as a focus group to recommend further steps with the practice. Perhaps a stronger representation of the private sector including the representatives of the food and forestry industry or third sector with the union of farmers

and forest owners could have given a good input to the workshop. Unfortunately all of them were not available to the workshop at the date when the workshop was implemented.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

In general, the practice was seen as positive and useful in Central Finland too if the regional, social and timing context can be taken into consideration. The participants agreed that there is a need to make the rural businesses, rural professions and the rural way of living better known among the youth and among the population over all. There is a natural demand for this kind of promoting work.

In that region, the forest industry has made big investments in recent years for developing their business and new innovations that are based on renewable wood fibres. A modern pulp mill there is called a plant that is producing bioproducts, because beside pulp the plant produces many side products from the wood raw material.

The participants of the workshop agreed that those investments have improved the profile of the forest industry and bioeconomy and made the cooperation of the whole regional bioeconomy community more intensive. Still, they saw that the community could develop collaborative actions further and a practice like Maaseutu Ammattiin rey could be a good tool. For that the practice would have to be modified to fit the regional context of Central Finland.

There is a concern, like in North Savo, that there is not enough skilled labour for the rural jobs in the future if the youth cannot recognize rural areas as a place of modern technology or modern jobs. The workshop participants agreed that the community must pay attention to regional attraction so that the educated and skilled people want to stay and work also in rural areas of the province. The bioeconomy community must have cooperation to introduce the rural livelihoods and professions as good opportunities to the youth and to surrounding society. It is important to show the additional value of bioeconomy to society. The actors of primary production and food industry as well the actors of the forest sector must do it together, for instance like they do it in the province of North Savo with the coordination of Maaseutuammattiin ry.

To activate this cooperation, there is a need for some coordinating unit or organisation in Central Finland too. The participants, no matter the background, did not deny the need for that. They saw that the branding was important for the rural areas, rural livelihoods and professions. The regional branding with the strengths of bioeconomy was seen as a good thing from the whole province point of view.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

The cooperation between farms, other rural enterprises and their stakeholders is important for a successful communication of rural livelihoods to the youth, to the education system and to the surrounding society. Both agriculture and forestry build the foundations of rural livelihoods. Typically forest income is an inseparable part of farmers' income especially in Central Finland and in North Savo. Still, in broader sight outside farms, there is some sort of attitudinal barrier between the actors connected to farming and the actors connected to forestry. The participants of the workshop shared the

opinion that the forest sector has a more consistent way throughout the chain from the private forest owners and forestry experts to big industrial companies of telling the facts about the forest livelihoods, about their economic significance for the society and, for instance, about the current and future jobs, about the entrepreneurship opportunities of that sector. The big picture is somehow clearer there than it is between the actors of the agriculture and the food system.

The general attitude towards agriculture was seen as somehow more appreciative in the province of North Savo than it is in Central Finland. Therefore, the cooperation between agriculture and forestry sectors has been tighter there and thus made it easier to start the practice like Maaseutu Ammattiin ry than it would be in Central Finland. But, the participants of the workshop considered the public atmosphere towards the bioeconomy in all to be better in Central Finland now than it has been ten years ago, at the time when Maaseutu Ammattiin ry was founded in North Savo.

On the other hand, the participants mentioned that in the communication, it is necessary nowadays to understand the concept of 'rural' broadly enough. It is more than just some traditional professions and livelihoods of rural areas. The message must reach people in every age group or every population group because there may also be many adult people who are considering a rural lifestyle or a rural job as an alternative for their future. Some of the participants considered the idea and communication of the Maaseutu Ammattiin ry to somehow reflect an old-fashioned impression of rural areas from the perspective of Central Finland. That impression may be caused from incomplete knowledge of all the actions of the Maaseutuammattiin ry though.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the practice

The workshop discussions gave somewhat contradictory views for implementing the practice in Central Finland. On the other hand, many participants wanted to have a clear focus for the actions of the practice but at the same time they criticize Maaseutu Ammattiin ry from operating with too limited or old-fashioned concepts in rural matters. Which one is more important: to get people to move to rural areas or just to get people to work in rural professions? They want to conceptualize rural areas wider than just through the traditional professions in agriculture and forestry or connecting rural areas only with natural resources.

Therefore, the workshop participants summed up that the name of the practice or the possible new organisation should be modernized to cover all possible actions and population groups that could be connected to rural life. In Central Finland, they prefer to use the concept of bioeconomy instead of concepts connected only with natural resources or with rural professions or with rural professionals.

The participants of the workshop noted that the youth today wants to highlight the meaning and relevance of their acts, in their studies and jobs as well. That should be highlighted too in communication that is connected to rural matters. The communication should emphasize that also the rural areas are good places for continuous learning and for offering good chances for the people who are looking for new directions for their working career. Also, the possibilities of remote work as a relevant topic were highlighted in workshop discussions.

On the other hand, the workshop discussions highlighted the concrete actions for the target group(s) of the practice. It cannot be only the communication with general facts concerning rural businesses or rural life. The digitalization is seen to make this communication easier than before. Still, it is better if people can see, hear, smell and feel the countryside. They have to meet the ones that already live and work in

rural areas. The image of rural areas must be updated so that people can realize that nowadays rural areas can offer possibilities to meaningful work and to meaningful life.

In North Savo, Maaseutu Ammattiin rey organizes farm and company visits for students and teachers, presents rural professions in schools as well as offers practical professional orientation opportunities for schools. In addition, they have some development projects with schools e.g. to develop the study plans. The students of secondary school level from age about 14 to 18 years are their main target group. The schools have given good feedback about the cooperation with Maaseutu Ammattiin ry. In Central Finland, the stakeholders first have to investigate the attitudes of the education system for this kind of practice before they can plan the more exact actions for a possible new practice.

Many stakeholder representatives said that they see the practice like Maaseutuammattiin rey as important and relevant nowadays but they were also somewhat sceptical about how to find ways to finance the practice in Central Finland. At the moment, without any extra efforts by someone, the interaction between and the commitment from stakeholders and potential operators of the practice are perhaps not strong enough to engage in collective actions and to gather the financing for the actions like they do in North Savo. One obstacle may be that there is no such person, community or organisation who is interested, willing enough or able, e.g. for financial reasons, to come forward and continue the discussions for founding or being a partner in such a practice.

Further steps and ideas in the implementation of the practice

In the province of North Savo, some years before the practice and the association of Maaseutu Ammattiin rey was founded, the rural developers' network, in the beginning two educational institutions of agriculture and forestry and the regional farmers' union managed some development projects that laid the foundations for the practice. Thus, the EU and national funding for the rural development projects actually made it possible to have a stimulus and the actual model to the practice. Also, even though they had a good regional collaborative network of agricultural and forestry operators and the common regional will that helped the establishment of the practice there, the case study raised the meaning of one to three key individuals as an important part of starting forces for the actions (Ruuska, 2021).

In the confrontation workshop a need for an activator, a need for some fiery person came up too. That was seen as essential to go forward with the new practice and to strengthen the collaboration inside the community of bioeconomy. Anyway, it seems that there must be "somebody else than me" to process the idea further. Without some extra input to this process, the possibilities of the practice in this context will remain unfeasible.

Like written in the previous chapters of this report, the practice was seen as positive and realizable but it would need some updating and modifications in the context of Central Finland. During the workshop we were not able to get a precise picture about how strong the true desire for the practice is, if somebody or some organisation would really start to recruit members or sponsors for that kind of association or for some other new collaborative actions type of Maaseutuammattiin rey.

One outcome from the workshop and focus group discussion was that the basic activities of the practice were found reasonable and there could be a need for similar actions in Central Finland too. All parties that had representatives in that event stated that a new external actor or organisation could be the best alternative unit to coordinate and run the daily actions. The stakeholders might support those operations like they do in North Savo. However, since some relevant stakeholders were missing from the workshop and since the matter of new practice is somewhat complex from the viewpoint of possible actions and because of the uncertainty of the real involvement of various parties, there is a need for further investigative discussions among the stakeholders.

The more concrete outcome from the focus group discussion was the suggestion that the preliminary arrangements for the possible new practice should be made by the external public funding in a short-term development project. During that project, they could also get a clear picture of the involvement of various parties for such practice. The representatives of JAMK University of Applied Sciences came forward with an announcement that their institution is ready to explore the possibilities of getting funding for such a project and also ready for running the project if it gets the funding.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The roots of the practice Maaseutuammattiin ry go back to the early 2000s. The educational institutions of agriculture and forestry and the regional Union of farmers and forest owners had noticed that the attraction to the education of these professions had strongly decreased. Those regional operators in North Savo became concerned, about their own future as an educational institution, but also about the fact that there would be scarcity of skilled persons and employees in these lines of businesses in general in the future. Therefore they started to build a practice to share the information about rural livelihoods and rural professions to the youth in secondary schools (Ruuska 2021).

The promoters of the practice also recognized that the urbanized population in general need to have better knowledge about the fact that the businesses based on forestry and agriculture and the sense of sustainable use of natural resources are very important for the economy and the people of the province of North Savo. The promoters had an ability to read the trends to start that anticipatory work for building the foundations of the practice.

Before the actual establishment of the association Maaseutuammattiin ry that collected all the relevant stakeholders to a collaborative network, two educational institutions of agriculture and forestry and the regional farmers' union managed some development projects that laid the foundations for the practice. The public funding for the rural development projects actually made it possible to have a stimulus to the practice. It was not that surprising that also in the workshop and the focus group discussion of the confrontation context, the stakeholders proposed first to start a public funded project to have a closer inquiry about the possible implementation of a new practice.

Still, a crucial point for piloting those ideas was that one or two visionary individuals started to share their ideas with an open mind and were willing to work hard for their vision and to build a regional network for the practice. There must be some fiery person(s) who believes in her/his vision, who makes others believe in it and who is ready for the efforts to bring the visions to more concrete actions.

Since societies and business life have moved from agricultural-based societies to industrialized and further to post industrial and information societies, only the minority of the population knows well the rural everyday work and lifestyle. Therefore, the basic idea of Maaseutuammattiin ry is applicable and

transferable to other regions and to national level, also internationally. Actually, a larger effect could be achieved if some national organisation would lead the practice, cooperating with regional and local operators. Since the minority challenge that affects rural livelihoods is true in every rural region and in every country and the major political decisions e.g. in educational policy are made in most countries at national level.

By the practice, in North Savo, good work was done in renewing gender roles in the rural economy. The rural professions are always presented systematically as suitable for females as males. They have also had a special project to promote the rural professions just to females and they have produced promotion materials that introduce females in rural professions. It can be seen positively in girls' educational and career choices there.

Digitalization and the internet give new possibilities to present the rural lifestyle and rural economic activities. Still, both in the Ruralization WP5.2 case study and in WP5.3 confrontation study raised the meaning of concrete physical activities and experiences when trying to get the youth to know and feel the 'real' rural areas. People have to see, hear, smell and feel the countryside and ought to have a possibility of meeting the ones that already live and work in rural areas.

The concepts of 'rural' and 'ruralisation' are multidimensional. Ruralization sees rural areas as a context for economic activities, not just focusing on traditionally 'rural' sectors such as agriculture and forestry, but also other multifunctional sectors such as tourism and diversification options as context for innovation and entrepreneurship (Murtagh et al, 2021). In principle, the practice of Maaseutuammattiin ry sees the rural areas in the same way. Still, the confrontation study has raised some critical observations about old-fashioned and maybe narrow perspectives of modern rural life and of rural job opportunities. The criticism of the workshop participants may partly come from the incomplete knowledge of all regional activities of Maaseutuammattiin ry.

Some groups that might be good to involve more tightly to the actions of the practice, are e.g. the local municipal administrations, local rural inhabitants who just live in rural areas but who work in urban areas or work remotely, people who have second residence in rural areas. Also, closer collaboration with some third sector operators who e.g. see rural areas more through the natural environment than through economic activities, could be worth considering. In any case, the interaction between the rural and urban areas is good to increase and to show to the youth that there are promising opportunities for employment and to build a good life in rural areas.

Contributors

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Reporting: Pertti Ruuska (UTU)

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Annex 1. Statistics of the contexts

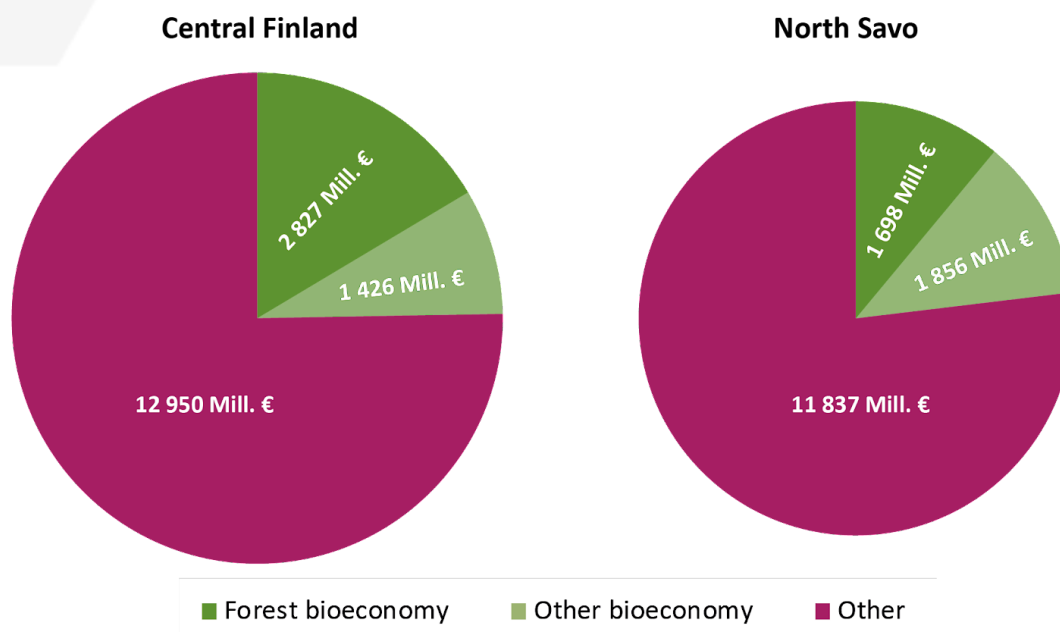


Figure 3. The share of bioeconomy in regional economy by total economic output in 2018.
Source: Lehtoviita & Tenhola (2021)

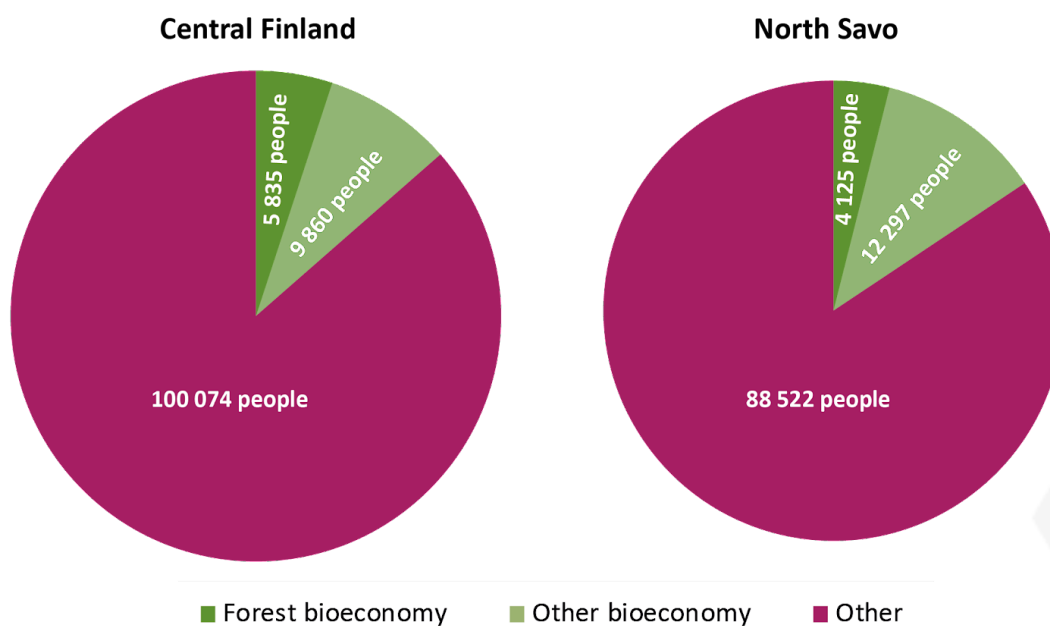


Figure 4. The share of bioeconomy in regional economy by the employment in 2018.
Source: Lehtoviita & Tenhola (2021)

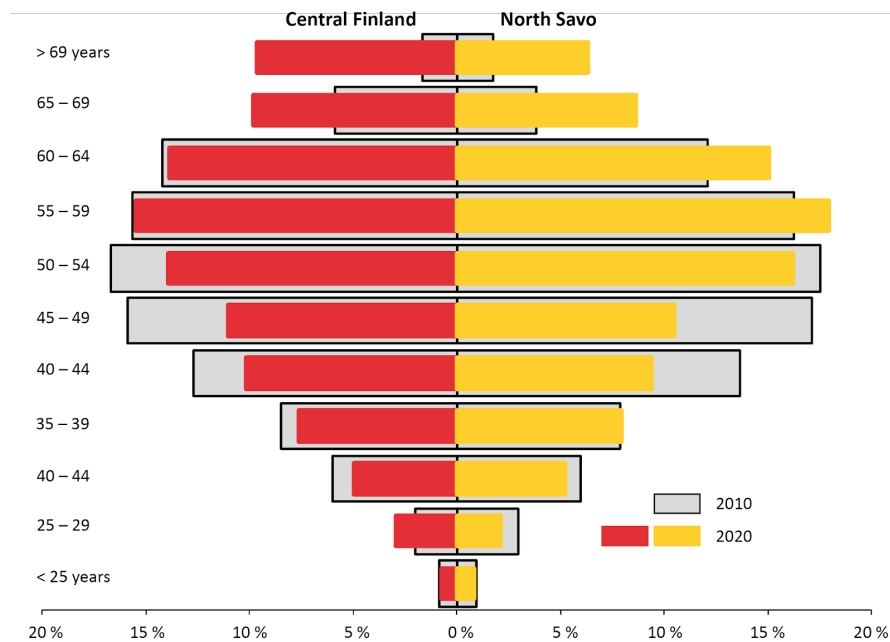


Figure 5. Distribution of farmers by age groups on privately owned farms in 2010 and 2020.

Source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Luke statistics database.

