



RURALIZATION

RURALIZATION

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

DRAFT

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

## D6.5 – Report on novel land practices

Version 1.0

RURALIZATION GRANT AGREEMENT No 817642



"The project RURALIZATION has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 817642."

## Version history

Ver.	Date	Comments/Changes	Author/Reviewer
0.1	11-10-2021	First working draft	TdL/Consortium
0.2	26-10-2021	First full draft with revisions based on Consortium and S.A.B. feedback	TdL/Consortium
1	29-10-2021	Final version validated by Consortium	TdL/Consortium

<b>Project Acronym</b>	RURALIZATION
<b>Project Title</b>	The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms
<b>Project Number</b>	817642
<b>Instrument</b>	Research and Innovation Action (RIA)
<b>Topic</b>	RUR-01-2018-2019 Building modern rural policies on long-term visions and societal engagement
<b>Project Start Date</b>	01/05/2019
<b>Project Duration</b>	48 months
<b>Work Package</b>	WP6 Access to Land
<b>Task</b>	T6.4 Analysis and developments based on current and novel innovative practices
<b>Deliverable</b>	D6.5 Report on novel practices
<b>Due Date</b>	31/10/2021
<b>Submission Date</b>	29/10/2021
<b>Dissemination Level</b> <sup>1</sup>	PU
<b>Deliverable Responsible</b>	Terre de Liens (TdL)
<b>Version</b>	1.0
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>Author(s)</b>	William Loveluck, Alice Martin-Prével, Véronique Rioufol, TdL
<b>Contributor(s)</b>	Annelies Beyens, Landg, Kim Graham, Kate Swade, SA, Clara Blasco Moreno, XCN, Attila Szocs, EcoRuralis, Titus Bahner, Thomas Kliemt-Rippel, Kulturland, Tanguy Martin, TdL Pays de la Loire, Oriane Guillou, TdL Bourgogne Franche-Comté, Salma Loudiyi, Magali Blot, TdL Auvergne, Marie Houdart, Îlots Paysans
<b>Reviewer(s)</b>	RURALIZATION S.A.B. and Consortium members

<sup>1</sup> PU= Public, CO=Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services), CL=Classified, as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC

### ***Acknowledgements***

The RURALIZATION partners who developed the action research projects described in this report would like to express their deepest appreciation to all the stakeholders who participated in their field work: farmers, volunteers, associations, local authorities and all other stakeholders.

Shared Assets particularly thanks Chris Williams (NEF) and Graeme Willis (CPRE) without whom their action would not have been possible.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to all who have provided precious advice and inputs concerning the methodological approach elaborated for this work: Nicole Chambron (CNRS), Jean Marc Chabosseau (TdL Poitou-Charentes), Robert Skrzypczyński (UWr), Mauro Conti (UNICAL), Aisling Murtagh and Shane Conway (NUIG).

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

## Table of Contents

Version history .....	2
List of Figures .....	6
List of Tables.....	7
Acronyms and abbreviations.....	8
Executive Summary .....	9
1 Introduction.....	12
2 Methodology .....	17
2.1 Approach and general organisation of the task.....	17
2.2 Central concepts and frameworks mobilised .....	19
2.2.1 Social innovations’ trajectory .....	20
2.2.2 Capital frameworks .....	21
2.2.3 Access to land pathways and other key findings of the D6.1 report.....	22
2.2.4 Sociograms and strategic analysis .....	23
3 Exploring emerging innovative practices: objectives and results .....	25
3.1 Land Stewardship.....	25
3.1.1 Context and issues related to the actions on land stewardship.....	25
3.1.2 Description of the actions.....	26
3.1.3 Results and outputs .....	28
ii. Policy proposals regarding hay meadows long term preservation .....	29
3.2 Commons and public farmland.....	34
3.2.1 Context and issues related to the actions on commons and public farmland ...	34
3.2.2 Description of the actions.....	35
3.2.3 Results and outputs .....	36
3.3 Farm restructuring .....	41
3.3.1 Context and issues related to the actions on farm restructuring.....	41
3.3.2 Description of the actions.....	43
3.3.3 Results and outputs .....	45
3.4 New models to fundraise for land .....	50
3.4.1 Context and issues related to the actions on new models to fundraise for land	50
3.4.2 Description of the actions.....	51
3.4.3 Results and outputs .....	52

3.5	Farm succession .....	57
3.5.1	Context and issues related to the actions on farm succession .....	57
3.5.2	Description of the actions .....	57
	* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out. ....	59
3.5.3	Results and outputs .....	59
4	Cross-cutting analysis of innovative actions on emerging land issues.....	65
4.1	Innovation lies in the way the issues are framed .....	67
4.1.1	Reframing the issue .....	67
4.1.2	Bringing these issues to the forefront of the agenda .....	69
4.2	Innovations implemented in an adverse context .....	70
4.2.1	Involving local communities .....	72
4.2.2	Determining stakeholders' strategies to drive an issue forward .....	73
4.3	Building legitimacy to "attract" different community capitals.....	78
4.3.1	Building legitimacy to cope with emerging land issues .....	78
4.3.2	Mobilising other types of capitals.....	80
4.4	Innovations change the way land is considered .....	81
4.4.1	Addressing dominant land trends.....	82
4.4.2	Adapting strategies to achieve more impact.....	88
5	Consolidation of methodologies and tools on innovative land work .....	91
5.1	How can documenting ongoing actions help innovation processes?.....	91
5.1.1	The benefits of methodical documentation of actions .....	91
5.1.2	Focus on the implementation and the use of the "Chronique" method .....	92
5.2	Using sociograms to better understand the social context where we are acting .....	95
5.3	How can land organisations improve methodologies and collective work on common issues .....	96
6	Policy recommendations .....	100
6.1	Thematic recommendations, linked to specific land issues .....	100
6.2	General recommendations on emerging land issues .....	101
6.3	Recommendations inferred from methodological conclusions .....	105
7	Conclusion .....	106
8	References .....	109
9	Annexes .....	114

## List of Figures

Figure 1 - Social innovation's process (source: Thou and Vincent, 2021).....	20
Figure 2 - Social innovation process and D6.5 report methodological framework.....	21
Figure 3 - One representation of the access to land pathway.....	23
Figure 4 - Conceptual framework used to classify the different mechanisms identified.....	28
Figure 5 - Seven co-existing rationales for biodiversity preservation on TDL farms.....	30
Figure 6 - the three pathways to assess biodiversity on TDL farms.....	32
Figure 7 - Shared Assets' power mapping diagram.....	36
Figure 8 - Governance and work organisation at the <i>Ferme de Sarliève</i> .....	45
Figure 9 - Sociogram on land issues regarding the <i>Ferme de Sarliève</i> .....	47
Figure 10 - Sociogram of a "generalised" retirement savings model.....	56
Figure 11 - Conditions of emergence of capacities for action.....	66
Figure 12 - Process allowing to bring an issue to the forefront of the agenda.....	70
Figure 13 - Sociogram on hay meadows' conservation in Albera.....	75
Figure 14 - Sociogram of land stewardship on the Maubusson farm.....	77
Figure 15 - mobilising different kinds of community capital at different stages of the innovation process.....	81
Figure 16 - Visual synthesis of the "Chronique" approach.....	93

## List of Tables

Table 1 - Issues tackled and actions led by A2L organisations.....	15
Table 2 - The different types of community capitals and their core aspects in Murtagh <i>et al.</i> 2020b.....	22
Table 3 - Analysis grid for stakeholder strategies .....	24
Table 4 - tasks included in the work plan of XCN and Terre de Liens .....	27
Table 5 - tasks included in the work plan of SA and ER .....	35
Table 6 - Overview of the three main types of common pasture use in Romania (based on Mantescu 2009).....	39
Table 7 – Situation of Kulturland’s farms concerning changes in building ownership .....	43
Table 8 - tasks included in the work plan of TDL and Kulturland.....	44
Table 9 - tasks included in the work plan of Kulturland and Eco Ruralis .....	52
Table 10 - tasks included in the work plan of DLg and XCN .....	58
Table 11 - Succession issues in Flanders and Catalonia (Vall del Corb) .....	62
Table 12 - What makes the action innovative and what is the specificity of the way the issue is framed? .....	68
Table 13 – Contextual and social aspects of adversity for each issue .....	72
Table 14 - Summary of results: how innovative land actions transform dominant land trends .....	83
Table 15 - opportunities and levers connected to the thematic issues (A) .....	100
Table 16 - opportunities and levers connected to the thematic issues (B) .....	101

## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>A2L</b>	Access to land
<b>ALPA</b>	Acces la Pământ pentru Agroecologie
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>CPRE</b>	Campaign to Protect Rural England
<b>DLg</b>	De Landgenoten
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EIP-AGRI</b>	The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability
<b>ER</b>	Eco Ruralis
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FdS</b>	Ferme de Sarliève (Farm of Sarliève)
<b>TFP</b>	Territorial Food Plan
<b>Ha</b>	Hectare
<b>IAEDEN</b>	Institució Alt Empordanesa per a la Defensa i Estudi de la Natura (Alt Empordà Institution for the Defense and Study of Nature)
<b>IP</b>	Îlots Paysans (a French farm incubator in the Auvergne Region)
<b>KG</b>	Kommanditgesellschaft
<b>KL</b>	Kulturland
<b>Kulturland eG</b>	Kulturland eingetragene Genossenschaft (eingetragene Genossenschaft = registered cooperative)
<b>LPO</b>	Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (French member of Birdlife)
<b>NEF</b>	New Economics Foundation
<b>SA</b>	Shared Assets
<b>SAFER</b>	Société d'aménagement foncier et d'établissement rural (Organism for rural land design and rural settlement)
<b>SCIC</b>	Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif (Cooperative company of collective interest)
<b>TDL</b>	Terre de Liens
<b>TDL PDL</b>	Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire
<b>UAA</b>	Utilised agricultural area
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>WG</b>	Working groups
<b>WP</b>	Work package
<b>XCN</b>	Xarxa per a la Conservació de la Natura

## Executive Summary

This report examines ten innovative approaches to securing land for agroecology in Europe, led by six organisations associated with the Access to Land Network:

- De Landgenoten (DLg), Belgium
- Kulturland (KL), Germany
- Terre de Liens (TDL), France
- Eco Ruralis (ER), Romania
- Shared Assets (SA), UK
- Xarxa per a la Conservació de la Natura (XCN), Spain

These organisations undertook ten “actions”, grouped together in pairs around 5 main issues: land stewardship, commons and public farmland, farm restructuring, new models to fundraise for land, and farm succession.

These actions covered a wide range of topics, from the conservation of hay meadows, to creating new visions for public farmland; from exploring new ways to own farm buildings, to creating solidarity-based land access structures. This report highlights both what is specific about these practices, which tackle emerging issues in their specific contexts, and what is common to all these processes of innovation on land issues, guided by social and environmental concerns.

The report has seven sections:

The **introduction** describes the aims of the report, and introduces each of the organisations and their projects in more detail.

**Section 2** covers the methodologies used, in particular the fact that a common analytical framework was developed to enable comparison, while the uniqueness of each of the actions was recognised with a lot of flexibility over delivery. The common analytical framework was based on the fact that all of the actions involved social innovation on issues related to access to land, and necessitated interactions with multiple stakeholders. A key concept of the shared framework was the “access to land pathway”, a typology developed in the previous RURALIZATION report on land innovations (D6.1) to categorise the actions used by these innovations while highlighting their interconnected nature.

All actions followed the same methodological approach consisting of developing a workplan and activity log; a context analysis; a sociogram to describe social interactions among stakeholders (optional); and a final report that synthesised the main outputs and lessons learned during the process. Additionally, each pair of organisations working jointly on a topic deepened together their understanding of common issues through bilateral meetings, shared literature reviews, joint methodologies or events, which informed the analysis of their actions.

**Section 3** summarises each of the actions and the innovative practices they explored, as well as the key findings. In summary, these are:

### *Land Stewardship*

The first approach, carried out by XCN in Spain and TDL in France, focused on analysing the possibilities of improving land stewardship in the hay meadows of Catalonia and on farms owned by TDL across France.

### *Commons and public farmland*

The second approach, carried out by Shared Assets in the United Kingdom and Eco Ruralis in Romania, looked at the role of public and common lands in two regions: England for the former and north-central Transylvania for the latter. Local authorities play a crucial role in ensuring these lands are used for to benefit local communities and new entrants, as owners of public land in the UK or as they often administer common pastures in Romania.

### *Farm Restructuring*

The third approach, carried out by Kulturland in Germany and TDL in France, focused on analysing the possibilities of restructuring existing farms, including diversifying a large peri-urban cereal farm in France and looking specifically at the ownership of farm buildings on farms across Germany.

### *New models for fundraising for land*

The fourth approach concerned the implementation of new models to fundraise for land: the creation of a community-based land ownership structure in Romania, by members of Eco Ruralis, in a country where such model does not exist, and the double challenge for Kulturland to find a way to use retirement savings as a support for land purchase while ensuring retiring farmers can be compensated for their investment in the land through adequate pensions.

### *Farm succession*

The last approach focused on the topic of farm succession. Two actions were developed by De Landgenoten and XCN in Flanders and Catalonia respectively. Both actions took place in areas where access to land is challenging and looked at ways to support succession outside of the family.