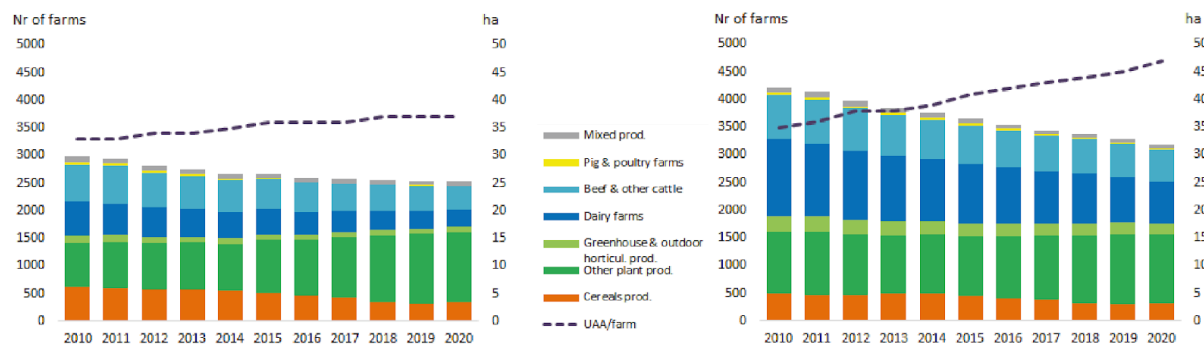


Figure 6. The number of farms by production sector and the average UAA in Central Finland (left) and North Savo (right).

Source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Luke statistics database.

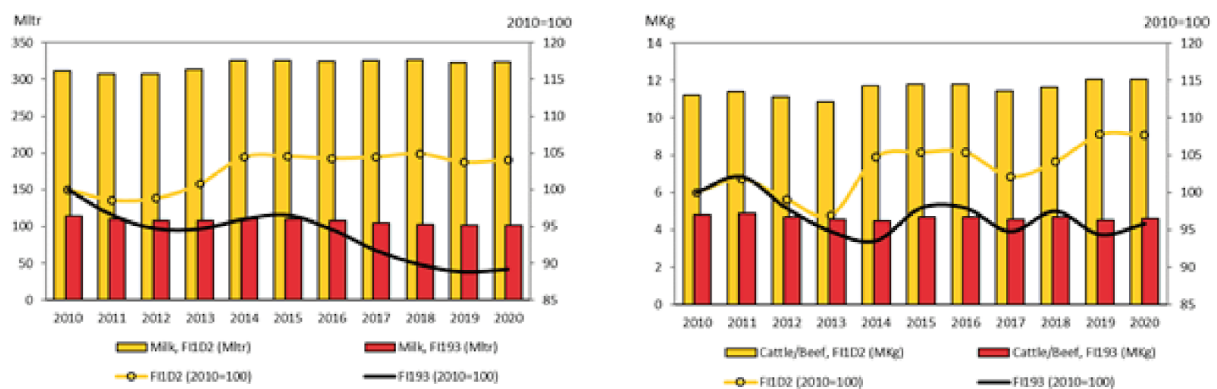


Figure 7. The milk production (left) and beef production (right) in Central Finland (FI193) and North Savo (FI1D2).

Source: Natural Resources Institute Finland, Luke statistics database.

Appendix 15: Clermont-Ferrand (France, NE8)

Organising partner:	Terre de Liens	Innovation Type 
Practice:	The Versailles Plain's Association and peri-urban agriculture diversification (France, FR5A)	
Practice context:	Versailles Plain, Yveline department - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	Clermont-Ferrand, (NUTS3 Puy de Dôme) - Predominantly urban	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	October 11th 2021	

Summary

The focus of this confrontation was the CNRS study on the “Versailles Plain Association (VPA) and peri-urban agriculture”³⁵. The VPA is a successful practice associating multiple actors—farmers, local authorities, civil society—to preserve a peri-urban plain located near the Versailles castle (Yvelines department). The VPA implements actions to protect the rural patrimony of the area and support its farms and farmers. The stakeholders invited to the confrontation, on their end, are involved in a common effort to preserve the peri-urban Sarliève plain near the Clermont-Ferrand metropolis (Puy-de-Dôme department). However, their context is much less successful. Urban development has already greatly reduced the Sarliève peri-urban agricultural area with a clear threat that farming could disappear in the coming years. During the confrontation, some of the critical factors identified to overturn this situation were: relying on the collective work of local civil society organisations motivated to protect the Sarliève plain and regenerate its agriculture, using land acquisition as a tool for preservation, and working to increase the number of actors involved in this regeneration effort. However, the obstacles are high due to intense land pressure, lack of adequate infrastructures for new entrants, and lack of legal land protection mechanisms. Among the key actors and measures identified to carry out the work, participants cited: working with local farmers and traditional farming networks,

³⁵ Robert-Boeuf, C. and Brédif, H. “The Versailles Plain’s Association and peri-urban agriculture diversification (FR5A) ». RURALIZATION Case studies on promising Practices, 2021

working with landowners, and involving local authorities in the governance of an agricultural project in the Sarliève plain.

Context

The practice studied in RURALIZATION is located in the Versailles plain, “an agricultural and natural area in the middle of centralised and urbanised metropolis: Paris” (Brédif & Robert Boeuf 2021). This area has a long-standing tradition of farming and currently hosts over 100 farms, with a dominance of large arable crop farms (rapeseed, cereal). However, the plain is also close to dense and expanding cities and its territory is bordered by important urbanisation projects (the Seine Aval National Interest Operation, to the northwest; the Paris-Saclay National Interest Operation, to the southeast) (Brédif & Robert Boeuf 2021). This creates pressure on land and agriculture. The Versailles Plain Association was created in 2004 to value the cultural, social, and landscape patrimony of the plain, notably through supporting the agriculture sector’s economic and social dynamism.

The Sarliève plain where the confrontation was held shares similarities with the Versailles context. It is also a traditionally agricultural area, where large farms cultivate cereals and arable crops. The land is of great agronomic quality and there is much local demand from urban dwellers for organic food produced locally. However, the proximity of the large and expanding metropolis of Clermont-Ferrand has led to a drastic reduction of the farmland area and farm numbers and the pressure on agricultural land keeps rising.

In this sense, the Sarliève context is much less successful than the Versailles one, as the agricultural area has been reduced to 300 hectares (while it still covers 23,000 hectares near Versailles). Only a few farms remain active in the proximity of Clermont-Ferrand and the farmland is owned by a limited number of families, some of whom no longer have ties to agriculture. Nevertheless, as in the context of Versailles, there is interest from some local groups to preserve the remaining agricultural patrimony of Sarliève. In both cases, fruitful alliances have emerged between civil society actors and with research to bring expertise and support to a land protection effort.

Results

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The presentation of the Versailles practice incited mixed reactions from stakeholders. On the one end, the positive feedback from participants highlighted similarities between the goals pursued in both territories. These concern preserving land and rural patrimony but doing so in a “dynamic” manner, by enabling the thriving of farming businesses and valuing agriculture as a local economic, social, cultural and landscape asset. The participants thus underlined that the Versailles example could:

- Provide ideas on the type of actions to carry out to promote the agricultural and rural patrimony of a peri-urban area, for instance by writing a landscape charter, structuring local value chains, supporting farm transmission, and so on.

- Provide inspiration on how to structure a collective governance in an organisation aimed at fulfilling these goals. The VPA's organisation in three colleges of farmers, civil society, and elected officials and its concertation practices were recognised by focus group participants as a strong asset to achieve its missions and federate a diversity of actors around a common "goal" or "vision" for the territory.
- Provide a model in terms of its capacity to leverage financing for its work, since the VPA has been able to mobilise large sources of institutional funding (e.g. LEADER funds).

However, there were also doubts regarding the applicability of the practice in the Clermont-Ferrand/Sarliève context. Indeed, while about 10% (2000 ha) of the Versailles plain territory is protected by a very strong legal mechanism designating the area as a "classified site", which cannot be urbanised, no such legal protection exists in Sarliève. Therefore, participants in the confrontation advocated for stakeholders working in Sarliève to implement more proactive strategies. This includes mobilising collective and community investment to concretely acquire and preserve land, as concertation and dialogue facilitation strategies elaborated in Versailles may not be enough to achieve this goal in such a pressured context. Furthermore, near Clermont-Ferrand, the agricultural fabric has already been largely dismantled, making it hard to federate and involve agricultural actors in a land protection effort. Participants expected that much of this work would have to rely on citizens and that a key aspect would be to create alliances with urban dwellers who may care for the quality of their food and environment. Finally, the VPA reached a fairly institutionalised status through financing and public support for the project. Even though there is moral and financial support of some public authorities for the land protection effort in Sarliève, the participants doubted that the initiative would ever achieve a similar recognition, status, and level of formalisation as the VPA's.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Based on contextual observations, participants defended as a critical entry point strategy the community-funded acquisition of a large area of land in Sarliève (between 80 and 150 hectares). The goal would be to implement a flagship project on this land, i.e. a "territorial farm" where various new entrants could establish, as well as a farm incubator and food processing and artisanal activities. This farm could also become an experimental site for emblematic actions to improve the biodiversity and environmental management of the area. Participants viewed such locally-anchored action as a lever to support a wider preservation effort on the Sarliève plain. It would demonstrate the feasibility of an agricultural re-dynamisation project, and become a "beacon" around which citizen and public actors mobilisation could be organised.

One of the critical factors in carrying out such work lies in the tight collaboration between local civil society organisations involved in the effort to protect the Sarliève Plain. Three leading organisations—Terre de Liens Auvergne, Îlot Paysans, and Bio 63—have joined forces to carry out the land acquisition project. They have complementary skills: while Terre de Liens has land expertise and

land acquisition capacity, Îlot Paysan is specialised in the creation of farm incubators and Bio 63 supports the development of organic farming and organic supply chains on the territory. Through their long experience and local anchorage, these organisations have already managed to secure funding for the project and to muster significant local support (involving citizens and local authorities).

Finally, the participants brainstormed on the appropriate governance to carry out such a project. Compared to the Versailles experience, it was clear to them that the barriers are too high in Sarliève to create three-prong governance divided between farmers, elected officials and civil society. CSOs are already at the forefront of organising a preservation effort in Sarliève and the creation of a local “territorial farm” structure will necessarily rely much on their leadership. However, some avenues were imagined to diversify the consortium of actors involved in the “territorial farm”. On the one hand, participants cited the creation of thematic “working groups” and “commissions” as a way to involve in the project larger circles of citizens and organisations with interest in specific topics (e.g. environment, economic aspects of the farms, partnership development etc.). On the other hand, it was suggested that the creation of a cooperative society of collective interest (SCIC) to manage the “territorial farm” should enable diverse colleges of actors (local authorities, farm workers, citizens) to take up shares and decision-making power in the company.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context.

As previously mentioned, one of the key bottlenecks in Sarliève lies in the very intense urban development pressure in the area. While this is not entirely different from the situation in Versailles, the lack of strong legal mechanisms to protect the remaining farmland near Clermont-Ferrand is a key barrier. While territorial development plans do mention the need to preserve the plain’s farmland and to work on the issue of food self-sufficiency, they fail to define clear orientation regarding agricultural and food models to be promoted and do not provide clear guidance to arbitrate between antagonistic projects. Participants cited the example of the “Urban Village” project supported by real estate developers to create a commercial, recreational, and office complex on 27 hectares of farmland. While this project was largely opposed by all actors interested in the preservation of the plain, it still received a favourable opinion from public investigators.

In addition to this, the maintenance and renewal of agricultural activities on the plain is a difficult matter. The land is of good quality, but mostly geared towards large monocultures and few infrastructures exist to transform and sell food locally. Therefore, supporting the establishment of new entrants on human-size and locally-oriented farms requires important efforts to change the farm/land structure. Lack of biodiversity, difficult access to water, lack of permits to establish agricultural buildings are also among the barriers that the Sarliève stakeholders identified in making their diversified “territorial farm” project a reality.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

To overcome these barriers the stakeholders have outlined the following strategies: working with local farmers and traditional farming networks, working with landowners, involving local authorities in the governance of a concrete agricultural project in the Sarliève plain.

In the Sarliève context working with landowners is an uneasy but important alliance. Few families remain that own land on the plain. They are key actors to convince if this land is to remain in farming use. One of them, a family of five joint owners (brothers and sisters), agreed to sell part of their large property to Terre de Liens. This provided the first concrete opportunity to carry out a flagship food re-localisation project on the plain. However, in parallel with this philanthropic gesture, the family of owners is also pursuing a strategy of asset valuation (trying to turn another part of the land into a buildable area to sell it for more money). Such ambiguity creates difficulty for the CSOs, who don't want to participate in the "greenwashing" of an operation to convert some land for urban development. During the focus group, it was raised that the orchestration and facilitation techniques exposed in relation to the Versailles example could be of interest to learn how to better manage the relationship with landowners in Sarliève.

Regarding the work with agricultural actors, the VPA case study also provided an inspiration. The association maintains close ties with farmers, unions, and agricultural institutions. Its representatives also explained the importance of mediating conflict that can arise between peri-urban city dwellers and the land workers (conflicts over noise, use of phytosanitary products, etc.). Focus group participants concluded that Sarliève CSOs could engage further with the local SAFER land agency and Chambre d'agriculture and that perhaps a broader survey of neighbouring farmers' view of the "territorial farm" project could be planned. They also identified as a priority the maintenance of a good relationship with the tenant currently farming the land targeted for acquisition by Terre de Liens, as this could help "maintain ties with the agricultural profession". Furthermore, the farmer can support the organic farming conversion process and enable gradual transfer of the land as new entrants start farming.

The relationship with local authorities has been ambivalent in the Sarliève context. Some of them support the territorial farm project while at the same time validating urban development (e.g. the 27 hectare "Urban Village" leisure centre project). In this regard, a comparison could be established with the Versailles example where such ambiguity is also a concern. The VPA representative further acknowledged that mayors from more urban municipalities bordering the plain, although part of the "elected officials" college, were less involved than rural mayors who share more goals and concerns with the VPA. However, the existence of an association where debates and decisions regarding the future of the plain can take place remains a strong asset to maintain a sense of community and duty from all actors towards the local patrimony (the VPA's actions are led only when the association's three colleges

agree on them). Involving local authorities in project governance was thus identified as a key strategy during the focus group. In particular, the level of responsibility that local authorities should or could take in the company that will be created to handle the “territorial farm” was discussed. A consensus that at least 10% of the company shares should be reserved to them emerged (farmers and farm workers would hold 30%, and other colleges such as citizen, rural development organisations, etc. would divide the rest between themselves).

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

Both Versailles and Sarliève actors maintain a relationship with academic and scientific actors. In the former, the alliance with an AgroParisTech professor enabled carrying out the first surveys and concertation efforts on the Versailles plain. In Sarliève, two researchers have been strongly involved since the beginning of the project participating both in its operational development (debate, strategic orientations, partnership and funding research, etc.) and in its documenting the project progress.

The strategy which consists in documenting the work done in Sarliève was largely endorsed by focus group participants as a way to foster the progress of this initiative. Participants highlighted the following benefits:

- giving visibility to the project;
- identifying tensions and successful trajectories;
- enabling cross-analysis of issues;
- facilitating the appropriation of the project by volunteers and external actors.

Further ideas to foster the development of the project included forging links with other “territorial farm” examples, organising visits to other sites for inspiration, and holding practice-exchange seminars between promising innovations.

Lessons learned and recommendations

A strong area of further learning regarding the Versailles practice concerns its long experience in territorial facilitation and stakeholder engagement. Indeed, while these aspects were mentioned during the event, participants pointed out that further transfer would be needed to be able to dive into the methods applied and learnings from the VPA’s 17-years long territorial work.

Some of the specific steps to foster stakeholder dialogue that could be applicable in the Sarliève context include:

- learning about how actors identify the peri-urban plain problem;
- identifying areas of agreement and disagreement;
- making areas of agreement and common interest a more central aspect in the Sarliève “territorial farm” project to incite participation and support.

Some of the ingredients to make this successful could be to rely on scientific actors to support the stakeholder engagement effort, to formulate open questions or find other ways to allow the expression of diverse territorial visions, to use prospective scenarios to enable actors to “project” themselves as well as identify their own responsibility in the future of the plain.

While facilitation and orchestration would certainly be a strong asset to go beyond the “territorial farm” project and towards successful preservation of the larger Sarliève plain, it was clear for participants that the difficult local context mandated adaptations compared to the Versailles example. Stakeholder engagement and facilitation are tools which can take time to put in place. Some stakeholders feared this would divert the attention from the strategy to develop quick, proactive, field-based projects, even if those can create antagonisms and raise defiance from some actors. The need to achieve tangible and visible results through interventionist strategies was therefore also viewed as a necessity in the face of the high pressure from urban development projects and the already advanced state of degradation regarding local farmland resources.

The settlement of new entrants and of a farm incubator on the land acquired by Terre de Liens in Sarliève is a key next step. This will demonstrate the feasibility and concrete progress of a local, territorial farm project in this tense area. The three leading organisations and volunteers who have been supporting the effort from the beginning should be involved in the research and selection of farming candidates. Finding additional funding and growing partnerships is also a key step. Collective work is planned on the rehabilitation of the site—e.g. planting of hedges or trees. These actions can be open to the public and become a widely-communicated emblematic effort to help grow the supporter base for the territorial farm project. Another key next step will be to mobilise largely against the development of the “Urban Village” and to refine the strategy to work more largely for the preservation of the Sarliève plain (beyond the territorial farm).

In concluding the discussions, stakeholders indeed underlined that time and financial means should be found to carry out both the local project and larger plain preservation effort at once. While some expressed interest in being more involved in one rather than the other, all agreed that both strategies would be mutually-reinforcing.

Contributors

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Appendix 16: Canary Islands, (Spain, SC1)

Organising partner:	Consulta Europa	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Farm diversification at succession (Belgium, BE3B)	
Practice context:	East Flanders, Belgium - Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Canary Islands - Intermediate with mostly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	December 15th 2021	

Summary

In recent years, the economic development of the Canary Islands has affected urban and rural territories in a different way. The uneven development between urban and rural areas should not only be seen on an individual level, but there is also a great difference between the capital and non-capital islands. This has resulted from the gradual ageing of the existing population of the rural areas as well as an increasing phenomenon of rural exodus. This problem is combined with the demand for food sovereignty in the islands, reducing dependence on external sources, as well as the need for diversification in production and regeneration of rural areas. To address this widespread problem, a workshop on rural development has been organised to present an innovative practice on diversification at succession (BE3B) as a driver to identify critical factors and barriers to its implementation in the islands, as well as possible measures and actors that should be involved. As part of the workshop, 3 brainstorming sessions were organised according to different target groups, therefore inputs are provided from 3 groups representing rural associations and local action groups (LEADER), policymakers and stakeholders, and citizenship (farmers, young people from rural areas, rural entrepreneurs, researchers etc.). The workshop concluded with a focus group discussion, highlighting steps to further cooperate among main representatives of these groups. Overall, diversifying production is perceived as necessary, although the future of rural areas in the Canaries seems to depend on sectors like tourism or the digitisation process.