**Section 4** is a cross cutting analysis of these innovative actions. It recognises that each action is trying to shift the dominant paradigm in some way, and to understand, and act on, the root causes behind the problems they are trying to address. However, given that the actors are often organisations with limited resources and low levels of power, this can be challenging.

The cross-cutting analysis develops the following key messages:

*4.1 Innovations lie in the way issues are framed*, noting that the act of reframing can be an innovation in itself, by changing the perceptions of different stakeholders on issues addressed.

*4.2 Innovations are implemented in an adverse context*. The organisations involved in the actions are all proponents of agroecology and reforms in land governance. This is not yet a mainstream view and as such they often have less formal power than more dominant voices in the system. Many of the actions took a very strategic view of the system to navigate these issues, and also relied on the support and action of local communities to help rebalance their power.

*4.3 Innovations need to build legitimacy to “attract” different capitals*. Organisations leading the actions took different approaches to building their legitimacy, which they then used to further their actions. Legitimacy can be built in multiple ways, including developing expertise and knowledge, convening relevant parties, created new partnerships and working with go-between actors who had legitimacy in different areas. This legitimacy is necessary to mobilise the social, political, financial, human and natural capital that the organisations are seeking to progress their actions.

*4.4 Innovations change the way land is considered*. While these innovations often address directly the need for generational renewal in dominant land system that is market and

financed based, they also have broader effects or potential impacts, which contribute to rural regeneration. This is a multi-dimensional task. Actions produce results that challenge dominant trends around land prices, environmental degradation, the perception of land as purely a financial asset, and the general decline in rural land-based economies. Concrete results are assessed and reflected upon in a “learning process”, where organisations seek strategies to achieve more impact.

**Section 5** then goes on to consolidate and reflect on the methodologies used. The act of reflecting on actions as they were being delivered, through maintaining the work plan and activity log, combined with the collective opportunities to discuss actions, allowed organisations to “take a step back” and see their own work in a new light. The use of sociograms proved to be more relevant in some cases than others; being particularly useful where there were differing stakeholders or some conflict that needed to be better understood. This section concludes with some thoughts on how land organisations can improve their methodologies and collective work on common issues for the future.

**Section 6** proposes a number of policy recommendations based on the work outlined in the report. These fall into a number of categories:

*Recommendations linked to specific land issues*, point out current levers to foster and potential levers to develop for each approach.

*General recommendations on emerging land issues* relate to:

- *The specificities of land innovation trajectories*, which require more flexible financing and project frameworks, as their paths are not linear, often take time, and can require major adaptations in an adverse context. Increased support for bridging the local, national and European levels is also recommended, in order to strengthen the sharing of practices that is already part of these organisations' positive working pattern.
- *The specific role local authorities can play in facilitating innovation development*. This includes reorienting public farmland, creating more favourable conditions for innovation deployment, or reinforcing the legitimacy land organisations.
- The importance of addressing the needs of new entrants, through country-based analyses of how access to land issues impact them or support mechanisms and funding to enable progressive entry into farming for example.
- *The need for in-depth policy solutions to change dominant land patterns*. The report points to some shortcomings or inconsistencies in national and European land policies. Small fixes and innovations are not enough to trigger broad generational renewal, an agroecological transition, and rural regeneration. Core reforms are needed in the current Common agricultural policy and other structural frameworks to achieve these goals.

The report **concludes** on how innovations follow logics of inspiration and adaptation rather than logics of direct transfer or top-down replication. To this end, action research methods can prove a powerful ally for instance to formalise strategic assessments of the context. But for innovations to unfold effectively, engagement with public institutions, policymakers, citizens as well as farmers or land users/owners is needed. Such an innovation process takes time and requires adequate support. This can materialise through adapted funding and the building more favourable regulatory environments, but it is also crucial to build more spaces to hear voices and harness expertise and experience of innovations.

# 1 Introduction

After previous analysis of 64 *mature* innovative land practices that contribute to rural regeneration and generational renewal across Europe (RURALIZATION D6.1 report Loveluck *et al.* 2021), the current research proposes to examine how grassroot organisations innovate on *emerging* land issues. As these organisations become more visible, solid, and integrated in land governance in their region or country, they tackle new issues leading to novel practices. These respond either to specific challenges identified as organisations’ social and territorial projects evolve, or to actions that were in their horizons from the start, but have become more urgent or which they can tackle after a few years of consolidating work and increasing legitimacy in the local networks.

This report presents the results and main insights from the work of six organisations who are members or partners of the Access to land (A2L) Network, a European network of grassroots organisations promoting access to farmland for agroecology.<sup>2</sup> In 2020-2021, in the frame of the RURALIZATION project, these organisations developed ten innovative actions tackling emerging land issues in their respective contexts. Their work can be re-situated within the “access to land pathway”, a conceptual framework developed in the RURALIZATION report D6.1 to categorise how organisations tackle complex and interconnected issues related to providing access to land for agroecology (see section 2.2.3 and annex I). The actions developed on this pathway can go from supporting new entrants before they farm or identifying a land opportunity to facilitate concrete setting-up in agriculture to acquiring farms, securing the use of farmland for sustainable agriculture, and helping maintain agroecological land use in the long term. The ten actions conducted as part of RURALIZATION are situated in one or more blocks of the access to land pathway. Since they concern emerging issues and new practices, they are less stabilised compared to the *mature* innovations studied previously. In some cases, these actions consist in revisiting existing forms of intervention, to improve them, adapt them, or make them more sustainable. In other cases, they involve developing entirely new practices, leading organisations to explore new approaches, social spheres, and subjects or partnerships that they did not experiment with until then. In this process, innovators find themselves meandering, experimenting, and sometimes making mistakes before being able to deploy an approach for the identified problem which is perceived as legitimate by a number of actors and which satisfies main stakeholders involved in the process. As we shall see, these processes of innovation, adaptation, or up-scaling, for various reasons, are often long paths, full of obstacles and changes in strategies. Therefore, the methodology developed to document these practices relied on both common frameworks and adaptability for all six organisations. The goal was to allow comparing initiatives—especially for pairs organisations working on common issues—while also grasping the specific features of the contexts in which these organisations operate.

## Presentation of the land organisations and the novel practices developed

De Landgenoten (DLg) is a Flemish organisation working to provide access to agricultural land for organic farmers through a cooperative and a foundation (both created in 2014). The cooperative acquires financial resources through the sales of shares, buys land, and makes it available to farmers through career-long leases. The foundation, on the other hand, can

---

<sup>2</sup> See [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)

receive donations of land or money (also invested in land). DLg works both at the local level, buying and managing land, and at a more societal level, mobilising Flemish citizens to participate to DLg's objectives and influencing policies to create a safe and secure environment for the farmers they support. Since the prices of Flanders' farms are particularly high, in the frame of RURALIZATION, DLg worked notably on the establishment of different financing scenarios to finance land transfers related to farm successions.