Context

The Canary Islands, being some of the islands predominantly rural (El Hierro and La Gomera), but most of them considered as intermediate rural territories, was chosen as the confrontation setting. Urban-rural differences are felt at the economic level, since rural areas have not had the same access to

the welfare produced by the intense development of the cities. Likewise, the difference between the capital islands (Tenerife and Gran Canaria) and the non-capital islands (La Palma, La Gomera, El Hierro, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, and La Graciosa) is notable, especially in those areas where tourism development has not had the necessary scope to make them more dynamic. To this fact, a clear imbalance between the income of their inhabitants, and the insular conditioning factor must be added.

Despite the differences between the islands themselves, throughout the archipelago prevails the problems surrounding diversification in agricultural production and the aging of people in rural areas. In this sense, the study case selected is a good example to open the debate around diversification in inherited agricultural businesses, especially to analyse the phenomenon of rural exodus and generational renewal. Thus, the innovative practice helped to identify some of the critical factors that condition young people's decision to stay in rural areas, as well as to continue with their parents' agricultural businesses.

The context has been chosen not only because of its relevance as a predominantly rural territory, but also because of the importance of agricultural businesses (especially bananas) and the problem faced when the main source of income depends on an agricultural product, hence the need for diversification. It should be noted that in the Canary Islands, many of the family businesses that depend on agricultural production are artificially maintained thanks to subsidies, so it is not profitable for successors to continue, as it has been raised during the workshop. However, Biohoeve Hof te Muizenhole and De Speiboerderij are two inspiring examples of farms where, after succession, diversification decisions were made, either to switch to organic farming or by adding branches in agricultural production. These actions succeeded in making the businesses profitable so that the successors could work full time, even hiring other family members.

Likewise, this type of business that managed to become profitable for the successors in the cases presented from Flanders are of interest for comparison with family businesses in the Canary Islands. On the one hand, Flemish municipalities resemble some rural Canarian municipalities in terms of population size and age, as well as agricultural business trends. Organic farming is also becoming a trend in the Canaries, but especially for the younger generation. On the other hand, the existence of similar success stories is unlikely to happen, mainly because successors either do not want to continue with the family business or do not want to stay in the rural areas.

In addition to identifying critical factors, the workshop generated debate on the main barriers that must be overcome to implement actions presented in the framework of the innovative practice from Flanders (Belgium). However, the debate has not only focused on the ideas derived from the case study presented but has also been extrapolated to the reality lived in rural areas in the Canary Islands. Common barriers that hinder rural development and generational renewal in the islands were identified, then addressing some of the main problems with respect to the diversification of production.

For this confrontation, participants from all over the archipelago were selected, trying to maintain a minimum of representation from each island, as well as considering that there should be a minimum of female representation, approximately 50%. In addition, each participant was specifically chosen according to their social profile and their relationship with rural areas. The brainstorming sessions have been organised according to this profile, being able to share very different points of view, from the individual (such as a farmer, an entrepreneur, a young person living in a rural area or a researcher), representatives or networks (local action groups, rural associations, heads of local employers' associations, farmers' organisations, etc.) to local/regional politicians involved in the definition/implementation of policy measures (policy-makers and stakeholders).

Participants in each target group included representatives of several LEADER local action groups, regional and island rural associations, representatives of the Government of the Canary Islands and the island councils, as well as the two Canary Islands universities: the University of La Laguna (ULL) and the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC). But more importantly, the workshop has had the participation of people who actually live in these rural areas of the islands, especially highlighting the profile of young and not so young farmers. There were cases of people who obtained aid from the program of young farmers of the Government of the Canary Islands, self-employed and entrepreneurs. Especially, it is worth noting a foreign person who comes from a big city and chose to live in a rural area and start a business called Maybeez (newcomer)³⁶. Nowadays, her business of organic products without plastic is known as a success story throughout the islands.

The workshop has been focused on rural development in the Canary Islands. It has served to share the knowledge generated in the project and to assess its possible implementation in the Canary Islands, thus contributing to rural regeneration in our islands, to promote generational renewal and, ultimately, to promote the ruralisation process in the Canary Islands. In addition to the short presentation of the RURALIZATION project, the workshop included a presentation about trends³⁷ affecting regeneration of rural areas in Europe and the RURALIZATION dream inventory as well as other innovative practices.

Results

Organised as an online workshop entitled “Rural areas as an engine for sustainable and inclusive development in the Canary Islands: A look at the process of island ‘ruralisation’, the new rurality and the generational renewal”. The confrontation practice involved three brainstorming sessions and one focus group. The main results derived from the brainstorming sessions and the focus group are presented below. The following are some of the most important conclusions of the sessions held with the target

³⁶ MayBeez originated on a small but incredible island of La Gomera, the Biosphere Reserve. As described by the owner, it is a small piece of land surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean that has everything as if it were a miniature world. Unspoiled coastlines, ancient forests, breath-taking landscapes, sudden changes of climate - everything you find here in this magical and authentic place. MayBeez was inspired by the power of nature that shows itself at every step in this paradise of eternal spring. Official website available here: <https://www.maybeez.es/>

³⁷ Full documentation of the extensive trend analysis exercise that was carried out in 2019–2020 among the participants of the EU funded RURALIZATION project available here: <https://ruraltrends.eu/>

group 1 named “rural networking”, target group 2 called “rural policy-making” and target group 3 denominated “rural generations”.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

Initially the ideas presented as part of the innovative practice on diversification at succession have been well received by the workshop attendees. However, most of them have questioned their implementation on the islands. The main problem when implementing the practice was identified as the lack of interest on the part of the successors to continue with the family businesses. In addition to this fact, it must be highlighted the phenomenon of rural exodus from the rural areas of the islands to the cities, as well as the transfer of the new generations from the non-capital islands to Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

However, many of the incentives analysed during the presentation promoted the debate around the existing economic aids in the Canary Islands. Among these measures, the subsidies of the Flemish Agricultural Promotion Fund stood out, either to continue with the family business (Biohoeve Hof te Muizenhole) or to create a new one, by adding an additional branch in the succession of the business (De Speiboerderij). A key element discussed during both the brainstorming sessions and the focus group was the advisory process after receiving a grant, as it is deficient. In this regard, it is claimed that most of the new subsidised farm businesses die after the second or third year.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

After the introduction of the practice about diversification on inherited agricultural businesses, initial emphasis has been placed **on the critical factors or obstacles that exist in the islands to promote the diversification of agricultural production and generational change in Canary Islands rural areas**. By addressing the problems and factors that would make impossible to replicate this practice in the archipelago, a wide variety of aspects of daily life have been covered, such as social services, education, basic resources such as water or access to property along with excessive land protection, among others. The lack of services in rural areas is seen as one of the main barriers (education, health, access to housing, land, transport, digital structures, etc.). Most people would not consider going to the countryside if they cannot raise a family and have the minimum services.

- **Access to land, property, and resources such as water**

Lack of planning, over-protection of land and the lack of water so characteristic of the islands become obstacles for people who want to move to the countryside or who must decide whether to stay. Regarding more administrative issues, there are also bureaucratic problems when it comes to knowing who has access to water and who needs it. In addition, a lack of funding is also identified along these lines.

The islands in general have a lot of uncultivated land, but the land is **fragmented and even abandoned**. Despite the large amount of unused land, **a barrier to land access** is identified, but mainly about

bureaucratic issues and land use. In addition to the problem of land access, there is the difficulty (especially for young people) in **gaining access to property**, especially with farms with access to water.

- **Lack of services and working in the primary sector do not provide an attractive context**

Added to this situation there is a need to show a more attractive rural environment, so the context becomes an essential element to consider. Nowadays, to work in the **primary sector is not very attractive**, especially for the new generations.

Participants in this session alluded to the positive reception of young people's support but questioned who would stay in rural areas when **there are no services that contribute to making the environment more attractive for daily life**. Therefore, the availability of services makes the rural environment a more desirable context to live.

- **Digitalisation of rural areas is not a reality yet**

To improve employment in rural areas, as well as access to structures and information, **it is necessary to invest in the digitalisation of rural areas**, not only to create more specialised jobs, but also to **modernise the primary sector itself**, in terms of monitoring, the use of sensors, automatization, etc.

- **Excessive bureaucracy in granting subsidies and lack of communication**

In addition to the information overload on the one hand, and the lack of knowledge of existing grants on the other, there is the **problem of identifying and understanding the calls for proposals**. There is also a basic need for this information to be well articulated, so that it is not necessary to search in numerous different places, organising access to the tools in an effective way.

- **Supply and demand problem and valorisation of primary sector products**

It is difficult to organise production in such a way that it can be sold all year round, especially when there is a constant tourist demand for a particular product such as lettuce, which is not available all year round on the small islands, so that **farmers miss out on this sales opportunity as they eventually must import the product**. There is a permanent need for market access and valorisation of the product, identified especially in the non-capital islands.

Facing the difficulties raised, some key measures that would encourage the diversification of agricultural production and generational change in rural areas, as well as the settlement or return of young people to these areas, have also been outlined.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

The following ideas related to key issues as well as obstacles to implement the innovative practice were mentioned during the brainstorming sessions and final debate:

Existence of strong social barriers for youth

During this session, the **existing social barriers for young people in the Canary Islands** were highlighted, especially when it comes to staying in rural areas (and more particularly in the non-capital islands), or when they want to start or continue with the family business.

Amongst the proposals that could be implemented, **the supply of services (health, education) and profitability (organic products should be more than just expensive)** are emphasised. As an example, the fishing sector on the island of El Hierro is used, where it can be seen how young people are returning, especially the rejuvenation of the fishing sector.

Cultural barriers and differing generational horizons

The new generations have a very broad horizon and very different expectations from those of their parents. **Young people nowadays have a very different background, more experienced when it comes to travelling. New generations aspire to have a very different lifestyle** to the one lived in the countryside, as it is considered very hard.

Youth from rural areas tend to be digitally isolated

Another of the barriers highlighted is more related to the sociological profile of the population. In this sense, the profile of a young person from the countryside in the Canary Islands has been compared with that of a young person from any other European country. **Insularity is a very important conditioning factor, especially in the case of the smaller islands, where young people in rural areas are more isolated, not only geographically but digitally too.** There is a lack of digital literacy due to no internet access and omission of information related to grants or calls for proposals. It is argued that the real return from subsidies would be obtained by ensuring that youth in rural areas are digitally literate.

Lack of training and information

Another of the most frequently addressed problems is related to the **training of older people, who are most of the population in many rural areas.** Educational problems are related to areas such as business management and marketing. However, we are beginning to see the difference with the new generations, who have more skills and training in these fields.

In addition to the lack of training, there is a **lack of information in rural areas**, as opposed to the excess in urban areas. The contrast is striking when **looking at cases of entrepreneurship**, so it should be ensured that both information and training also reach the people who need it most in these areas. This lack of information becomes a real problem when it comes to the subsidies that are aimed precisely at this social profile; **there is widespread ignorance of the existence of the aid that they could receive** and, at the same time, it seems that the aid tends to have the same recipients.

Lack of support and bureaucratic barrier

One of the most prominent obstacles in all the sessions was the **lack of support and accompaniment for people who receive grants, especially after the first year in which they start a business.** An example was given of a young man from the island of El Hierro who had to return the full amount of the aid he received due to a small inconvenience. It is argued that there are mechanisms that do not work well.

Furthermore, **there is a significant bureaucratic barrier when applying for aid.** If there is no guarantee that 100% funding will be received, the percentage of interest is considerably reduced. A thought is given to the lack of confidence that young people and rural citizens have towards subsidies and the lack of personnel to ensure this information reaches them.

Rural associations and networks such as LEADER groups emphasise the excessive time spent on the justification of subsidies and management of calls for proposals, as opposed to the lack of time spent on communicating the existence of subsidies and providing aid in a more direct way.

Business viability and dependence on subsidies

Agricultural products are sold at very low prices, which is currently reflected in the price of cow's milk in Spain. Thus, many of the businesses whose main source of income depends on agricultural production need subsidies to be profitable.

The orography of the Western Islands as an obstacle to mechanisation

In the case of the western islands in the Canary Islands, being more mountainous, the landscape is characterised by the existence of terraces³⁸ and there is not so much flat land, which makes it difficult to use machinery in the fields. Initially, although it does not seem to be a determining factor, the orography can also become an obstacle for farmers and stock breeders to innovate and invest in the mechanisation of tasks and the acquisition of new machinery to work in the fields.

Creation of new jobs in the primary sector before diversification production

Among the participants, there are direct questions about how to diversify existing jobs in the primary sector. **Diversifying agricultural production is an issue, but there is also a need to create new jobs in the primary sector**, as well as to make existing jobs more attractive.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

Some of the most important measures to be considered and possible actors to be involved are summarized as follows:

Product diversification can become a successful case

The case of Lanzarote's cheeses is well known, as they have received awards, have been widely marketed and have even had to buy milk from abroad. It was precisely the young people who continued this business and decided to diversify production and sell cheeses instead of just milk.

Structure and direct marketing channel to avoid intermediaries

During the session, the **need to achieve a marketing channel that does not involve intermediaries was emphasised.** The association of farmers and stock breeders in the Canary Islands, **ASAGA-ASAJA**, publishes a price index which compares the cost of products at origin and destination; in other

³⁸ In areas with steeper slopes, terracing is traditionally practised in the Canary Islands, giving rise to problems of mechanisation

words, how much the farmer sells a product for and how much the recipient sells it for. Surprisingly, in the agricultural sector, the difference is typically 11 times between the farmer's price and the selling price at destination. However, in the case of meat products, the difference is between 3.5 and 5 times. Therefore, the commercial structure is essential to avoid the chain of intermediaries, it is necessary to shorten the channels of communication (e.g., farmers selling their products directly or through the internet).

Need for advice and support when applying for subsidies

Mention is made of the **need for measures to facilitate access to subsidies for young people in rural areas, as well as the need for strategies to apply for subsidies**. In this regard, it is criticised that many of the subsidies for business start-ups push young people to take out a loan from the bank, which in most cases they must pay back before they receive the subsidy. Therefore, there is also a need for subsidies to be paid out earlier to avoid having to resort to bank loans, as well as to avoid paying interest. It is necessary to consider the profile of the young people at whom the aid is aimed, and it is necessary for the public administrations to "get out of their offices" and provide real support for these young people. It is also criticised that public management is focused on subsidies and not on training citizens and ensuring success stories.

Social and service restructuring in rural areas

A **comprehensive social restructuring is needed to bring people back to the countryside, starting with making life pleasant, especially for growing old and having all the necessary services**. It is important for the government and the administration to encourage people and life in the countryside by promoting attractive measures and providing subsidies, but it is also necessary to promote a comfortable place to live in with necessary basic services, both for the elderly and for the new generations. The rural areas of Italy are given as an example, where living houses are well equipped, transport works, there are schools for the kids, internet is available, there are attractive gastronomic options.

Education as a basis: accessibility to specialized rural training and additional skills

Another aspect that needs to be emphasised is that farmers are **trained, not so much on the cultivation side, but more on the business side**, so having a business plan is essential. For example, in agricultural training schools, entrepreneurship training is encouraged. One of the most recurrent options is direct sales via the web.

Specialised education on topics that concern rural areas does not reach people in these areas. Often there are only online courses that do not go in depth into the knowledge needed to make a farm business profitable. Moreover, people who really need access to such training are often unaware of the existence of such courses. Therefore, it is recommended to facilitate access to education in rural areas, especially those courses that can be useful for this social group: entrepreneurship, ecological productions, certifications, access to grants and advice, digital and commercial skills, etc.

Municipalities and city councils as connectors with rural areas

As a measure, it is proposed that local councils function as "dissemination antennae" for relevant information. It also proposes the creation of advisory offices, in the form of field workshops, highlighting the figure of the rural development agent.

Overcoming the obstacles requires the intervention of multiple actors

With regard to the actors that need to be involved in order to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the application of innovative practises on farm business diversification and generational renewal in rural areas in the Canary Islands, the main actors highlighted were the **public administrations as promoters of rural development in general, and more specifically, rural development agents, the government at regional level (especially through the Canary Islands Rural Development Programme) and the university.**

The **profile of the rural development agent is crucial; however, it is felt that they have gone from being useful to technicians who write projects** but do not promote development in practice. Rural development agents could promote attractive areas, improve work plans, and promote initiatives adapted to the different realities of the islands. In general, both politicians and the administration are key players in promoting and boosting development.

On the other hand, it is perceived that the education system seems to live out of the rural world, so **it is recommended that the university take a more active role.** The need for generalised training is emphasised, teaching entrepreneurship, and showing the reality of work in the countryside, as it seems that education only focuses on filling in curriculum. In addition to training activities, special emphasis is placed on counselling and, above all, on accompanying people in rural areas, especially when it comes to applying for subsidies.

In addition to the educational sphere, there is **also a call for citizenship as a main actor, especially when acting from the Union**, exercising pressure as a lobby, which confers power to the sector. Lobby groups, together with the government at regional level and local councils and town councils, are the fabric that has the capacity to overcome obstacles and succeed in implementing innovative practices that contribute to rural regeneration.

There is also an agreement between the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Canary Islands Government and the banks, but all measures requiring investment will be considered and the participation of other entities will be assessed. It is also stated that these agreements need to be reformulated to ensure financing aid for young people.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

After identifying some of the most important measures to implement the presented practice as well as overcoming main barriers, other innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and generational renewal were arising. The following topics were highlighted:

Systemic profitability of organic production

In addition to the supply of services, it is also necessary to think organically: **the by-product of livestock farming is not only fertilizer, it also produces energy**. In general, added value must be produced at the system level. There are studies that verify that organic production is indeed profitable and provides higher income and a higher profit margin.

One example is the organic butcher's shop in El Pinar (El Hierro), where father and son look after the livestock, while the mother manages the shop. The family sells its products both in El Hierro and Gran Canaria, they oversee packaging the products and setting the selling prices; however, it is said that the sellers would prefer this not to be the case, to be able to increase the final price.

Need for specialisation and buying "zero kilometre" products

On the other hand, reference is made to **the need for high specialisation and the importance of buying locally (local and "zero kilometre" products)**. The idea is that in a few years' time, agricultural production in Europe will be organic, and young people can contribute by providing new marketing mechanisms, as the current marketing systems are outdated. Even though organic farming has not yet developed much in the Canary Islands, there are many young people who are inclined to start in this sector.

Local markets should exist at the municipal level

The existence **of markets makes it easier for farmers and stock breeders to sell their products**, so access to this public infrastructure is essential. However, there are still many municipalities that do not have a local market, paradoxically the most rural ones, as may be the case in some municipalities in La Gomera.

Need for counselling, feasibility studies and communication between councils and government

Youth grants are a very important incentive that has received several constructive criticisms during this session. Specifically, reference was made to the last call for these aids, in which there was a disparity of criteria between livestock and agriculture. The lack of **resources and budget to pay GESPLAN, a public company attached to the Regional Ministry of Territorial Policy, Sustainability and Security of the Canary Islands Government, was also highlighted, resulting in a lack of support in the process of granting subsidies**. The Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Canary Islands Government has confirmed this lack of budget and assures that this will not happen again next year. They also insist on the importance of the support provided by GESPLAN and on the need to better inform young people of their obligations.

The cabildos ask for more attention from GESPLAN for the next call for proposals, especially because some cabildos have employed groups of economists to carry out feasibility studies due to the complexity of agriculture and livestock farming. As an example of an island from which more aid is requested, specifically from the island of Lanzarote there was a very large response in the application

for subsidies despite the strong vocation for tourism. Even so, it is recommended that there should be **more communication between town halls and the government.**

Finally, it is recommended that subsidies be paid in advance, although it is feared that some of the loans may have to be repaid if some projects are not viable. In view of this situation, the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the Canary Islands Government has stated that it will rethink the situation in a different way.

Pilot project to recover land in forest areas

Regarding the problem of access to land in the Canary Islands, it is necessary to facilitate the leasing of land. Despite this, it is a major problem in the islands, as they have a large part of the protected landscape. The Directorate General for Agriculture of the Canary Islands Government argues that a tractor project will be launched to recover farms in forest areas.

Renewable energies to promote local energy circuits in rural areas

Integrated training adapted to the agricultural reality; the qualification is necessary to be well involved in the rural environment. Som Energia is a non-profit cooperative of green energy consumption³⁹. Through advice and the use of renewable energies, an increase in self-consumption could be achieved and dependence on the grid could be reduced, promoting local energy circuits in rural areas.

Adding non-agricultural activities such as experiential tourism generates added value

If diversifying production is not seen as a fully profitable option, adding non-agricultural activities such as the creation of leisure services on the farm is a very attractive alternative. In this sense, **experiential tourism is becoming a trend in the Canary Islands, whereby value is added to the agricultural businesses.** Guided tours of the farm business are a very ingenious way of creating a more enriching experience for the consumer, who will value the product more highly after learning about all the work that goes into making it. Other options such as offering tastings, small live music performances, renting rural houses or other rural experiences are some examples that add value to farm business infrastructures, significantly increasing profits.

Lessons learned and recommendations

One of the most important conclusions of the workshop was the decision to schedule regular meetings between the agricultural extension agencies of the islands and the Directorate General for Agriculture of the regional government, following the proposal to have regular collaboration meetings with the inter-island governments.

³⁹ Among its main activities are the commercialisation and production of energy from renewable sources. As a main commitment, they aim to promote a change of the current energy model to achieve a 100% renewable model. Additional information is available on the official website: <https://www.somenergia.coop/es/quienes-somos/>

Internet and digitisation as key to rural development

Another key factor is the internet and the digitalisation of services, especially for entrepreneurs, as well as acting as an incentive to attract population. In the case of the island of La Gomera and, in general, of the non-capital islands, **the installation of optical fibre networks for rapid internet access has promoted the arrival of digital nomads** (who tend to repeat visits and return to the island), as well as helping to fix the resident population. During the brainstorming sessions, some of the entrepreneurs in attendance explained that starting a business on the island of La Gomera a few years ago was much more difficult because they had problems getting products, both personally and for their business.

One of the most characteristic cases in all the islands is the presence of foreign workers (mainly Germans) who live on the island normally during winter season and return to their countries during the rest of the year. This phenomenon can be observed in a very particular way in La Gomera. **The arrival of the internet in some of the more remote areas has allowed living in the countryside to become a luxury**, being able to work surrounded by nature, which becomes a "dream" for someone coming from a big city, as is the case of some of the attendees. However, the purchase of houses in rural areas by foreigners has also increased the price of housing, making it less affordable for young people.

The Food Chain Law: a hopeful horizon?

Reference is made to the new Food Chain Law (**Law 16/2021, of 14 December, which amends Law 12/2013, of 2 August, on measures to improve the functioning of the food chain**)⁴⁰, which could have a positive effect on the profits of the first link in the chain: farmers and livestock farmers.

The text is basically the **framework of good practices, regulations and sanctions that must define the relationship between all those involved in the food sector**, from producers -farmers or livestock farmers-, agricultural cooperatives, industry, and manufacturers; to distribution, whether they are supermarkets, hypermarkets, or large catering firms.

The aim of this regulation is to make price formation more transparent and, above all, to increase protection for the weakest links, such as small farmers. In addition, it seeks to put a stop to practices considered anti-competitive, such as what is known as 'selling at a loss', which consists of selling below cost, charging less than what has been paid for.

The **law introduces changes for all actors in the chain, who will always have to seal their contracts in writing and reflect the costs they face**. These contracts, whether new or existing, will have to be recorded on a platform, a virtual register. So that, if there are breaches or complaints, for example, because a farmer is not being paid the agreed amount during the established period, those responsible for supervising the chain⁴¹ will have these contracts at their disposal on the platform.

⁴⁰ Legal text available here: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2013-8554>

⁴¹ Such as the autonomous communities or the Food Information and Control Agency (AICA), attached to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Spanish Government.

Promoting innovative projects

In general, there are plenty of **projects that could be promoted at the local level that would serve to revitalize rural areas**, including facilitating access to land for young people, as well as making use of the large amount of abandoned land that currently exists. In terms of policy making, it is important that agriculture and sustainability are among the policy areas of interest at the municipal level. There are also very significant small actions that can be implemented such as planting trees on the roadside, allocating grants for green manure, reusing abandoned farms and farmsteads, building rainwater wells in agriculture or purifying water for irrigation, etc. Collaboration between municipality-province-neighbours as well as citizen participation are the basis for contributing to the regeneration of the rural fabric.

The future of the primary sector is cross-sectoral

There are many **sectors that are interlinked with and add value to the primary sector, such as tourism**. When it comes to businesses whose main source of income is agricultural production, diversification of production is often not enough to make it profitable. However, looking at non-agricultural activities that add value to the business can provide a radical change. Some options are related to experiential tourism (guided tours), outdoor activities (trekking, star gazing, etc.), rural accommodation, gastronomy (tastings and explanations of winemaking processes), art and culture (exhibitions, live music, theatre performances, etc.).

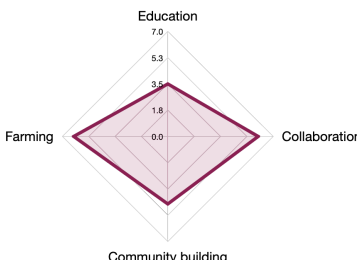
Idealised view of rural life by outsiders

Newcomers are often those who have an idealized view of life in the countryside. These people usually come from big cities and see a return to nature as a higher quality lifestyle. This is often made possible by teleworking and the installation of optical fibre networks for rapid Internet access in small towns. However, many of these people also decide to become entrepreneurs and lead a different lifestyle, having their own business and a life without the stress of the city. It is agreed that the future of the rural areas of the islands is more likely to depend on this social profile than on the new generations inheriting a family farming business.

Contributors

Workshop facilitation and reporting: Tamara Ventura (CE)

Appendix 17: Uelzen (Germany, SC2)

Organising partner:	Kulturland, ILS	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Slow Succession, Slow Revolution: regenerating the agri-food system in the Catalan Western Lands through agrobiodiversity and local food cultures (Spain, ES5B)	
Practice context:	Catalan Western Lands, Lleida province - Intermediate	
Confrontation context:	Uelzen, Lower Saxony (NUTS3) - Rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	October 13th 2021	

Summary

The confrontation of the case study "Slow Succession, Slow Revolution: regeneration of the agri-food system in the Catalan Western Territories through agricultural biodiversity and local food cultures" (ES5B) was selected for the district of Uelzen (NUTS 3 DE93A) with the purpose of identifying concrete potential measures to complement the existing initiatives of the various networks established in the region. Although Uelzen benefits from support coming from various levels (EU, region, municipality) in financial as well as in other terms (human resources), the region experiences a situation of dormance, lacking the ability to fully economically, socially and culturally explore its potential. The confrontations enabled us to identify a certain number of reasons that are not mainly specific to the area, but rather could be generalized to represent other rural areas. The participants selected represented a set of innovative producers of organic goods, promoters of the gastronomy and cultural aspects of the region as well as representatives from the municipality.

Context

The district of Uelzen (NUTS 3 DE93A) counts as a rural region that is both strongly dependent on the agricultural sector (53.7% agricultural area, 64 inhabitants per Km²) but also enjoys relative proximity to urban centers (Hannover, Lüneburg, Celle in 70-100Km radius). As the "door to Wendland", it also

enjoys a moderate supra-regional tourist activity. Nevertheless, although having the potential, the region is rather less known for touristic attractions.

The region has a very well organized and active Ökomodell Region⁴² (translated as “ecological model region”), and a Think Tank with active, engaged citizens. The eco-model region Heideregion Uelzen is oriented to current trends of increasing demand for regional, organic food and has established projects that support, on the one hand, the increase of the share of organically farmed land and, on the other hand, the increase of the supply of regional organic products to consumers. However, the distance to larger metropolitan areas is also a structural disadvantage in the marketing of organically produced agricultural products and despite all these initiatives the region is still well below the German average in terms of percentage of ecologically farmed land.⁴³ The main agricultural products are cereals (39.6%, mainly spelt), potatoes (20.9%) and sugar beet (13.5%).

As both the population and the gross value added of the region are declining (93,131 inhabitants in 2017 compared to 92,389 in 2019; gross value added in 2012: at €1,935 million and in 2018 at €1,713 million), we considered Uelzen a “less successful context” in the sense of our research project. So, although some critical success factors are present, the development of the rural region in terms of attractiveness for the studied actors (newcomers, new entrants, successors) is either absent or not strong enough. However, there are some initiatives and approaches that could be intensified or expanded in its scope, in order to achieve a stronger regional development.

This case study was initially selected for its potential to increase the region's attractiveness to farm successors, but also proved to be a tool for attracting newcomers. In the context of Uelzen, newcomers could contribute with an important share of innovation.

Results

First impressions

Although there was a general interest in the practice, the ability of it to cause a positive impact in the Uelzen area was highly questioned. The case was considered very specific to its original context and difficult to reproduce in a different cultural setting. It was considered that although initiated by Slow Food, an international, well known and strong movement, the importance of the narrative would have to be regionally reinterpreted and professionally implemented, in order to achieve an impact (DE1-SC2-04).

The confrontation method has a strong capacity to move people out of their comfort zone of thinking, and it was possible to expand participants horizons enough for them to identify two potential new development paths:

⁴² Ökomodell Regions are a German political construct developed to support selected geographic areas in developing ecological agricultural practices.

⁴³ According to the German Federal Statistical Office (umweltbundesamt.de) in 2020 the share of ecologically farmed land in Germany was 9.6% of total agricultural land (9.9% of the 22.100 farms), while in Uelzen district this share is 4.9%.

1. Regional gastronomy: the organic producers present in the workshop avowed not having thought so far about exploring the route of local gastronomy as a selling channel. They express their intention in further pursuing this idea and to develop their existing network to increase the importance of this market.
2. Vertical integration: increasing the value of products sold by adding a processing step was also identified as a potential additional revenue source. Increasing the value added of grains, such as the regionally produced grains (spelt) and potatoes (ancient sorts) with the production of pasta and “blue” potato chips. “The Lüneburger Heide Chips”, as the name sprouted during the brainstorming session (DE1-SC2-02) could become a classic, being the region one of the biggest German producers of potatoes. It was stated that there are already small producers trying their chance with small scale innovations, but they lack the support of a central, umbrella organisation to support innovation, as well as to offer the necessary resources and know-how to not only facilitate certification but also to trademark and protect the regionality of the developed new products.

Critical factors

Even if the participants were very critical regarding the potential transferability of the presented practice, they also recognized the presence in their context of a key requirement to replicating such a practice with success: the existence of regional networks. Both (a) the Ökomodell Region and its initiatives such as Öko-Regal⁴⁴ and existing producer of ancient potato species, as well as (b) the BioFood Cluster⁴⁵, which aligns organic producers with the same interests and shared marketing channels, are important platforms that would be able to support the initiative.

But having the network structure is not enough, as from an existing network something dynamic has to emerge: it is important to create a mixture of stability and connection, allowing for small conflicts to take place among members of the network, creating the necessary tension as an engine to ignite human relations (DE1-SC2-05). More concretely, the participants identified a number of elements that would be crucial for a favourable outcome:

- A. The presence of broad based platforms - such as Slow Food- which have the knowledge for implementing locally and in small scale (think global, act local);
- B. The physical capacity, such as machinery, as well as the know-how for food processing must be available in the region in order to bring about the benefits of vertical integration;
- C. Sufficient supply of organic and ancient seeds, as well as plants are necessary.

Currently there is a shortage in the region of organic and even more of ancient seeds, which was seen as an opportunity to be addressed but was not further discussed.

⁴⁴ Project designed to create a standardized selling space for regional products inside the local organic shops.

⁴⁵ An initiative to foster the cooperation and clustering of the existing knowledge around processing of food from organic agriculture.

Key issues and barriers

Following the methodology we discussed in a subsequent brainstorming which factors should be considered as obstacles, meaning that they would be crucial but hard to make available.

1. The proportion of land farmed organically is still very low in the Uelzen District. Some positive trends can be discerned but on a very small scale related to the potential of the region.
2. “Selling locally” is considered difficult, due to the relatively weaker buying power of the rural population. Paradoxically, urban consumption of regional and organic products is stronger than rural consumption.
3. Lack of selling channels that allow for specific targeting of selected consumer types, specially those that are more prone to pay for quality and for differentiated products.
4. Lack of agricultural infrastructure in terms of availability of specific machinery that would allow for more innovation, but also of bundled structures for bringing the products to the market, conceptually and physically.
5. The lack of cohesion and the high competitiveness, especially among the long-established farmers, was mentioned as a factor hindering the potentials of collaboration.
6. The lack of diversity in the offering (fresh vegetables was specifically mentioned), resulting from the long-established conventional farming and monoculture, the reduced varieties of the produced goods making it difficult to create an attractive basket for interested customers.
7. Strict regulation for animal farming (husbandry, slaughter, nitrate overload of the soil) limits the development of regional specialties and small scale production.

Proposed measures to overcome the obstacles identified

The participants were then invited to reflect on their considerations and imagine practical solutions for the stated problems. Following measures and ideas addressing previously mentioned issues could be documented:

- i. Measures to increase organic farming
 - (a) allow farmers more individual scope of action: the existing subsidy schemes are very narrow in scope and favours massification. In order to increase diversity and innovation a different approach should be put in place;
 - (b) ensure farmers economic viability: subsidy schemes to financially support farmers in the transition to new approaches of farming should be put in place, to favour innovation and risk taking;
- ii. identify the ideal conditions for a successful succession: which infrastructure is necessary, which processes should be put in place and which type of networks should be available in the region in order to favour a positive outcome within a familial transition;
- iii. The soil should be analysed for its “aptitude” and only a culture that is most adapted to the available soil and climate conditions can provide an economically viable culture. This is the advantage of ancient local species that would normally thrive endemically with less intervention. Technological and scientific knowledge should be developed in this field.
- iv. improve availability of agricultural infrastructure with commoning and cooperation in small scale, shared logistic-services , distribution and support for direct selling of farmers goods;

- v. Slaughter management: make jobs more attractive, with better training, re-introduce slaughter trucks, mobile pasture slaughter, regional slaughterhouse.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The extensive discussion with participants with different backgrounds and opposed perspectives allowed for creativity to emerge. The idea of confronting people with topics that they are not naturally inclined to deal with or at least not interested in at a certain point in time raises a barrier that can be subsequently destroyed by curiosity and the intellectual challenge of coming up with solutions. It ends up generating a certain “aha!” effect and proves to be very creative. Participants realize that there are still many untapped potential in their own region, while creative new products are envisaged. Through the lively exchange between different stakeholders information is cascaded and processed, unveiling new opportunities for relations to be explored. In the Uelzen case we had a successor agreeing with a municipal officer to set up a round table with other successors in the region to discuss methods to approach and resolve common difficulties. The group was also able to identify 2 products with unsatisfied demand and very elastic pricing, meaning a great opportunity to diversify into this markets (eg. organic eggs and free range pig meat). Also the differences in geographic location and population structure of the different contexts being confronted were clearly raised at the beginning of the discussion as being a barrier for transferability of the practice. Later during the discussion this aspect turned to be less important and the objection faded away as more similarities than differences were identified. For instance heavy regulation appears to be one of the common barriers that severely limit innovation in agriculture no matter where in Europe.

At the end of our interaction with the participants, following paths of further interest for research crystallised:

- 1) Vicious circle: in order to sell more high quality, differentiated products, a higher buying power of the local population would be desirable. But to generate a higher buying power, more successful local employers are needed, offering job opportunities for better qualified employees, paying higher salaries and thus allowing in turn to rely on the local market for customers. Not having the local market is maybe not a cause, but the consequence of not producing higher quality goods. Political measures, subventions and aid need to be designed to break this vicious circle and allow for more local self-sufficiency and less dependency from urban centers.
- 2) Local shortsightedness: reduced innovation and creativity may be due to the fact that locals are “used” to what is available and don’t see the potential of innovation with fresh eyes, as newcomers do. An example is the local availability of innovative organic producers of smoked fish, exquisite ancient potatoes and one of the only produced white wines in north Germany, all of them not selling to local restaurants and not promoting a bundled offering with the combination of their 3 products - that marry so well with each other and could turn into a regional delicacy.
- 3) The lack of governmental pension schemes for farmers was considered a very important negative factor impacting the decision of successors about taking over their parents' farm. This fact was also

mentioned as one of the main barriers for cooperatives, since in this setting the lack of regular income after stopping the activity is not backed by support from a potential successor.