Kulturland (KL), in Germany, also aims at preserving farmland on a long-term basis for community-connected ecological farming. For this purpose, KL established a cooperative in 2014, and is actively working on new models of tenure for farmers, combining the use of the cooperative and other legal structures and partners. KL is engaged with more than 20 farms around Germany. Its works also includes analyses of land market regulations on a political level, in particular regarding political and legal framework changes needed to facilitate new tenure models. Concerning the issues addressed in the frame of RURALIZATION, KL worked on two actions to perfect innovative models previously experimented with. On the one hand, they looked at new management systems for agricultural buildings, aiming to limit the responsibility of the KL cooperative in such management. On the other hand, they worked on micro-pension models for retiring farmers in their network, based on land investment used as retirement savings.

Terre de Liens (TDL) was born in 2003 from the convergence of individuals with diverse backgrounds in people's education, organic and biodynamic agriculture, ethical finance, solidarity-based economy and rural development. TDL now involves 19 local branches united in a national Federation and over 30,000 citizens as members, volunteers, shareholders, and donors. Since 2006, TDL has also developed two financial entities to directly support farmers through land acquisition: a solidarity-based investment company (*la Foncière*) which collects citizens' savings through shares and a Foundation recognised by the state as being in the public interest. TDL works for access to land through various channels: supporting farmers on legal, technical, and social aspects to find and access land; acquisition and management of farmland and farm buildings for ecological farming; information and mobilisation activities to promote the involvement of citizens on access to land; advocacy aiming at fostering access to land for ecological farming; collaboration with local authorities, etc. As part of this work on novel practices, TDL's actions tackled on the one hand the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity on the farms it acquired and, on the other hand, a project to restructure a large conventional and monoculture farm into a territorially-embedded agroecological farm hosting multiple activities.

Eco Ruralis (ER) is an association of peasants, organic farmers and gardeners and agricultural activists, advocating for peasants' rights around issues like agrobiodiversity, land, seeds, CAP, and more. ER helps peasants develop their capacity to collectively defend themselves against unfair and unequal situations which can involve corporations or abusive authorities. Regarding land rights, Eco Ruralis has for instance researched and exposed the issue of large-scale land acquisitions, land concentration, and land grabbing in Romania to turn these issues into a national debate. Within RURALIZATION, ER worked on the question of "commons" from two angles: through the analysis of traditional common pasture systems in Romania—highlighting their many beneficial roles for peasant agriculture—; and through the construction of new

modalities of common land acquisition—studying the possibility to create a Romanian acquisition tool similar to those developed by DLg, TDL or KL.

Shared Assets (SA) is British a “think and do tank” which supports the development of new models of managing land that are sustainable and productive, create livelihoods, enhance the environment, and involve local communities. The organisation provides advice, support and training, undertakes research, and advocates for changes in the way land is managed. To this end, SA builds and shares resources to help local communities and local authorities to create better local food systems, or even assists them. The organisation can support the exploration of legal structures and governance models to this aim. Also tackling the topic of “commons”, Shared Assets worked on the use of council farmland in England, proposing a “holistic vision” on how this publicly-held land could be best used to meet multiple local policy goals regarding access to land for new generations, thriving local economies, and the provision of many other community land-based services.

Xarxa per a la conservació de la Natura (XCN) is an umbrella organisation composed of over 160 associations, foundations, city councils, enterprises and persons working for land stewardship. It develops a strategy to enable the participation of multiple stakeholders—land owners and users, organised civil society, citizens or private companies—in better land management and environmental protection. XCN has helped initiate hundreds of land stewardship agreements with landowners, covering over 62,000 hectares of land (i.e. 2% of Catalan territory) and 230,000 ha of maritime area. XCN’s activities are focusing on awareness raising; the development of technical and legal instruments for land stewardship; and support, training and networking for the development of land stewardship. In this RURALIZATION work, XCN explored the issue of farm succession in a territory where local stakeholders perceive it as a potential lever for a sustainable agricultural transition. In a second action, XCN tackled the identification and analysis of different mechanisms that could contribute to the long-term conservation of hay meadows in a resilient and self-sustained manner.

The following table (table 1) synthesises all the actions developed by the six RURALIZATION partners, who were grouped together in pairs around five main issues: **land stewardship, commons and public farmland, farm restructuring, new models to fundraise for land, and farm succession**. This work provided an opportunity to examine in greater depth some issues emerging from the D6.1 report, like the importance of human capital and actors interaction in innovation development. The current report attempts to highlight both what is specific about these practices, connected to the context in which they evolve and to the issues they address, and what is common to all these processes of innovation on land issues guided by social and environmental concerns.

Issue	1 <sup>st</sup> Partner	Main objective	2 <sup>nd</sup> Partner	Main objective
Land stewardship	TDL – Assessing biodiversity on TDL farms	<b>Clarify the objectives underlying the assessment and the monitoring of biodiversity</b> on TDL farms and propose a more satisfying “ <b>Biodiversity Toolbox</b> ” to address concretely these issues on farms.	XCN – Hay meadows conservation	<b>Identify and analyse the effectiveness of different mechanisms</b> that might contribute to the <b>long-term conservation of hay meadows in a resilient and self-sustained manner</b> .
Commons and public land	SA – Council Farmland	<b>Build relationships with influential stakeholders</b> and connect people within the ecosystem around public farmland to <b>co-create a clear vision for the future of public farmland</b> .	ER – Common land	<b>Map out the situation of common land, and identify social, legal and administrative leverages</b> to favour access to this land and <b>engage with local and national stakeholders</b> on this issue.
Farm restructuring	TDL – Large farm reorientation	<b>Develop and document an</b> ongoing project to transform a large conventional farm into an agroecological farm hosting multiple activities and an incubator.	KL – Building’s ownership	<b>Explore innovative organisational, legal and financial building ownership models</b> allowing farmers to have direct financial and management responsibility while not disconnecting buildings from the farmland and not overburdening future generations regarding buildings purchase.
New models to fundraise for land	ER – A new community farmland trust: ALPA	<b>Document and reflect on the creation of a community-based land ownership structure in Romania</b> (legal form, governance and functioning, etc.), taking into consideration the current farming demographic and land market context.	KL – Retirement savings	<b>Explore the possibility of having the financial ownership of land gradually shifting from the old to the new generation</b> while helping former farmers to supplement their retirement pensions.
Farm succession	DLg – Extra-family farm succession	Increase <b>DLg’s capacity to play a role in farm succession through financing land for new generations, and share and make known</b> these possibilities to target groups (especially retiring farmers).	XCN – Revitalising Vall del Corb area	Improve the knowledge on the farming sector in the Vall del Corb area of Catalonia, with a <b>focus on studying expectations of retiring farmers and possible new entrants to foster a local agricultural transition through generational renewal</b> .

Table 1 - Issues tackled and actions led by A2L organisations

While the RURALIZATION work consisted in “capturing” the evolution of these innovative actions over a period of eight months (from November 2020 to July 2021), it is important to specify that most of these actions were integrated in some long-term work of the A2L Network partners. They were based on and made possible by pre-existing work and resources, built on pre-existing exchanges with local stakeholders or work within the A2L Network. The RURALIZATION framework allowed to reinforce or complete this work with additional resources allocated to innovation development during the eight-months period. It was also an opportunity to deepen these practices and to take a step back for in-depth analyses, reusing the common methodological framework developed for the project (Murtagh *et al.* 2020a, 2020b), previous analyses of 64 *mature* land innovations (Loveluck *et al.* 2021), and grounding the work in general project discussions on the ruralisation process. To complement this research report, each action was also described in a summarised 4-page handout oriented to public of field organisations (Annex III). The handouts describe the main learnings of the work, while singling out particularly innovative or impactful aspects of the actions as well as “tips for practice” to inform future field work on these topics. Hopefully, they can constitute a useful resource to inspire more innovative work on land issues in Europe.

A better understanding of land innovations and their adaptations to specific contexts can contribute to their up-scaling and can demonstrate and strengthen linkages with public policies. The main objectives of this report are thus:

- 1) to identify and analyse some of the emerging issues and “hot topics” A2L organisations are facing and trying to tackle through innovations;
- 2) to show and analyse the concrete contributions of the innovations to rural regeneration and generational renewal;
- 3) to better analyse the innovation process itself, while trying to strengthen the methodological approaches to analyse it.

After this introduction, the report will describe the methodology adopted (section 2), the context, objectives and main results of the ten actions carried out (section 3), a cross-cutting analysis highlighting common and key findings from this work (section 4), an analysis of methodologies and tools for innovation may have been created or consolidated through this work (section 5), policy recommendations (section 6), and conclusion (section 7).

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Approach and general organisation of the task

The methodology used in this analysis of emerging land issues has attempted to meet the double requirements of “flexibility” and “common framework”. Indeed, given the variety of issues studied and actions implemented, flexibility was necessary to allow each land organisation to implement work adapted to their local realities and to involve partners, resources, and analytical frameworks adapted to their particular issues. In parallel, a common framework was established, allowing, despite the different approaches, to develop comparisons and cross-cutting analysis of actions. The shared analytical framework aimed in particular to:

- observe “through the same lens” specific aspects of social innovation on land issues;
- encourage comparisons between practices or actions;
- provide a general analysis or overview of the problems and solutions encountered.

This common approach was twofold, with: a) an overarching analytical framework and methodology to study all practices as they developed; b) some specific analyses of “common issues” among partners working on the same topic (e.g.: farm succession, land stewardship, etc.). The overarching framework was built on the common characteristics of novel practices, which have in common that they all involve social innovation to issues connected with rural regeneration and generational renewal, all involve multiple stakeholders (implying in most cases to understand specific actor strategies), all directly or indirectly address access to land and the issue of property-use relationships. To document in a common way the conditions of emergence, levers, trajectories and initial impacts of these novel land practices, the common methodological framework included:

- the construction of a workplan and activity log to follow the work envisaged;
- a context analysis;
- the optional production (if relevant) of a sociogram to describe social interactions among stakeholders;
- the deepening of common issues among pairs working on the same topic;
- and finally, the writing of an action report synthesising the main outputs and lessons learnt during implementation.

#### a. Construction of a work plan

The initial work plan clarified the objectives and determined the tasks to be carried out and concrete results and outputs to be produced during the eight-months phase of action research on emerging land issues (from November 2020 to July 2021, however, given the first two months were dedicated to the establishment of a common framework and the formalisation of partnerships concrete tasks included in the work plan often started in January 2021). This work plan was backed with an activity log, aimed at recording the concrete actions carried

out. The log allowed following the progress of the tasks but also to see if the work plan changed over time, as the action progressed.

On this aspect, it is important to specify that the differences between the planned actions and the actions actually carried out are considered part of the work reality of land organisations. This is particularly the case in a phase of emergence, where meetings, findings and conclusions can lead to reorienting the work. The development is often a moment where one can decide to focus more specifically on a key aspect or to review the strategy, either regarding the way the issue is analysed or regarding the way the land organisation should intervene.

### **b. Context analysis**

Upon beginning their actions, A2L partners were also encouraged to produce a context analysis, aiming at identifying factors or actors that could help or hinder implementation (and which could later help highlight drivers influencing innovations trajectories). A distinction was made between endogenous elements of context—controllable or partly controllable by the actors—and exogenous elements—not controllable or modifiable by the actors or difficult to change. The different types of community capital (see section 2.2.2) already used or that could be leveraged to meet innovation challenges were also examined. Depending on actions, the scale and idea of “context” could vary. For example, working on specific farms involved a stronger focus on local areas (using the relevant geographical scale, depending on the project) while working on legal arrangements or national advocacy could involve giving more context elements on legal or institutional aspects.

### **c. Analysing stakeholders’ interactions**

Part of the objective of this work was **to better characterise the conditions of emergence or realisation of social innovation on land issues and to understand the specific role of human capital in these trajectories**. Indeed, the RURALIZATION D6.1 report highlighted the key importance of human capital (skills, knowledge, abilities, etc.) in the implementation of land innovations. Consequently, particular attention was paid to this type of capital while documenting the actions implemented, leading to better analyse the different stakeholders involved in actions, their positions and their relationships. In order to grasp the importance and dynamics of some partnerships, a **sociogram** representing interactions among stakeholders was produced when relevant for the action. The construction and interpretation of these sociograms was based on strategic analyses (see section 2.2.4), and aimed at better understanding (either retrospectively or as the action was implemented) the specific roles or centrality of some actors and how actors with different strategies and aims could either find compromises or, on the contrary, lock down situations.

### **d. Delving into common issues**

Within pairs working on the same topic, partners jointly discussed and analysed some common issues. This consisted of identifying common questions, but also potential differences on how the same issue could be tackled according to the context. Based on these common questions, either specific literature was jointly explored or joint analysis was conducted through discussions. The RURALIZATION framework planned for the development of a “major action” (led by the first partner see table 1) and of a “smaller action” (led by the second partner) in each pair. The different levels of responsibility were reflected in the common issues methodology, where the first partners were responsible to carry out most of

the background research, lead pair discussions, and draw the conclusions of common issue dialogues in their final reports. In some cases, they even impulse joint public event (e.g., SA with ER to deepen analyses). The first partners also more generally allocated more time and means to the development of their actions.