- 4) Aspects of culture clash come spontaneously to discussion, even if not specifically addressed. For instance the integration of newcomers in the existing rural life was mentioned as being a problem. The social fabric in small villages is densely knotted and newcomers have a hard time finding the adequate social context to establish first contacts. It was proposed that crash courses, the type of “how to live in the country” should be offered as an opportunity to learn the specificities of the local society - “put the hands on dirt” (DE1-SC2-03) as well as to establish first contacts with locals.

Further consequences for the context and potential next steps

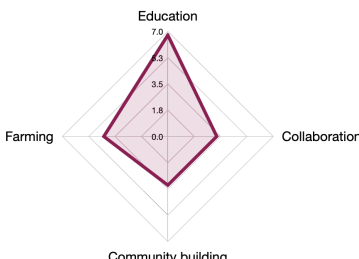
Fostering the interaction and exchange of ideas among farmers, government officials and other relevant actors on a case by case manner has in itself the potential to catalyze a transformational process. The seed for setting up a network of successors, formal or informal, to exchange learnings, document mistakes and failures and work together on solutions was planted during one of our workshops. The process will be potentially facilitated by the municipality, which has a good overview of the players, as well as about the age structure of family members and could therefore facilitate the process. With the support of an engaged successor, this initiative could initialize a shift towards offering more targeted support for innovative initiatives of and for young farmers.

Contributors:

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Appendix 18: Timis Region (Rumania, SC3)

Organising partner:	Ecoruralis	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Training in “nature professions”: a driving force for the rural regeneration of Pays Coutançais (France, FR6B)	
Practice context:	Coutance, Manche department (NUTS3)- Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Sancraiu commune, Timis Region - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 28th 2021	

Summary

In this confrontation the cases of “Pays Coutançais” and CSA Hof Pente GbR have been confronted with community initiatives on education, rural development and farming in the Timis county area of Romania. The activities and presence of an intentional community was important in this confrontation where some aspects of the CSA farming and educational approaches from the cases were already present.

While the complexity of the “Pays Coutançais” case was hard to comprehend by the confrontation participants, the CSA Hof Pente GBR initiative was very well received as an inspirational case and blueprint to follow.

Certainly, the confrontation has undergone in a moment of strong Covid-19 related limitations so discussions and brainstorming resumed to an online meeting, but despite of this, a lot of the limitations impeding the successful uptaking of the cases were outlined and an appetite was created for further developing and connecting the educational activities with agroecological farming and community supported agriculture.

Context

Stanciova Village is located in Timis County, 35 km far from Timisoara and 12 km far from Recas, the nearest town. The village is surrounded by forest and biodiversity. The population

(approximately 450 people) is mainly Serbian (60-70%), the rest are Romanians and few Hungarians. The Serbian population came originally from Montenegro in the XV century.

Agriculture is the main income generating activity in the village. The traditional gardening methods, working the land with horses, common work, these are habits still alive in this community.

Ecotopia Romania Association was set up in 2000 as a local organisation supporting the development of the area and ever since its members are active in the community, running projects of common interest together with the villagers. The mission of the association is to develop in Stanciova a model of a sustainable rural community, including the environmental, social, cultural and economical aspects whilst respecting the local traditions. The house owned by the association is regularly hosting many foreign volunteers that wish to experience the traditional lifestyle in a Romanian village and learn about it.

ASAT is the first Community Supported Agriculture network in Romania, promoting direct partnerships between solidarity groups of responsible consumers and small local agricultural producers. ASAT local solidarity partnerships refer to the collaboration between a small local agricultural producer and solidarity consumers, in order to ensure a natural local food, made during at least one agricultural season. Central partnerships are centered on vegetables, to which are added other locally produced and transparent food products. The local partnership of solidarity between small farmers and consumers is a mutual commitment in which people equally and fully benefit from the harvest of a certain area cultivated by the farmer. A commitment from a group of citizens to support a farm and fair remuneration for the work of the vegetable grower, which guarantees a natural or organic production. A form of cooperation between consumers and small agricultural producers in order to ensure access to locally produced healthy food.

ASAT (Association for the Support of Peasant Agriculture) is the form which developed in Romania, starting with 2008, an approach of CSA (community supported agriculture) focused on vegetable production. The model used for Romania is that of AMAP in France, aiming to develop local partnerships in solidarity between urban and rural.

Ferma Urzica, from Stanciova is a CSA farm affiliated to the ASAT movement, producers of organic vegetables for local food with a passion for regenerative agriculture. They produce vegetables and raise birds in their own household, which they have been developing since 2013.

Results

Organized as an online workshop, this confrontation involved three brainstorming sessions and one focus group. The participants were local farmers involved in CSA networks and citizens which are local inhabitants or partners of the local CSA initiative. Also some local and regional NGO members participated in the discussions.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The stakeholders found the cases very interesting, most importantly they felt that the two independent case studies that were presented complemented well and elevated the local interest in implementing the practice. While the CSA Hof Pente GbR generated a widespread acceptance and was generally considered to be more easily implementable in the region due to similar local initiatives, the case of Pays Coutançais was less accepted and considered too rooted in the local and historical specificity of the case region and not easy to replicate in the Romanian context.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practices

The brainstormings highlighted the **human capital** mobilized as a main critical factor. Both cases rely on the capacity and experience of this human capital and participants agreed that to attract human capital in the region would be primordial.

Also, the **relationship with local communities** was found very important. Both cases and the confrontation landscape share this critical factor. Local NGOs and CSA initiatives from the confrontation region were especially created to intensify this relationship and bet their successes on this factor.

Agroecology and regenerative farming was mentioned as a crucial approach as it seems an important meeting point for both consumers and producers when it comes to agricultural systems to be based on.

Alternative, natural and community oriented education was identified as a common thread both when it comes in replicating parts of the Pays Coutançais case and some local NGOs already engage in this work development but recognise the long road to be taken until reaching the level of organisation presented in the case study.

Nature conservation and landscape preservation both in education and practice was witnessed as important in both cases, moreover a factor that the local community and local NGOs already up-took in their current activities.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practices in the context

Stakeholders mentioned several key issues that revealed strong barriers in developing the case practice in this specific region:

Land concentration and land grabbing is an accentuated problem in the area. Mentioned both by farmers and NGOs present in the confrontation process as a critical limitative factor due to its high prevalence in the region. The agricultural lands of Timis county are one of the most

speculated and concentrated in the country. Due that the majority of investors are overtaking land either using abusive practices or legal loopholes, this is creating a lot of lack of transparency, eroding the integrity of local authorities and limiting access to land for agroecology and small-scale farming in general. It is important to mention that while participants recognize that a replication of the cases would bring important benefits for the future of the context, they also mentioned access to land and land availability as a whole as a key bottleneck.

Industrialization of farming and large-scale monocultures goes hand in hand with the above point. The prevalence of large monocultures transformed Stanciova into an oasis of biodiversity while the region has generally a homogenised landscape with a few prevalent crops and reduced biological diversity. Local authorities are seen more as drivers of this trend and their general lack of vision represents a great barrier in implementing more holistic and long-term approaches.

Participants identify the **lack of rural educational institutions** also as an important bottleneck. Stanciova is a village (and that can be extrapolated to the region) with a very reduced young generation and children are turned towards the urban schools. Education is very mainstream following the national curricula and with little opportunities to introduce educational pathways in conserving the natural landscape and especially a connection with local rurality.

Local social cohesion is fragile. While some local new-comers and new entrants in farmers started the base of an intentional community with common values in agroecology, others, especially farm successors are only very loosely connected to the social life, more only pursuing only their local economic activity in farming.

Also, out-migration from the community and generally in the region is very high. While de-population was identified also as an opportunity for new-comers and new members of the intentional community to arrive, still most participants consider a great threat the migration from the local rural region towards the urban areas or to other countries and economic opportunities.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

- the involvement of the local intentional community in the development of educational opportunities in the region based on the narrative and good examples of the two cases, linking nature professions, agroecology and the CSA movement.
- development of activities linking non-formal education and on-farm educational courses by local NGOs.
- Linking the local farming community with citizens through creating more CSA initiatives and peer-to-peer learning from more established CSA farmers from the region (and other regions).
- More in-depth witnessing of the cases through study trips and visits to their sites.

- Approaching local authorities and asking for support, but also offering proposals for an alternative local development.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

- Promoting agroecology as an overarching concept in food production and landscape management;
- Exploring the local implementation of the “food sovereignty” concepts, with more participation in decision making and rural political visioning, connecting constituencies (farmers, citizens, civil society) in an over-arching regional network.
- Linking with like minded communities from other regions of Europe, building up the sense of belonging and being “on the right path”.

Lessons learned and recommendations

Participants expressed that more aspects could be learned about the synergies and networking that enabled the development of especially the CSA Hof Pente GbR where the "Transparenz schaffen" project was mentioned.

The local NGOs and the CSA farms showed great interest in intensifying their collaboration on the educational aspects and to establish educational farms as main pillars of practical education while promoting natural professions.

Also, as a next step, participants agreed that it is important to map out the policy frameworks that could enable the upscaling of their activities and uptake of the cases in the region. For this a good policy analysis was proposed as an activity of the local network.

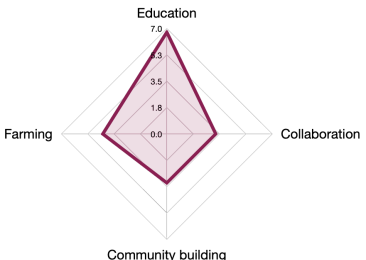
Funding opportunities coming through LEADER and national agencies will also be taken in review so that they could be approached either by local farmers for diversifying their activities with an educational factor, or by NGOs to support the networking efforts.

Contributors

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Appendix 19: Lower Saxony (Germany, SC4)

Organising partner:	Kulturland, ILS	
Practice:	Training in “nature professions”: a driving force for the rural regeneration of Pays Coutançais (France, FR6B)	
Practice context:	Coutance, Manche department (NUTS3)- Predominantly rural	
Confrontation context:	Niedersachsen (NUTS 2) - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	November 2nd 2021	

Summary

The case study “Training in “nature professions”: a driving force for the rural regeneration of Pays Coutançais” offered many departing routes for further investigation. Due to the inherent ability of education to catalyze change, we selected the NUTS2 area of Lower Saxony to be confronted with the educational aspect of the case study. Lower Saxony is one of the German federal states with the lowest share of organic farmed land and organic farming schools. In addition to the specific educational aspects, the case offers opportunities to investigate the cohabitation of different actors (indigenous community and newcomers) in the rural landscape. This enables us to explore reasons and solutions that are relevant to create a growing rural community. The initial idea was to confront the “Coutances case” with stakeholders from a conventional school. Through this comparison we might have identified advantages and disadvantages of conventional and organic agricultural education, as well as to trigger change and development. Unfortunately the cooperation proved to be unfruitful. The contacted school, one of the most renowned conventional agricultural schools in Low Saxony, was not open to dialogue and stated being not interested in including organic approaches in their curriculum. We decided to address the topic differently and organized the workshops with independent educators and alumni. Local authorities were broadly invited but did not show any interest in participating. Due to that, the results are based on a very small sample of interested people, so there might be a bias towards organic farming. Nevertheless we were able to gain additional insights and relevant information to add to the case.

Context

In Lower Saxony the current offering of education in organic farming (OF) is very limited. There is only one public school consistently offering a third year specialization in OF for conventional agriculture

students⁴⁶. The private schools that partially cover the gap between conventional and organic farming are not well perceived by the public administration, besides they are less financially supported as public schools. Because the majority of the farms operate in a conventional mode, the demand for qualified workers in conventional farming is bigger. This of course influences both the availability of apprenticeship jobs as well as the interests of trainees, especially when they have a farming background. The farms operating in ecological mode tend to be much smaller, consequently they have less resources to employ and train youngsters. In addition, “the eco-scene has no interest in building up a parallel educational system”(DE2-SC4-02) as it was stated by one of the participants. In fact, the idea is to influence the conventional sector with organic farming practices, to achieve the objective of broadening OF . But as a concern, the willingness of the state to act, as well as the readiness of current school staff to evolve in this new direction is doubtful (DE2-SC4-05).

Results

First impressions

The interest of the participants in the case study was very high, especially due to the fact that there are very few schools offering education in organic farming in Lower Saxony.

The participants evaluated the characteristics of the showcased school as a combined offering for various age groups as interesting and easily applicable in Germany. But it was neither considered as the main innovative aspect of the school nor as an advantage compared to conventional, separated systems. The participants had the feeling that different age groups experience their learning environment differently and may not even cross each other's way, unless the curriculum is specifically designed for creating an intergenerational exchange (DE2-SC4-02). But since there are hardly any formal offerings in Lower Saxony to support a professional transition for adults, the case offered a concrete possibility for the development of such a path.

Listed below the reader can find specific aspects that attract more attention to OF and can be seen as opportunities:

1. Educational approach that responds to student's needs, by placing students as key agents of the transformation process. Especially if one assumes, as stated by one participant, that “students are more rapidly adjusting to the reality of the environment than members of the formal school structures and governmental bodies” (DE2-SC5-05). More precisely this two characteristics of the Coutances Lycee (high school) were highlighted:
 - A. collaborative development of new professions, such as the paysan boulanger, aggregating steps of the value chain in one profession and thus increasing the income of the farmer as well as the quality of the product;
 - B. workshop-style education: practical and interactive knowledge transmission, with more hours in the field, and regarding this, having more practical experience than hours of theory in the class.

⁴⁶ The Justus-von-Liebig-School of the Hannover Region, <https://www.jvl.de/>

Besides, mathematical knowledge is mainly transmitted as applicable theory and socio-cultural aspects are integrated in the development of new forms of farming.

2. The combination of conventional and ecological education in the same school in parallel programs, especially because younger generations are more and more interested in alternative ways of farming.
3. Close collaboration with community and municipality to develop activities to the general public, such as planting, collecting mussels and shells, environmental education, as well as cultural festivals.

Taking into account the increasing challenges related to the transition from conventional to OF, it was mentioned that not only the technical and economical aspects are relevant. Also the increasing importance of socio-cultural aspects were highlighted, such as animal welfare and environmental impacts. The presented case study appeared to be successful in the integration of all these aspects in their activity field.

Critical factors

In general the participants were highly interested in the school model and estimated it as transferable. Nevertheless they identified some critical factors that cannot easily be surpassed in terms of implementing such a school in Lower Saxony or in Germany.

One critical point is the fact that in France the educational system is centralized and financial support is guaranteed from the federal government under the condition of following the specified “missions”. Germany has a decentralized system, for the curriculum and for the financial report. The public administration in Lower Saxony does not prioritize the development of an OF curriculum in the existing public schools. Reasons are the perceived powerful position of the conventional agriculture lobby and the lack of trained educators and teachers in organic farming.

In order to successfully replicate the educational model of the Lycee de Coutances the following conditions would have to be available additionally (the list is not-exhaustive):

- de facto versus seemingly existing time and flexibility for teachers to adapt the curriculum to students needs;
- de facto prevailing demand for OF education in rural areas, which may be smaller than the one prevailing in intermediate areas. It is perceived that the demand for OF education is mainly generated by newcomers.

Key issues and barriers

In Lower Saxony the majority of agricultural land is still conventionally farmed and the farms are bigger than in most other parts of Germany. Because of that, the demand for qualified employees trained in OF is smaller than for conventional farming and integrated production. Consequently the apprenticeship job offerings as well as the number of apprenticeship candidates are mostly for conventional farming. Even though the demand for OF education is growing, mainly due to newcomers and younger generations, there is still not enough financial support from the state nor political willingness to develop the OF educational program. To be able to pursue the objective of improving the educational offering of OF, the

support from higher government instances would be needed. The participants see this lack of support as a big hurdle. Along with the authorities, the participants also mention little interest in ecological approaches from farmers associations, existing conventional educational centers and school managements.

The easy accessibility for urban customers is still the most important selling point for organic products, because “people are not ready to drive to the countryside everytime they need to buy their food supplies and even less willing to live there’ (DE2-SC4-03). This fact clearly favors the development of organic farming in intermediate areas close to urban centers and not necessarily in rural areas, where most apprenticeship jobs are available.

In addition to the apparently most critical aspects related to the conflicts between conventional and organic farming, the following items were also discussed:

- financial support for students during the training period, higher apprenticeship salary;
- not enough places and offerings for apprenticeship;
- sluggish processes to establish a new school entity, in the case of starting from scratch - much easier would be to expand the current curriculum with integrated topics such as sustainability and OF;
- Although experiencing a revival in recent times, the food culture of “artisanal processing” is less popular in Germany than in France.

Proposed measures to overcome the obstacles identified

In addition to the long list of barriers, participants were also able to identify a myriad of potential solutions.

The bulk of solutions were aligned along the topic of partnership, network and collaboration. All possible types of collaboration were spontaneously mentioned, highlighting the benefits of collaboration for the different functional areas such as school financing, continuous education for teachers, quality control and program development, etc.

The proposed measures were:

- Intensify the collaboration with conventional schools, to develop an integrated curriculum covering both, conventional and organic farming. The word “ecologizing” the traditional curriculum was used (DE2-SC4-01).
- Promote an alliance of the existing movements with similar interests (e.g. regenerative agriculture, permaculture, Community-Supported Agriculture, biodynamic, vegan), to increase the strength and consolidate the intention around one voice, thus having more power to face the establishment of conventional agriculture.
- Strive for an alliance with the conventional agriculture lobby, involving the chamber of agriculture to jointly develop solutions for the OF education. Specific measures were proposed, such as to organize workshops and round tables with the chamber of agriculture, to promote creative concepts, innovation and collaboration with alternative movements.

- The identification of organic farms to become partners and develop supplementary school offerings.
- Partnering with foreign OF schools to foster exchange and innovation among the countries.

In addition to the dominant topic of collaboration, the continuous education of teachers in both segments was also mentioned many times. Attractive training and continuous education offerings for vocational school teachers in the conventional sector would help overcome the current barrier of unreadiness and unwillingness, as stated by one participant “conventional school staff need to get in touch with ecological content” (DE-SC4-05). This could be offered in a centralized manner. On the other hand, OF educators are mostly engaged in private schools and do not profit from the same benefits of public employees, e.g. not being paid for their continuous education efforts. Initiatives to address this issue should be put in place.