### e. Writing a final case report per action

Partners produced a 10- to 15-page report per action, which provided the core material used for the elaboration of this deliverable. These reports reused analysis produced in previous documents (work plan, context analysis, sociogram, etc.) and provided locally-anchored overviews of the main results as well as the processes and interactions that influenced them. The results could take different forms: drafting of a common vision on the future of council farmland for SA; interviews, surveys, construction of scenarios and collective meetings on the issue of farm succession for XCN and DLg; etc (see section 3 regarding main outputs). Among analyses conducted in these reports was also included how partners saw that their actions related to the “access to land pathway” (see section 2.2.3) at their current stage or if achieving future objectives. When relevant, an analysis of the sociograms was also carried out as well as a retrospective reflection on the main success factors and barriers encountered.

The first lessons of these case reports were discussed in a workshop with stakeholders and experts held in August 2021. This workshop focused on further drawing out the expertise of grassroots organisations, based on peer-to-peer and open-heart exchanges. It highlighted key directions for the final report, notably the need to delve into the issue of building legitimacy and adverse contexts (see section 4). The meeting also informed final recommendations (section 6) as a time was dedicated to reflecting on what could be improved regarding research action project frameworks. Further to this, bilateral exchanges with academic experts were added to explore specific issues (property-use relationships, role of local authorities in particular).

## 2.2 Central concepts and frameworks mobilised

The main analytical concepts used in the overarching framework come from four main sources:

- Concepts, principles and review of definitions emerging from the RURALIZATION methodological deliverables - D3.1 *Assessment Framework* (Murtagh *et al.* 2020a), D3.2 *Detailed Conceptual Guidelines* (Murtagh *et al.* 2020b) and D3.3 *Review Report and Fact Sheets* (Murtagh *et al.* 2020c).
- Analytical frameworks and questions emerging from the first phase of study of *mature* land innovations - D6.1 *Typology of actions based on analysis of current innovative actions on access to land* (Loveluck *et al.* 2021).
- Reflections developed by Thou *et al.* (2018) regarding the analysis of the phases and processes of social innovation.
- Reflections on strategic analysis as developed by Crozier & Friedberg (1980), adopted by Chambron (1995), as a common basis for the analysis of interactions among stakeholders and construction of sociograms.

### 2.2.1 Social innovations' trajectory

Social innovation here is not understood as an innovation aimed at favouring the implementation of an innovative product in order to be able to penetrate a specific market, but as an innovation with significant *social* features, aimed at implementing a long-term solutions regarding problems that neither market logics nor state policies manage to address. These innovations involve a diversity of actors and address multiple challenges (social, economic, environmental, etc.) within a specific territory to which the innovation must adapt.

RURALIZATION actions are based on the observation that certain land issues are not addressed by the market and public policies, or worse, that market and policies tend to deteriorate situations. This places these initiatives in the field of social innovations, which address complex and interconnected issues.

The practices documented in RURALIZATION had diverse maturity levels, with more or less work carried out prior to their implementation. In addition, land organisations were either in the position where they were directly implementing the practice, while others were supporting another (affiliated) structure in implementing it, as XCN with IAEDEN and or TDL's national federation with TDL regional associations.

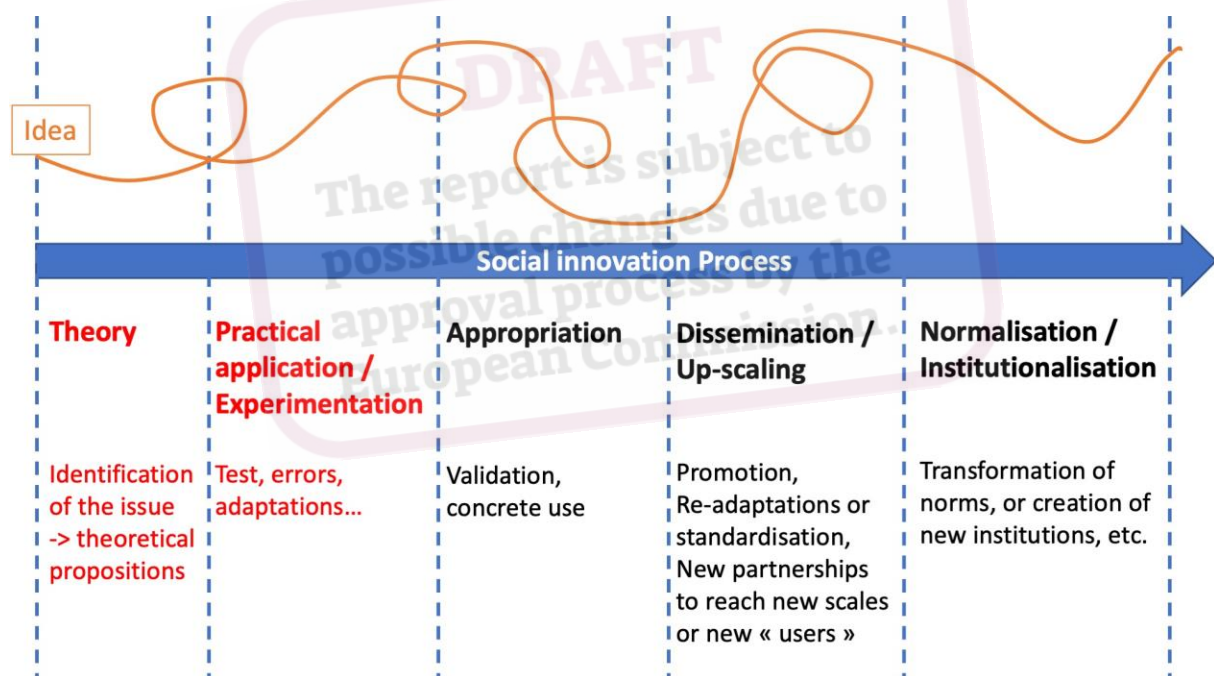


Figure 1 - Social innovation's process (source: Thou and Vincent, 2021)

The figure above, sourced from the work of Thou and Vincent (2021), presents in a theoretical way the main phases of evolution common to social innovations. The orange curve illustrates how, starting from a first idea still theoretical and unfroneted with field reality, the principles and ideas of innovations are shaped or even change directions over time. Regarding the trajectory, the innovations we studied rather concern the first two stages (i.e. "theory" and "practical applications"), although some preliminary elements of appropriation and dissemination of the work were implemented over the eight-months period.

The following figure (figure 2) describes how, in the first two stages of theory and application, the different aspects of the current report's overarching methodological framework helped to document and analyse practices.

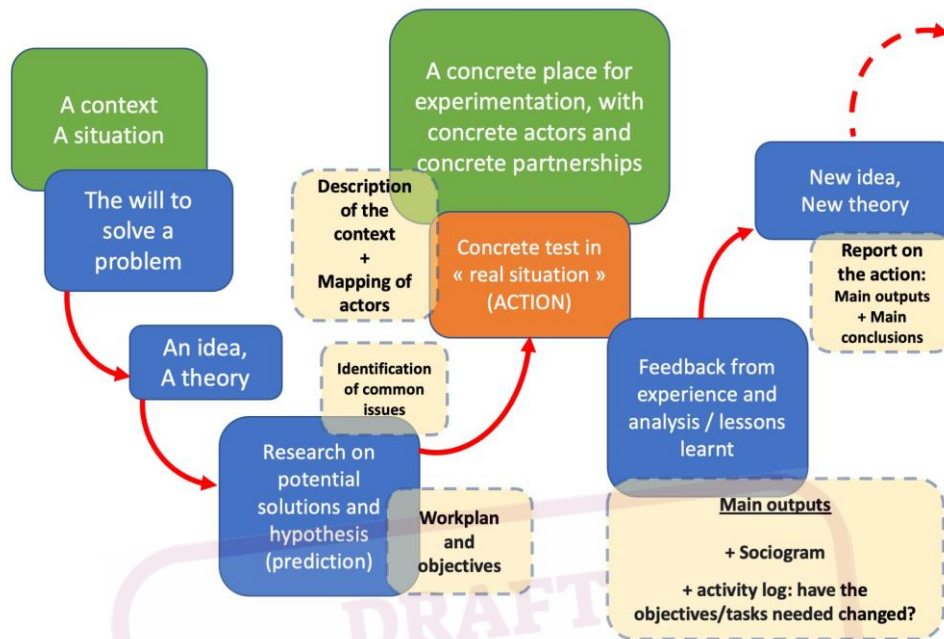


Figure 2 - Social innovation process and D6.5 report methodological framework

It seems important to point out, concerning this figure, that “the will to solve a problem” does not arise “by itself” and in a purely theoretical way. It emerges either from the vision and social mission of land organisations (e.g. to foster access to land for new entrants) or from concrete actions during which they are confronted with practical difficulties. This leads organisations to formulate more precise questions or novel issues and, eventually, to try solve them.

### 2.2.2 Capital frameworks

Capital frameworks are part of the core concepts of the RURALIZATION project (Murtagh *et al.* 2020b). In the context of the D6.1 report on existing land innovations and of this action-research report on emerging land issues, the seven types of capital distinguished as part of the community capital framework are considered (Emery and Flora 2006; Flora *et al.* 2016). They are presented in table 2. As already stated in D3.2 and D6.1, different capitals intersect and influence each other and some may be more important than others in certain contexts. Access to one specific type of capital also act as a catalyst and unlock access to others. As an example, political relationships can help getting access to financial resources or to a concrete land purchase opportunity.

The concept of community capital is useful to help understand innovative land practices, especially as these innovations do not only rely on existing capital but can also contribute to generating new resources. This capital framework can therefore also help understanding their impact on generational renewal or on the different dimensions of rural regeneration. Land, as a natural capital at the core of these innovations, will be at the heart of the analyses, but in close relation with all the other types of capital that could influence its access and use, social and human capital in particular.

Type of capital	Core aspects
<b>Natural capital</b>	All renewable and non-renewable resources e.g. land, water, soil, forests, farm livestock, marine life, flora and fauna. Other capitals can degrade or enhance it.
<b>Cultural capital</b>	Attitudes and norms that influence outlooks and values and then shape actions. Values and norms can also feed into the shape of regulations. Also includes more tangible and intangible culture such as traditions and language. Can be shared by people and across places, but also can differ among people and across places.
<b>Human capital</b>	Human potential e.g. talent, skills, knowledge, self-esteem, abilities, health and well-being. Can be developed informally or through formal education. Also, wider services and feed into it such as health services.
<b>Social capital</b>	Capital embedded within organisations, wider social networks and wider informal connections. Relationships that enable working together towards shared goals. Trust is also an important part of social capital, which can take the form of closer (bonding social capital) or loose ties (bridging social capital).
<b>Political capital</b>	Empowerment and ability to influence change. Could translate into changes to policy and regulations or pressure to enforce exiting governance instruments. Ability to influence may be determined by the nature of governance e.g. bottom-up initiatives, multi-level governance.
<b>Financial capital</b>	Economic capital or financial resources possessed or accessible to for example enterprise, community organisations or wider rural population e.g. income, access to credit, tax incentives, grants. A mobile capital that is more straightforward to exchange and measure than other capital forms.
<b>Built capital</b>	Range of human-made fixed assets such as infrastructure and buildings. Also, ownership can come in different forms (e.g. public, private or community).

Table 2 - The different types of community capitals and their core aspects in Murtagh *et al.* 2020b<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2.3 Access to land pathways and other key findings of the D6.1 report

The “access to land pathway” framework resulting from the D6.1 report (see figure 3 and annex I for the representation of this pathway), corresponds to a form of “theoretical pathway” categorising the type of actions that organisations can leverage to favour access to land for agroecology. The pathway therefore includes:

- actions carried out with new entrants before a land opportunity is identified (block 0)
- actions aimed at preserving land or organising its accessibility (like anticipating potential farm succession) (block 1)
- actions aiming at steering the use of land towards specific practices, especially agroecological practices (block 2)
- actions aiming at concretely buying land or farm buildings or securing leases for new entrants (block 3)
- and finally, actions linked to marketing, diversification of activities or even farm succession anticipation in order to keep land farmed agroecologically in the long term or to keep small-scale farms viable and transferable for future successors (block 4).

<sup>3</sup> Based on Braithwaite, 2009; Emery and Flora, 2006; Copus *et al.* 2011; Flora *et al.* 2016