Further proposals were also mentioned and are listed below:

- i. Governmental financial support for adults interested in professional transition towards OF and an increased financial support for students during their education.
- ii. Provide conventional farmers with examples of successful conversion stories, in the form of the biographies of progressive, successful organic farmers.
- iii. Integrate organic agriculture as workshops within the conventional farm education program.

Lessons learned and recommendations

One of the key findings of the confrontation was the relevance of “collaboration”. The subject “education” in general, and organic agriculture education in Lower Saxony specifically is too broad and important to be addressed from one side only. We need alliances, partnerships and collaboration from all stakeholders involved, overcoming potential rivalries and competition between specific groups in order to generate integrative approaches and to maximize the positive outcomes of a transformation. This is perceived to be strongly influenced and pushed by the presence and will of newcomers.

Taking into account the high share of farmers retiring in the coming years, we also realize that authorities need to better observe the demographic evolution of the population in their specific districts, taking advantage of a potential high interest that newcomers show for farming and rural development. This should result in a consequent increase in the supply of services as required by this segment, thus increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for the settling of new generations. In the case of Lower Saxony the interest in OF education was attested by the majority of the workshop participants, not without a certain astonishment and disappointment about the disinterest of authorities in actively participating and co-creating a new scene for the future of sustainable agriculture. A balance between a top-down and a bottom-up approach needs to be achieved: there should be “train-the-trainer” possibilities, in universities, schools and elsewhere, where the future educators are forming and emerging; a close look in the curriculum of universities should be systematically pursued, and content that aligns environmental, economical and socio-cultural new realities should be included. The pressure generated by the rising demand from the bottom needs to increase.

Finally, although we started the confrontation highly interested in the reaction of participants to the hybrid campus being practiced in the Lycee Coutances, with different education paths being pursued by students of different age groups and professional paths, we were surprised by the low appeal it has for the audience. Hybrid schools are very common in France, and are part of a tradition. As for Germany, exchange and cross-fertilization were not seen by the workshop participants as a natural result from the simultaneous presence and occupation of the same school buildings. The creativity and innovation arising from the Lycee Coutances can probably not be linked only to one factor and has to be considered as systemic. A multi-generation learning (high school, apprenticeship, career changer), a multi-curriculum offer (conventional, organic), and a collaborative education environment (school administration, students, authorities, community) are all under the umbrella of a highly “hands-on” learning method. Regarding that, the school resembles a big laboratory of ideas, operating as a workshop where different stakeholders can experiment and test new ideas, put them in place and verify its efficiency.

Further consequences for the context and potential next steps

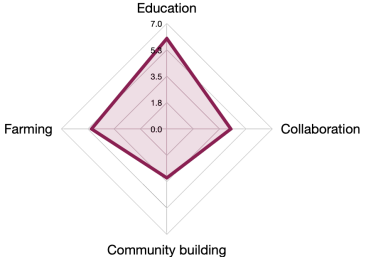
The participants were one voice when they concluded that a “Bildungstag” - an education day- congregating educators from all orientations to discuss the future of agricultural education was an honourable objective to be set for the near future. Gathering representatives from all stakeholder groups on board, welcoming their perspective from the point of view where they currently are and working together finding ways to jointly achieve a sustainable transformation of the Lower Saxony and German rural landscape.

Contributors:

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Appendix 20: West of Ireland (Ireland, SC5)

Organising partner:	NUI Galway	Innovation Type 
Practice:	Vital agriculture and forestry in Uusimaa region: The ELINA project (Finland, FI8B)	
Practice context:	NUTS 3 region - Uusimaa - Predominantly urban	
Confrontation context:	NUTS 3 region - West of Ireland - Predominantly rural	
Workshop location:	Online	
Date:	October 26th 2021	

Summary

Exploring the replication of the ELINA training and information programme to support farm succession in the west of Ireland identified strengths and new learnings for the context. Further to this, also emerging were a range of considerations that could enhance a similar programme, and the wider succession support framework, in the context. Aspects of its strength were: ELINA's attention to the successor and the existing farmer; its focus on peer to peer learning; its engagement with farmers not just through formal training; and its multi-pronged approach elevating the succession issue to a place sitting alongside other central farming issues. To enhance a similar programme in the west of Ireland a number of considerations emerged. This included: combining training with an individualised approach targeting individual farmer needs and focusing attention on improving the gender balance in farming at succession. Further to this, making supports available to support action on succession issues as a follow on to training and information programmes emerged as important. Overall, succession is a process that occurs over a long timeframe and actions need to tackle issues at different stages (e.g. from pre-succession and raising interest in the farming profession to the farm transfer stage) and of the different actors (successor, existing farmer) in the process.

Context

The west of Ireland was chosen as the confrontation context. This is a predominantly rural area. Farm livelihoods in this region face economic challenges. Family farm income is €13,941 in the region, the second lowest of all regions in Ireland. The border region is the lowest at €13,292. The age profile of farmers in the region is predominantly an ageing one. The average age of farmers in the western region is the second highest in Ireland at 59.9 years, while the highest is the midland region at 61 years (Teagasc National Farm Survey 2019). The ELINA project, and its focus on both issues of generational change in tandem with focusing on farm business development, made it a strongly relevant practice to examine in the west of Ireland context.

Another important aspect of the west of Ireland context is that while the ELINA project presents a novel way of approaching succession issues, it does not present a unique approach. With a similar objective of information provision on succession, Teagasc (Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority) runs the 'Transferring the Family Farm Clinics' across Ireland. These 'clinics' aim to prepare farm families for succession by providing information and guidance on all the diverse considerations surrounding transferring the family farm (Teagasc, 2020). ELINA was chosen because it presents something familiar, therefore potentially more easily gaining acceptance, however also offering new ideas to build on the current approach.

The ELINA project context is the Uusimaa region of Finland (see Appendix 1 for an overview of ELINA and the Uusimaa region). Uusimaa is a predominantly urban area. The confrontation context is a predominantly rural area. Despite being different region types, farming in both areas share important characteristics. Part-time farming is common in the Uusimaa region. In the western region of Ireland more than half of farmers have an off farm job (54.1%). The average age of farmers is similar in both regions. In the Uusimaa region and more widely in Finland the average age of farmers is 53, while in Ireland the average age is 58 and in the west of Ireland 59.9 (Ruuska, 2021; Teagasc National Farm Survey 2019).

An important difference between the regions was the extent of the gender imbalance in farming. The main farmer is female on 17% of farms in the Uusimaa region of Finland, while in the western region female farm holders/managers only made up 2.6% of all farms (Ruuska, 2021; Teagasc National Farm Survey 2019).

To gain more specific insight on the context, and the key issues facing agriculture and succession, a pre-workshop survey was circulated to participants of the brainstorming sessions and focus group (see Appendix 2 for the detailed results). According to the results, a variety of challenges impact agriculture in the region. Of ten challenges associated with agriculture in the west of Ireland, all participants identified them as a challenge to some degree, apart from one respondent who did not see persistence of traditional gender roles as an issue. Most significantly, all participants identified the ageing farmer profile and farm viability as significant or extremely significant issues. More than 90% identified succession and farm supports as significant or extremely significant issues. This further underlined the relevance of the ELINA approach where it deals with succession issues in tandem with other farming challenges. To gain an initial insight on the ELINA approach as a tailored, area based project the pre-workshop survey also assessed in what ways participants felt succession support would benefit from being tailored. Tailoring support based on multiple perspectives emerged as a top area of priority. The second area of concern was tailoring based on older farmer issues. As a result of this, we provided space for themed discussion in the focus group on the older farmer. This involved the presentation of a project

exploring the establishment of a social organisation for the older farming community in Ireland. This is with view to supporting a more age-friendly environment in the farming sector (see Appendix 3).

Results

Organised as part of one online workshop, this confrontation involved three brainstorming sessions and one focus group. A pre-workshop survey was also used to gather initial insights. The main results emerging are presented here as a whole. The findings cross-over elements that are specific to the context and to the practice.

Acceptance and interest in implementing the practice

The ELINA project was accepted by participants as a practice of interest in relation to dealing with farm succession in Ireland. However, it was also felt that for future approaches to effectively deal with farm succession they must also go beyond the ELINA approach and its focus on training and information provision. Despite this, a number of particular aspects of interest emerged. One was ELINA's focus on dealing with succession issues in tandem with other farming challenges. ELINA had a number of core focus areas: investments and generational change; inter-farm cooperation; entrepreneurial skills; and product development and environment. Another was the area-based, tailored approach. As a training programme, ELINA's focus on peer-to-peer learning was also seen as a crucially important aspect of the project's approach.

Identified critical factors related to the implementation of the practice in the context

Attention to both the successor and existing farmer

ELINA's target group was both the successor and the existing farmer. This dual focus emerged as critical in the west of Ireland. This also emerged in our pre-workshop survey where two thirds of respondents suggested succession support would benefit from a tailored approach based on multiple perspectives. Focusing on older farmer issues emerged of particular importance, but this was also followed by the need to also focus on younger farmer issues. During the workshop, participants emphasised the importance of focusing on the needs of the successor (e.g. farming as a viable, attractive occupation) and the older generation stepping back (e.g. social needs of retiring farmers, re-defining the continuing role of the older farmer on the farm). Further to this, more technical and organisational aspects (e.g. the farm is transferred to successor or the farm is in partnership) also need consideration. Overall the challenge is to embrace the complexity of farm succession through appropriate training and information.

Peer-to-peer learning

ELINA fosters peer-to-peer learning and helps create a bridge for current knowledge transfer into farming practice (Ruuska, 2021). The peer-to-peer approach emerged as a crucial element for a similar project in the west of Ireland context. The focus on knowledge exchange and sharing is important in farming for more effective learning and skills outcomes, rather than more one-way knowledge transfer.

Different spaces of engagement

ELINA focuses on a combination of different types of training, such as small groups, study trips and some larger events. Farmers may take part in public, larger training events but then join smaller training groups for follow on learning (Ruuska, 2021). Similarly, in the west of Ireland context the need for a range of different spaces of engagement emerged. Those discussed went beyond the more formal training spaces utilised by the ELINA project. For example, the mart (i.e. livestock auction) was highlighted as a crucially important space to engage the existing, older farming generation. Potentially also schools could be a further space of engagement. This would be to raise awareness and interest in farming as a profession with the potential successor well before the time of transfer arrives.

Succession as part of the wider farming conversation

ELINA brings a range of information together for farmers on the succession process and services that can facilitate it, but in the context of also dealing with a wider set of farming challenges (Ruuska, 2021). In the west of Ireland context this approach was viewed positively. Succession is a sensitive topic and the social, cultural and psychological factors influencing it must not be overlooked. Succession is an issue farmers and farming families can be reluctant to discuss and consequently act on. Bringing the issue to the fore and dealing with it alongside other farming challenges raises its profile, highlights its importance and could help to normalise the conversation. The pre-workshop survey also showed the importance of increased focus in farm families on the issue. Over three quarters indicated a lack of intergenerational communication as a significant or extremely significant issue impacting succession from the younger farmer perspective.

Coordinating organisation with strong farming connections

The coordinator of ELINA, ProAgria, is a farmer-owned organisation and has a wide network to promote events (Ruuska, 2021). Reflecting on the west of Ireland context, the brainstorming revealed the crucial importance of organisations that deliver succession information projects to have strong trust built with farmers, or in its absence, proactively work on building it.

Potential successors a necessary focus

Potential successors could also access the ELINA programme, not just those in the process of succession (Ruuska, 2021). In the west of Ireland context, availability of successors is an issue which makes active targeting of potential successors an important part of a future approach in this context. The pre-workshop survey showed that almost three quarters of respondents felt identifying a successor, as well as provision for non-successor family members, were significant or extremely significant issues impacting succession from the older farmer perspective. Further to this, if the transition into farming is not immediate and potential successors leave the farm for a period to

pursue education and/or work, they may still return. Encouraging this return of potential successors is important, as well as building understanding among the existing farming community that departure from the farm may be temporary. In addition, it may benefit the farm's future in the long term allowing professional development of the potential successor.

Key issues and barriers for implementing the innovative practice in the context

Farm viability and availability of successors

A particular problem emerging in the west of Ireland context was that farming may not be viewed as a career option for children in farm families. As part of the pre-workshop survey over 90% of respondents indicated that farm viability was a significant or extremely significant issue impacting succession from the younger farmer perspective. So regardless of information and guidance on farm transfer and succession issues, if farming does not provide a viable livelihood, full or part-time, for the next generation successors will not be available to enter farming. The issue of farming as an economically sustainable livelihood is a major issue threatening the future of the family farm in the west of Ireland. The need for a wider shift emerged in the brainstorming sessions where there is transformative change in farming to support the survival of the family farm and farming as a sustainable rural occupation. Potential avenues towards this change could include increased support for organic farming. It was discussed as a potentially more economically viable type of farming.

While area-based and tailored, ELINA still represents a too generalised approach

ELINA took an area-based, tailored approach and responded specifically to the needs of farmers in the Uusimaa region of Finland. ELINA also had a tailored approach in the sense of operating with flexibility allowing the content of the programme to change in response to needs and for farmers to shape the topics of the training received. This is an appropriate approach in the west of Ireland. While farm types and sizes vary, common issues could be identified specific to the west of Ireland to tailor a similar project in this context. However while this approach has potential, the brainstorming also raised the issue of the need for an even more specific approach. ELINA does not take a sectoral approach, but deals with all farm types together. The pre-workshop survey helped to identify some of the more specific key issues to address from the younger farmer and older farmer perspectives. In relation to the younger farmer the top five issues emerging as significant or extremely significant were: succession planning, farm viability, lack of intergenerational communication, lack of farmer retirement and access to land. For the older farmer, the top five issues emerging as significant or extremely significant were: succession planning, access to support/resources, fear/anxiety associated with change in later life, emotional ties to farming and lack of awareness of the succession process. However even beyond this, the need for a more individualised approach emerged from the brainstorming. Farms are all different which consequently also have different issues to deal with in relation to succession. Projects dealing with succession also need to encompass the addressing of individual needs.

Farmer engagement

The issue of how to effectively engage farmers emerged in the brainstorming groups. Gaining farmer participation was a challenge highlighted by participants. Being part of ELINA and its training would require a time commitment. The Finnish analysis of ELINA also highlighted how part-time farming made the time capacity to engage in the project a challenge. In addition it was noted that training is a typical tool used to assist farmers and perhaps fatigue exists (Ruuska, 2021). Further to this, there is also the challenge of engaging existing farmers and potential successors that are not actively thinking or planning for farm succession. The analysis of ELINA also highlighted how data protection requirements can pose a challenge. Farmers approaching retirement cannot be identified and approached, they must come forward to engage in ELINA (Ruuska, 2021).

Capacity of agricultural advisors

Another emerging challenge was the wide-ranging skill-set required to implement ELINA and the capacities of agricultural advisors. It was felt advisors would not hold the required skills to deliver such a programme.

Identified measures and actors that need to be involved to overcome the obstacles and succeed in the implementation of the practice

A number of potential key actors

In the west of Ireland, Teagasc is well-placed to act as a coordinating organisation for a project similar to ELINA. It operates the similar 'Transferring the Family Farm Clinics', as well as a range of other services for farmers e.g. advisory services and discussion groups. However, other actors were also highlighted as a key part of the succession support system. The Land Mobility Service provides succession planning and matching farmers to support collaborative farming arrangements. Enterprise Boards also emerged as important in relation to finding new ways to support farm viability and more entrepreneurial, innovative approaches to farming. Even before this, schools could have a potential role to play. The idea of succession and careers in farming could be integrated in some way in the educational curriculum. The involvement of the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine would also be a central anchor point for any future approach.

Involve a range of 'advisors' with varied skill sets

Involving a range of experts with different skill sets would be important to the successful implementation of ELINA in the west of Ireland context. ELINA did involve a range of experts with different areas of expertise (Ruuska, 2021). This is an important aspect to carry forward. This also perhaps needs to go beyond the type of expertise engaged for the ELINA project. The future need for cross-departmental work to support succession is also highlighted in the Finnish study of ELINA

(Ruuska, 2021). The idea of a farm welfare group emerged in one of the brainstorming sessions that could involve social care and public health workers. Trust among farmers and these professionals is also crucially important. This could build on existing connections, if present, in rural and farming communities. The organisations listed above would also present a key source of expertise.

Engaging farmers at different levels

There is a need for widening the spaces of engagement with farmers (and potential farmers) to support succession more effectively. ELINA did use a variety of means to share and develop knowledge, such as public, larger training events and smaller training groups. However, from the brainstorming it was clear that going a step further is important. Both more formal (workshops, training sessions, discussion groups) and informal (social places of farming, the family itself) 'spaces of engagement' are important.

Incentives for participation and wider financial supports

Incentives emerged as an important measure to support increased engagement with farm succession. These are important on both sides, for the successor and the existing farmer. In addition to this, support to assist follow through and taking action would also support greater effectiveness. This may entail availability of supports to assist with the costs associated with using professional services (e.g. solicitors, mediators). This would help to realise the actions promoted by projects such as ELINA. Costs can be a key barrier to putting actions into practice.

Further innovative ideas to foster rural regeneration and development in the context

Re-define 'farmer retirement'

Farmer retirement has to be looked at in the context of farming as a way of life. The expectations generally associated with retirement, that involvement in the profession ceases, were strongly highlighted as often having little relevance in a farming context. Often the older, existing farmer, while stepping back, continues to work alongside the successor. Retirement is a sensitive topic and new terms are required in agriculture to properly represent the process of farm 'retirement', which can be more about stepping back than stepping away from farming.

A greater role for women

The availability of a successor is a key issue that inhibits succession. There is untapped potential because of traditional gender roles. The pre-workshop survey also identified the persistence of traditional gender roles as an issue impacting succession. From the older farmer perspective 40% said it was a significant or extremely significant issue, while from the younger farmer perspective 50% agreed it was. Brainstorming identified that women may not see themselves as potential successors, or be viewed as such within the farm family. More broadly, women in farm families can play an important part of the wider solution and be part of a collaborative approach to the farm succession process in their farm family.

An age friendly farming environment

Greater focus is needed on the human side of farm succession and an important part of this is attention to the needs of the existing, older farming generation. Part of the solution currently being explored in the Irish context is the establishment of a social organisation for this generation addressing their needs. This would be a similar organisation to what exists for young people in rural Ireland (Macra na Feirme) (see Appendix 3). The pre-workshop survey also reinforces these findings. More than 90% of respondents indicated that the fear/anxiety associated with change in later life and emotional ties to farming were significant or extremely significant issues impacting farm succession from the older farmer perspective.

Lessons learned and recommendations

What could be additionally learned about the practice

Overall, ELINA could be a valuable approach in the west of Ireland, but with some adaptations. It could be valuable as a project that is part of a wider succession support framework. Additional considerations emerging are:

- There is a need to look beyond the area-based approach and also address some of the more micro and individual needs of farms and farmers. The individual farm level is also an important space where engagement with the succession issue is needed.
- Focusing on improving farm viability alongside addressing the wider issues of succession could also add to improved farm succession.
- Incentives to support increased engagement on both sides, for the successor and the existing farmer, could improve outcomes.
- Following training and information provision, there is need for follow through and support for taking action on succession issues. This could include making financial assistance available to use professional services (e.g. solicitors, mediators).
- Exploring using more diverse spaces of engagement would also be important. These include both formal training and more informal social places of farming, to more effectively deliver information and training on succession.
- There is a need for greater gender equality when it comes to participation in farming in the west of Ireland context. A higher predominance of male farmers emerged as a greater issue in the west of Ireland context compared to Uusimaa. This issue would need greater specific attention in an ELINA-type project in the west of Ireland.

Further consequences for the context and next steps

ELINA's focus on training and information provision to ensure farmers have access to key information on succession is important. However, while projects focused on training and information are an important part of the farm succession policy framework, they should only be one part of it. The reflections of Ruuska (2021) on the ELINA programme also note the complexity of the farm succession process (e.g. economic, legal, psychological, social, cultural aspects) and effectively dealing with it, as well as the particular challenge of dealing with the psychological/human aspect of succession. Further measures are important at different scales, levels of engagement and over time. More specifically this could involve:

- A collaborative, multi-actor approach involving stakeholder (e.g. The Land Mobility Service, Macra na Feirme) and public bodies (e.g. Teagasc, DAFM, Enterprise Boards).
- A multi-level approach for example targeting the micro family and individual level, alongside wider awareness raising, training and information projects such as ELINA.
- A longer-term approach where succession is not just on the farming agenda as farmers approach traditional 'retirement' age but the succession question is a continuous part of farm planning.
- A specific focus on supporting greater levels of gender balance in the next farming generation.
- Greater attention to the human side of farm succession, particularly for the existing, older farmer and the creation of supports that support a more age-friendly farming environment (e.g. see Appendix 3).

More broadly, a wider idea that emerged was the relevance of looking towards international good practices to help adapt and improve approaches to supporting succession in the west of Ireland. Assessing 'good practice' is helpful to re-imagine approaches to succession and could also be a useful approach in other areas such as in relation to rural newcomers and new entrants to farming.

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Reporting: Aisling Murtagh, Maura Farrell, Louise Weir (NUIG)

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Report SC5 appendix 1: The ELINA project and Uusimaa context

Presentation by Pertti Ruuska on ELINA and the Uusimaa region given at the confrontation workshop before the brainstorming sessions and focus group.



TURUN YLIOPISTO



TULEVAISUUDEN TUTKIMUSKESKUS



RURALIZATION


RURALIZATION

Case ELINA in Finnish context
26.10.2021

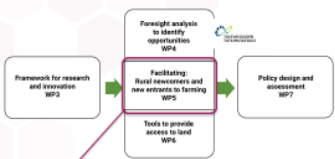
Pertti Ruuska
Project researcher
FFRC, University of Turku



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Case ELINA in RURALIZATION project

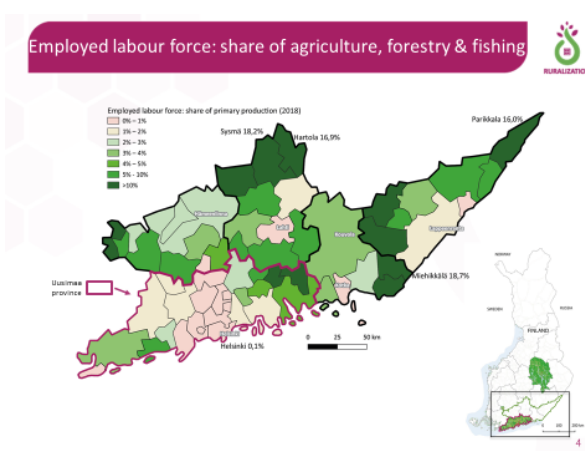
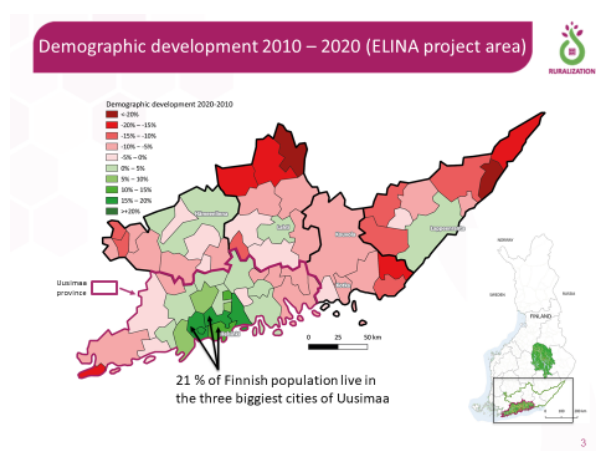


Vital agriculture and forestry in Uusimaa – The ELINA project, lead by the ProAgria organisation

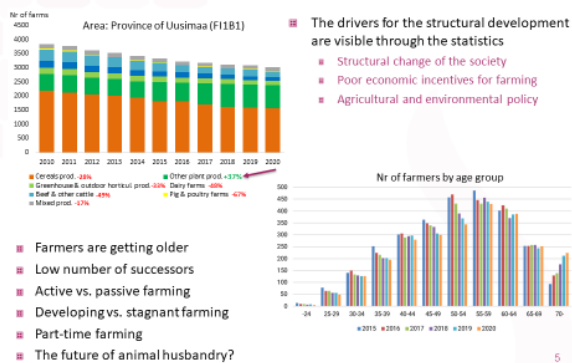
- 11/2015-12/2018 → 12/2021 (larger area)
- Kind of professional updating education for farmers
- CAP pillar II funding (EU+national)
- Budget 389,000 € (90% public funding)



2



Farm structure in Uusimaa region (FI1B1)



5

Goals and organization of the project



- **Goals of the project**
 - developing farmers' know-how to improve the profitability of farming
 - utilising the new research information in developing farmers' competence
 - Farm management and environmental management cross-sectional themes
- **Focusing on promoting the farm investments, transfer of farms to the next generation, farmers' collaboration**
- **The designing consortium had members from the ProAgria, regional Farmers' Union, some farmers, Food industry (dairy cooperative, grain industry), regional ELY Centre (public funding)**
- **The project staff (the core group 2-3 experts) of ProAgria organized the planning and implementation of training actions**
 - A 'neutral' and well-known source of information
 - The ProAgria has versatile expertise available, wide networks
 - following the demand for training subjects (listen to farmers)

6

Some features of ELINA-Uusimaa project



- **The project is an "umbrella" for many themes**
 - Large operating area, economies of scale in project administration
 - Richness of themes
 - For farms successions a specialized project could work as well
- **The idea of a study path**
 - from public events and webinars to field trips and to study groups
 - [personal training not possible → Aid of advisory services for individual farms in CAP]
 - Peer-learning, peer-support, networking
 - Training almost free of charge* (90 % public funding)
 - Many ways to reach the training, still some challenges to catch (the right) farmers
- **566 persons (+webinars) took part in training sessions (11/2015 – 12/2018)**

*webinars usually O.C. theme days or seminars 20-30 €/attendee, study groups 100-250 €/person (5-6 meetings, 1-2 advisors), study trips 50-70% of the costs

7

Can a practice like ELINA activate regeneration in?



- **It is not a silver bullet for exploding the change of generation in farms, still it can**
 - Encourage to start discussions e.g. in training groups to develop individual future plans and to continue the succession process with the peer support
 - Both the successor and the retiring farmer should prepare themselves mentally (years) before the timing for the actual succession is relevant
 - Collect, with many specialists, the pieces of up-to-date information about the farm succession process easily available for the farmers.
 - Make the younger farmers to trust that they are not left alone

8

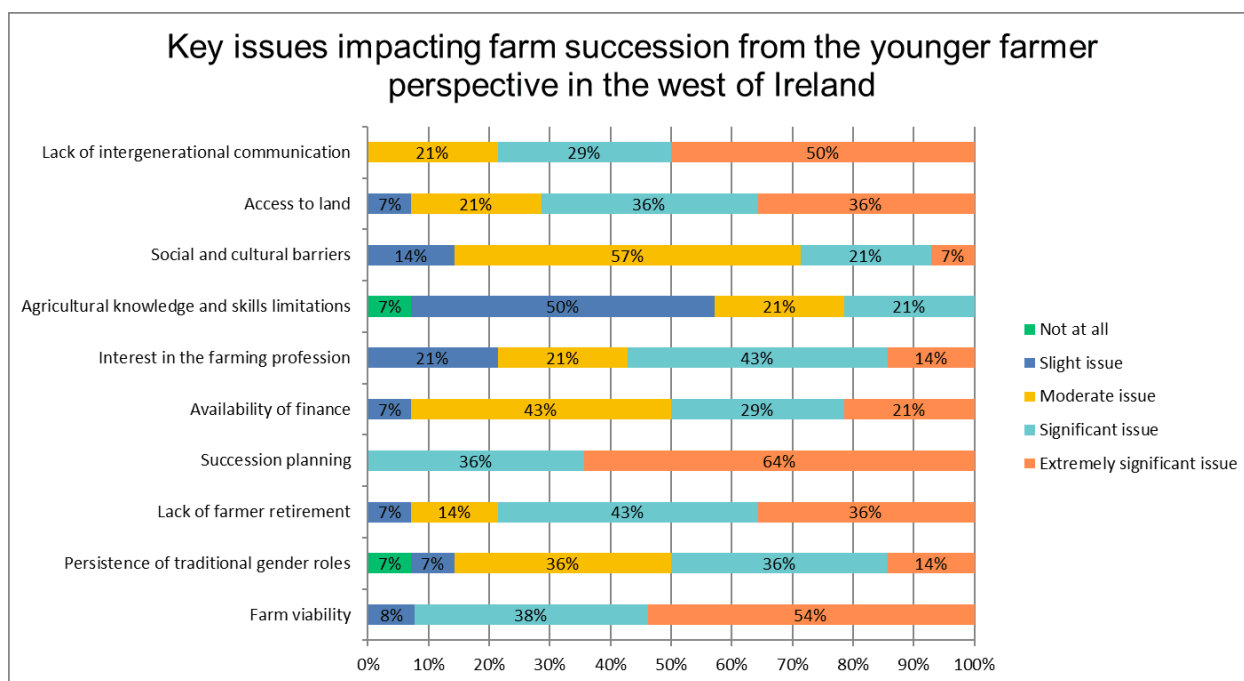
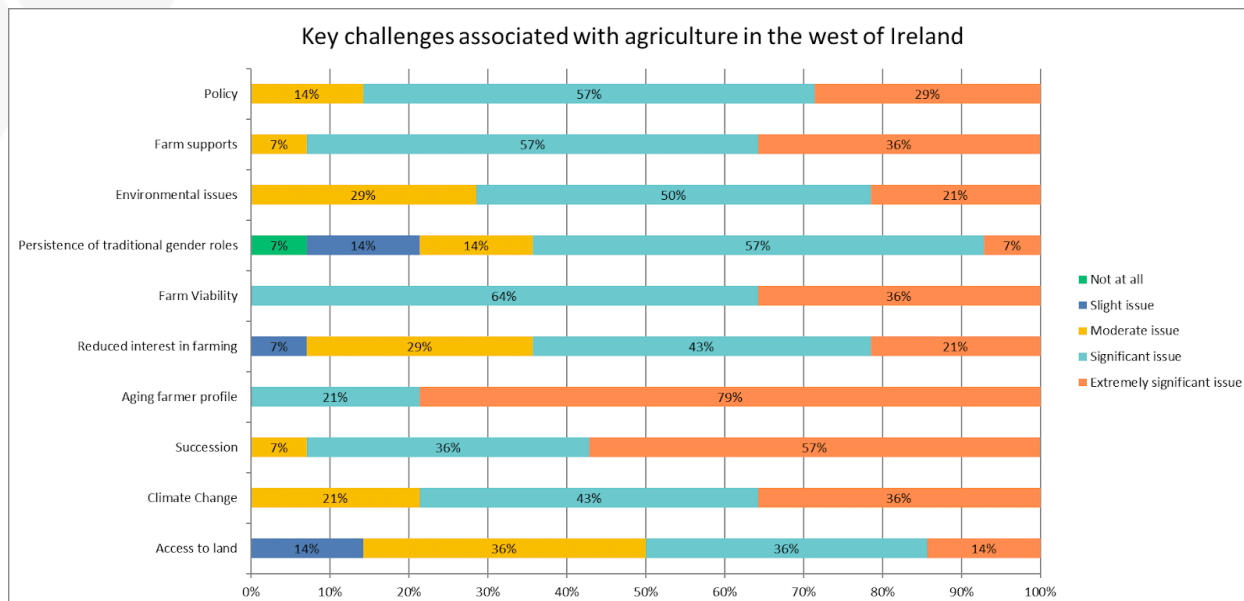
Can a practice like ELINA activate regeneration in?



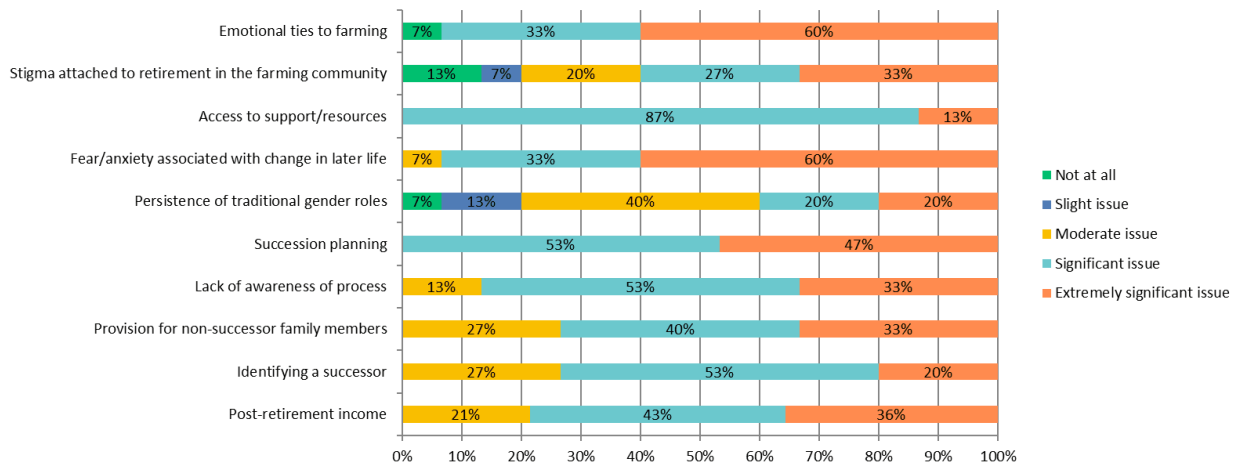
- **Improve the image of farming and rural lifestyle**
 - Unknown or even negative for many urban people
 - The development projects could be used to improve the communication with the surrounding society
 - e.g. the significance of the agriculture and efforts made for environmental issues
 - Take fresh thoughts from the outsiders
- **The network and stakeholders near farmers must cooperate to reach and encourage potential successors**
 - Keep that in mind when meeting farmers and their potential successors
- **[The society and the food system should give better economic incentives for farming → could be easier to have more successors]**

9

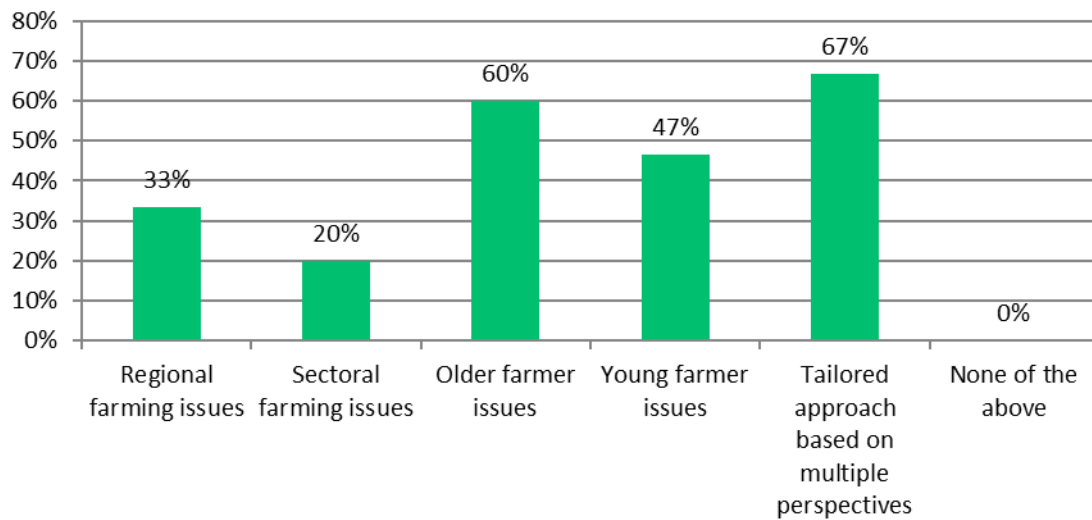
Report SC5 appendix 2: Pre-workshop survey results



Key issues impacting farm succession from the older farmer perspective in the west of Ireland



Succession supports would benefit from a tailored approach based on:



Report SC5 appendix 3: An age-friendly farming environment

Creating an Age-Friendly Environment in Farming through the Establishment of a National Social Organisation for Older Farmers in Ireland

Dr Shane Conway, Postdoctoral Researcher, Rural Studies Centre, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

Generational renewal in agriculture policy's preoccupation with developing strategies and interventions encouraging older farmers to 'step aside' and retire to facilitate young farmers wanting to establish a career in farming appears at complete odds with the basic principles of the World Health Organization's age-friendly environments concept, centred around the formation of policies, services, and structures which 'support and enable people to age actively' (WHO, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, existing research and literature on this concept is predominantly focused on a model of urban aging, thereby failing to reflect the diversity of rural areas, particularly the farming community. With over one third of farmers in Ireland aged 65 and over, policy makers must now reconsider their excessive preoccupation with financial incentives encouraging older farmers to step aside from farming, and instead place a greater emphasis on delivering strategies aimed at protecting their quality of life.

A new study by Dr Shane Conway in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Centre at NUI Galway is exploring the potential of creating an age-friendly environment in the farming sector through the establishment of a social organisation for the older generation of the farming community in Ireland, designed to fit their specific needs, interests, equivalent to that of younger people in rural Ireland, i.e. Macra na Feirme. This initiative will have a particular focus on the health and well-being benefits of social group membership in later life, in line with the World Health Organization's age-friendly environments concept. As extensive research on the social and emotional issues affecting older Irish farmers by Conway et al. (2016; 2017; 2018; 2021) has identified their deep-rooted desire to continue farming, such an organisation has the potential to help farmers develop a pattern of farming activities suited to advancing age, thus providing them with a sense of purpose and legitimate social connectedness within the farming community in later life. Such an investigation is particularly timely in the current COVID-19 pandemic as rural communities prepare to adapt, rebuild, redevelop, and reenergize as part of their recovery plans. Social isolation measures brought into effect in an effort to curb the spread of the virus have further highlighted the importance of ensuring social inclusion for the elderly population of society (OECD, 2020), including older farmers, to help avoid social isolation and loneliness in later life. The extent to which older farmers themselves can be involved in the co-production of age-friendly policies and practices at farm level, which are responsive to their

aspirations and requirements will also be explored to illustrate how policy, and indeed society more generally, can respond positively to the aging farming population.

The potential of collaborating with Ireland's livestock mart sector, consisting of over 60 co-operative mart centres across the country to roll out such an organisation nationally will also be investigated. Livestock marts provide a vital social facility for the farming community, some of whom have no other social outlet. Their existing positionality and reputation as a 'hive' of activity within the heart of rural communities, provides marts with a ready-made platform to diversify their services and become social hubs for the older generation of the farming community in their catchment area.

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Appendix 21: Field activities and workshop participants

Location and date of the confrontations from rural Newcomers practices

Confrontation Code	Workshop type	Location	Date	# of participants
NC1- NL	Brainstorming 1	Online	18.11.2021	4
NC1- NL	Brainstorming 2	Online	18.11.2021	4
NC1- NL	Brainstorming 3	Online	18.11.2021	4
NC1- NL	Focus group	Online	18.11.2021	12
NC2- FL	Brainstorming 1	Vesanto (FL)	9.11.2021	6
NC2- FL	Brainstorming 2	Vesanto (FL)	9.11.2021	8
NC2- FL	Brainstorming 3	Vesanto (FL)	13.11.2021	9
NC2- FL	Focus group	Online	11.1.2022	4
NC3- PL	Brainstorming 1	Leszczyna (PL)	21.10.2021	4
NC3- PL	Brainstorming 2	Leszczyna (PL)	21.10.2021	4
NC3- PL	Brainstorming 3	Leszczyna (PL)	21.10.2021	4
NC3- PL	Focus group	Leszczyna (PL)	21.10.2021	12
NC4- IT	Brainstorming 1	Malito (IT)	24.11.2021	7
NC4- IT	Brainstorming 2	Malito (IT)	24.11.2021	7
NC4- IT	Brainstorming 3	Malito (IT)	24.11.2021	8
NC4- IT	Focus group	Malito (IT)	15.12.2021	10
NC5- PL	Brainstorming 1	Nowina (PL)	3.11.2021	5
NC5- PL	Brainstorming 2	Nowina (PL)	3.11.2021	5
NC5- PL	Brainstorming 3	Nowina (PL)	3.11.2021	4
NC5- PL	Focus group	Nowina (PL)	3.11.2021	14
NC6- HU	Brainstorming 1	Csákvár (HU)	3.11.2021	6
NC6- HU	Brainstorming 2	Csákvár (HU)	3.11.2021	6
NC6- HU	Brainstorming 3	Csákvár (HU)	3.11.2021	6
NC6- HU	Focus group	Csákvár (HU)	29.11.2021	8
NC7- DE	Brainstorming 1	Online	16.11.2021	6
NC7- DE	Brainstorming 2	Online	16.11.2021	7
NC7- DE	Brainstorming 3	Online	16.11.2021	3
NC7- DE	Focus group	Online	16.11.2021	24

Location and date of the confrontations from New Entrants into farming practices

Confrontation Code	Workshop type	Location	Date	# of participants
NE1- RU	Brainstorming 1	Alunisu village (RU)	25.11.2021	19
NE1- RU	Brainstorming 2	Alunisu village (RU)	25.11.2021	19
NE1- RU	Brainstorming 3	Alunisu village (RU)	25.11.2021	19
NE1- RU	Focus group	Alunisu village (RU)	25.11.2021	19
NE2- UK	Brainstorming 1	Online	4.11.2021	3
NE2- UK	Brainstorming 2	Online	4.11.2021	2
NE2- UK	Brainstorming 3	Online	4.11.2021	3
NE2- UK	Brainstorming 4	Online	4.11.2021	3
NE2- UK	Focus Group	Online	4.11.2021	12
NE3- ES	Brainstorming 1	Online	24.11.2021	5
NE3- ES	Brainstorming 2	Online	24.11.2021	5
NE3- ES	Brainstorming 3	Online	24.11.2021	6
NE3- ES	Focus group	Online	24.11.2021	16
NE4- FR	Brainstorming 1	Online	25.11.2021	6
NE4- FR	Brainstorming 2	Online	25.11.2021	6
NE4- FR	Brainstorming 3	Online	25.11.2021	6
NE4- FR	Focus group	Online	25.11.2021	10
NE5- BE	Brainstorming 1	Online	18.10.2021	4
NE5- BE	Brainstorming 2	Online	18.10.2021	4
NE5- BE	Brainstorming 3	Online	18.10.2021	4
NE5- BE	Focus group	Online	18.10.2021	12
NE6- FR	Brainstorming 1	Larzac (FR)	4.11.2021	8
NE6- FR	Brainstorming 2	Larzac (FR)	4.11.2021	9
NE6- FR	Brainstorming 3	Larzac (FR)	4.11.2021	9
NE6- FR	Focus group	Larzac (FR)	4.11.2021	20
NE7- FI	Brainstorming 1	Saarijärvi (FL)	4.11.2021	6
NE7- FI	Brainstorming 2	Saarijärvi (FL)	4.11.2021	6
NE7- FI	Brainstorming 3	Saarijärvi (FL)	4.11.2021	6
NE7- FI	Focus group	Saarijärvi (FL)	4.11.2021	18
NE8- FR	Brainstorming 1	Online	10.11.2021	5
NE8- FR	Brainstorming 2	Online	10.11.2021	6
NE8- FR	Brainstorming 3	Online	10.11.2021	5
NE8- FR	Focus group	Online	10.11.2021	14

Location and date of the confrontations from Successors' practices

Confrontation Code	Workshop type	Location	Date	# of participants
SC1- ES	Brainstorming 1	Online	15.12.2021	5
SC1- ES	Brainstorming 2	Online	15.12.2021	5
SC1- ES	Brainstorming 3	Online	15.12.2021	6
SC1- ES	Focus group	Online	15.12.2021	19
SC2- DE	Brainstorming 1	Online	13.10.2021	7
SC2- DE	Brainstorming 2	Online	13.10.2021	7
SC2- DE	Brainstorming 3	Online	13.10.2021	7
SC2- DE	Focus group	Online	13.10.2021	7
SC3- RU	Brainstorming 1	Online	28.11.2021	12
SC3- RU	Brainstorming 2	Online	28.11.2021	12
SC3- RU	Brainstorming 3	Online	28.11.2021	12
SC3- RU	Focus group	Online	28.11.2021	12
SC4- DE	Brainstorming 1	Online	2.11.2021	6
SC4- DE	Brainstorming 2	Online	2.11.2021	6
SC4- DE	Brainstorming 3	Online	2.11.2021	6
SC4- DE	Focus group	Online	2.11.2021	6
SC5- IE	Brainstorming 1	Online	26.10.2021	6
SC5- IE	Brainstorming 2	Online	26.10.2021	5
SC5- IE	Brainstorming 3	Online	26.10.2021	6
SC5- IE	Focus group	Online	26.10.2021	17

Participants overview tables

Workshop type	Brainstorming 1	Brainstorming 2	Brainstorming 3	Brainstorming 4	Focus group	Grand Total
Confrontation Code	# of participants (Sum)					
NC1- NL	4	4	4		12	24
NC2- FL	6	8	9		4	27
NC3- PL	4	4	4		12	24
NC4- IT	7	7	8		10	32
NC5- PL	5	5	4		14	28
NC6- HU	6	6	6		8	26
NC7- DE	6	7	3		24	40
NE1- RU	19	19	19		19	76
NE2- UK	3	2	3	3	12	23
NE3- ES	5	5	6		16	32
NE4- FR	6	6	6		10	28
NE5- BE	4	4	4		12	24
NE6- FR	8	9	9		20	46
NE7- FI	6	6	6		18	36
NE8- FR	5	6	5		14	30
SC1- ES	5	5	6		19	35
SC2- DE	7	7	7		7	28
SC3- RU	12	12	12		12	48
SC4- DE	6	6	6		6	24
SC5- IE	6	5	6		17	34
Grand Total	130	133	133	3	266	665

Table 7 Number of participants per workshop type (per confrontation)

Category	Professional organisation
Role	Total (Sum)
Agroecological organisation representative	4
Association	3
Bank officer	2
Development and advisory organisations	6
Educational organisations	3
Environmental organisation representative	1
Expert on collaborations and cooperatives from the 'Innovatiesteunpunt'	1
Finance sector	1
Head of development in a broadband and digital company, remote worker	1
Head of marketing in a digital company, remote worker	1
Head of regional youth project dealing with rural professions	1
Local employers' or farmers organizations	2
NGO representative	37
Private network	14
Professional organisations	2
Project manager in regional remote work development project	1
Project worker in a rural community development project	2
Rural 3 development or civil society organisation	10
Rural development expert	2
Rural development organisation	11
Rural organisations/networks/LEADER groups	5
Social/cultural organisation representative	1
Grand Total	111

Table 8: Type of professional organisations engaged at the confrontations (overall)

Female stakeholders

Category	Community	Educators	Entrepreneur	Farmer/ landworker	Media	Professional organisation	Public & civil servant	Researcher	Grand Total
Confrontation Code	Female (Sum)								
NC1- NL	0		0			0	3	1	4
NC2- FI	1		1			6	4	2	14
NC3- PL	2		3	0		4	1		10
NC4- IT	1		0			0	11		12
NC5- PL	4		1	0		1	1		7
NC6- HU	5			1		4			10
NC7- DE				4		9	3	1	17
NE1- RU	3			5		2	0	0	10
NE2- UK	1		0	3				2	6
NE3- ES						1	4	0	5
NE4- FR	0			2		6	1	4	13
NE5- BE				7		1			8
NE6- FR				5	1	6	3	0	15
NE7- FI		5		0		3	2	0	10
NE8- FR				0		7		2	9
SC1- ES	0	0	1	1		2	1		5
SC2- DE				2		0	3		5
SC3- RU	1			3		2			6
SC4- DE		1		0			0		1
SC5- IE				2		6	2		10
Grand Total	18	6	6	35	1	60	39	12	177

Male stakeholders

Category	Community	Educators	Entrepreneur	Farmer/ landworker	Media	Professional organisation	Public & civil servant	Researcher	Grand Total
Confrontation Code	Male (Sum)								
NC1- NL	4		1			2	1	0	8
NC2- FI	4		0			2	1	0	7
NC3- PL	1		1	0		0	0		2
NC4- IT	4		6			3	7		20
NC5- PL	3		3	2		0	0		8
NC6- HU	3			1		4			8
NC7- DE				2		5	0	0	7
NE1- RU	2			3		2	1	1	9
NE2- UK	1		1	2				1	5
NE3- ES						5	5	1	11
NE4- FR	1			3		6	1	4	15
NE5- BE				4		0			4
NE6- FR				4	0	5	0	2	11
NE7- FI		2		1		1	2	2	8
NE8- FR				1		3		3	7
SC1- ES	1	2	0	1		3	4		11
SC2- DE				0		2	0		2
SC3- RU	1			2		3			6
SC4- DE		2		3			0		5
SC5- IE				2		5	0		7
Grand Total	25	6	12	31	0	51	22	14	161

Table 9 Workshop participation by gender and role (per confrontation)

Appendix 22 Access to land related content

Critical factors:

- Willing and open farm transferors. Testimonies harvested in the focus group emphasised the facilitating attitudes retiring farmers can adopt when transferring land to a group. These include: being open to a different type of agriculture being practised on their land; being amenable to sharing networks, contacts, and knowledge with the successors; and, most importantly, showing willingness to leave the farm and let the group synergies develop on their own after an initial period of mentoring. (France)
- The farm/land should be suitable for restructuring and diversification. Collectives can take over larger farms, provided these are compatible with a diversification of activities (e.g. from a family practising cereal monoculture to a group of people implementing polyculture and animal raising). Beyond diversification, this often means the farm infrastructure themselves have to be adapted. Such “restructuring” can entail creating new buildings or repurposing old ones, changing the location of some activities on the farm, creating hedges, fences, irrigation systems, etc. (France)
- The ability to organise collective financing of the land is also critical. Collectives can be appealing to new entrants because they allow pooling together money to invest in the land. However, proper juridical schemes to share investment and risks are critical. The ability to appeal to external financing also is key, whether through classical bank circuits (which entails finding financiers open to group agriculture projects) or solidarity investment schemes. (France)
- The availability of land for small farms, with specific needs and practices that differ from those of cereal farmers (France)

Barriers:

- High price of agricultural land (All)
- Dominance of industrial farming (All)
- Difficulty in accessing land due to scarcity, high-price and unwillingness of landowners to lease for long-term (Belgium)
- Expensive and difficult to access, sometimes driven by demand for second/holiday homes (England).
- Securing land for a suitable length of time for long-term agroecological techniques such as agroforestry, or achieving the desired biodiversity outcomes were suggested as making access to land even more challenging.(England)
- Competition on access to plots to capture subsidies connected to land surface (France)
- Banks are not open to finance atypical agricultural projects and solidarity investment solutions remain rare (France)

- Difficulty linked to the lack of data on who owns the land and where land opportunities suitable for collectives may be found (France)
- Hard to start farming activities in the region because there is no available land for sale, specially small or medium-sized farms (Hungary)
- Conservative mentality on using or renting land due the fear of permanently losing possession or ownership. This mentality is certainly more tempered in the new generations. (Italy)
- Landowners' fear of losing their land through usucaption (Italy)
- Access to affordable on/near farm accommodation is a barrier for new entrants.(Ireland)
- Land is difficult to buy, regulations as to required conditions for being able to purchase farmland often unclear (Poland)
- Land concentration and land grabbing. Land market prone to speculation. (Romania)
- Investors either use abusive practices or legal loopholes, thus creating a lack of transparency, eroding the integrity of local authorities and limiting access to land for agroecology and small-scale farming in general.(Romania)
- Lack of planning, over-protection of land and the lack of water so characteristic of the Canary Islands become obstacles for people who want to move to the countryside or who must decide whether to stay. Regarding more administrative issues, there are also bureaucratic problems when it comes to knowing who has access to water and who needs it. In addition, a lack of funding is also identified along these lines. (Spain)
- Fragmented and abandoned land; bureaucratic issues around land use. Difficulty (especially for young people) in gaining access to properties with access to water (Spain)
- High quality land is seldom available for agroecological projects. Moreover, the increase of a number of big companies investing in the acquisition of large land extensions is leading to land concentration (Spain)

Measures:

- Appropriate land lease duration (Belgium).
- Bring new entrants in contact with older farmers looking to transfer and/or explore new business options (Belgium)
- Gain access to more council land (England)
- Engaging with existing landowners interested in making some land available for community farming initiatives.(England)
- Create environmental and agricultural policy and subsidy frameworks which support and prioritise community farms at scale as opposed to industrial agriculture (England)
- Pooling money from various individuals and/or taking over larger farms collectives can more easily address the challenge of access to land (France)
- New land solutions: land financing, progressive land transfer (France)
- Municipality could have a role of guarantor for the rental of land for organic cultivation, social and educational farming (Italy)

- Creating an “Associazione Fondiaria”. This is an association between owners of public or private land with the aim of grouping agricultural areas and forestry, abandoned or uncultivated, to allow an economically sustainable and productive use of them (Italy)
- Local, regional and national authorities should improve access to land for newcomers, especially those who need land for the activities (and food production has been shown to be an important aspect of artisanal production with significant potential). Other types of infrastructures that support access to less tangible issues related to land (knowledge, networks, etc.) should complement access to physical land itself. (Poland)
- Creating transparency via property registry to facilitate access to land and housing (Romania)
- Farmland abandonment may indeed turn out to be an opportunity to access land easily, while in other cases the lack of land management can be seen as a deterrent because it increases the costs of setting up a productive project (Spain)
- Pilot project to recover land in forest areas : Regarding the problem of access to land in the Canary Islands, it is necessary to facilitate the leasing of land. Despite this, it is a major problem in the islands, as they have a large part of the protected landscape. The Directorate General for Agriculture of the Canary Islands Government argues that a tractor project will be launched to recover farms in forest areas. (Spain)
- Pilot projects for abandoned land recovery (Spain)

Appendix 23 Organizations promoting rural development

ADEAR (Association for the Development of Agricultural and Rural Employment)- (France)
 ASAGA-ASAJA Association of farmers and stock breeders in the Canary Islands- (Spain)
 CSA Network - (England)
 Ecological Land Cooperative- (England)
 Farmstart Network - (England)
 Grow Remote- (Ireland)
 Kehitysyhtiö SavoGrow (<https://www.savogrow.fi>)- (Finland)
 Landworkers' Alliance - (England)
 Landgilde <https://landgilde.nl> -(Netherlands)
 LEADER (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_de) - EU
 One Planet Council, Wales (England)
 Ponent Coopera (Spain)
 SAI- Reception and Integration System (<https://www.retesai.it/english/>) (Italy)
 Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment
 (<https://okm.fi/en/service-centre-for-continuous-learning-and-employment>)- (Finland)
 Rutes Compartides (RutesCompartides.cat)- (Spain)
 Obradors Compartits (www.obradorscompartits.cat)- (Spain)
 VIVEA Fund for the training of professionals in the agriculture sector
<https://vivea.fr/accueil/vivea-fonds-assurance-formation-agriculture/> - (France)