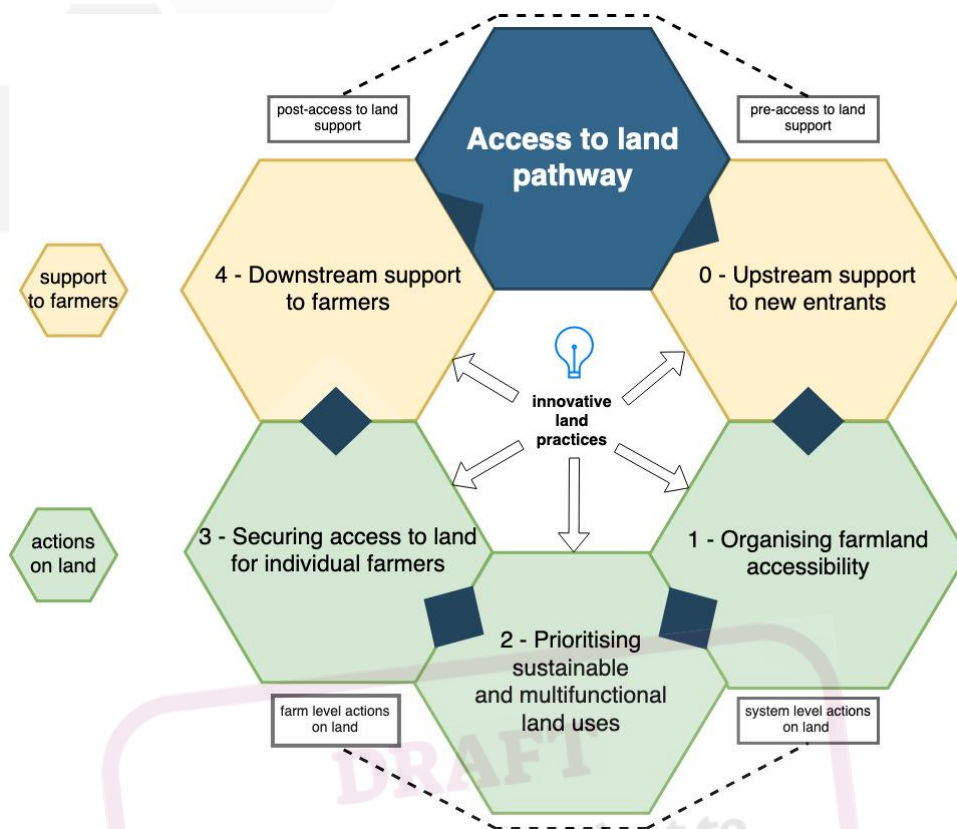


Figure 3 - One representation of the access to land pathway

Depending on the issue concerned, organisations can leverage means of action from a single block or combine several actions from different blocks of the pathway. The maturation of a practice which began by focusing on one block can also translate into expanding into other blocks of the pathway (leveraging new tools, new approaches). This pathway also shows, as specified in the D6.1 report, that addressing an issue like access to land for agroecology involves a systemic approach to causes and impacts (Loveluck *et al.* 2021). Practices indeed often find themselves wanting to address a specific issue, but having to activate several levers to do so (e.g. addressing farm succession gaps requires not only looking at which land is in the hands of retiring farmers but also being aware of whether of new generation of farmers exist and is properly trained to take over this land and whether the viability of the transferred farms can be maintained in the long term).

This pathway is also a framework to describe the particular way in which land practices tend to unfold according to their initial contexts and objectives. Indeed, one can observe contextual element or types of capitals required to take on certain blocks of the pathway. The present report is an opportunity to further investigate such links, raised as questions in the D6.1 report.

#### 2.2.4 Sociograms and strategic analysis

Sociograms represent an alternative or complementary way to analyse social networks. The joint analysis of visuals and narratives can offer a systematised, holistic view of relationships. Sociograms can also help capture changes in relationships over time (in connection with different social processes) or changes in relationships in different social contexts (formal, informal, etc.). The focus of a sociogram can be shifted depending on the issue addressed and

the objectives. The angle chosen for analysis may thus influence the type of actors represented (e.g. persons or organisations), the way the relationships will be qualified (friendship, advice, co-work), and the way of representing these relationships or their “measure” (simple presence/absence of a tie or further qualifications). Finally, the nature of relationships represented on a sociogram can either be material (commercial exchanges, financing flows, etc.) or immaterial (technical exchanges, exchange of information, etc.) (Houdart *et al.* 2011).

Historically, the improvement of sociograms has been partly possible through the development of sociological theories helping qualify actors’ strategies within social organisations. In this respect, Crozier and Friedberg's book *Actors and systems: The politics of collective action* (1980) was an important turning point for some analytical developments, helping to qualify the notions of interactions, networks, complexity, and dynamics of social processes, with a focus on power relations and strategies within social organisations or among stakeholders. In their approach, a “social actor” is defined by: 1) an objective 2) a strategy and means to implement it. In this way, a strategic analysis is fully compatible with an understanding of community capital, as they represent potential means (social, political, financial, etc.) on which actors (or land organisations) can rely (Chambron 1995).

The sociogram relates to an issue, a problem. It is valid at a given moment (i.e. a state of power relations and strategies). It aims at clarifying an ongoing situation but also at foreseeing strategies for change. To this end, the sociogram potentially allows to identify the strong or weak points of the different relationships (and not of the actors) or to understand the barriers or lack of knowledge (absence of relationships). Weak points can be changed by transforming or building relationships. In general, strategic processes follow basic logics:

- some actors create subsystems (like alliances with other stakeholders sharing a common interest) to drive changes that meet reluctance or opposition;
- an actor tries to influence an opponent’s situation or position by relying on other stakeholders connected to that opponent;
- actors try to marginalise or discredit opponents so that they lose influence; etc.

Strategic analyses can be employed without visual sociogram representations. A grid like the following one (table 3) can be used to specify the issues and strategies of the main actors, whose objectives (implicit or explicit) are described.

Actors	Objectives		resources	constraints	Isolated strategy	Conditions for a solution to the problem
	explicit	implicit				

[Table 3 - Analysis grid for stakeholder strategies](#)

As mentioned, the resources potentially leveraged by actors to meet these objectives can correspond to capitals (possibly identified in the column “isolated strategy”, i.e. the strategy to meet these objectives). The last column results from a reflection on the grid: reading the grid both horizontally (the logic of the actor) and vertically (the multiple interactions and the system), it allows reflecting on the conditions under which the main issue could be solved or on the potential synergies that could solve it.

## 3 Exploring emerging innovative practices: objectives and results

The following section describes the activities led by land organisations on novel practices, grouped by approach. For each approach, contextual elements are provided. Then, the main objectives and the different tasks carried out for each action are described, followed by the main results and conclusions obtained.

### 3.1 Land Stewardship

The first approach regrouped two actions carried out by XCN in Spain and Terre de Liens in France, which focused on better articulating land stewardship and agroecology:

- in partnership with IAEDEN, a local naturalist association working on the conservation of hay meadows and the associated temporary ponds in the county of Alt Empordà (Albera massif), Catalonia;
- on the farms owned by TDL all over France, with the aim of determining a modular and participative approach to assess, maintain or improve biodiversity on these farms.

#### 3.1.1 Context and issues related to the actions on land stewardship

Land stewardship, in these cases, corresponds to civil society-led nature management and conservation strategies. Strengthening sound ecological management of farmland is a major challenge for several reasons.

- The degradation of land and ecosystems is taking place all over Europe, with a 30% drop in farmland birds since 1990, the pollution of 30 to 50% of European rivers and lakes and high proportions of land affected by erosion and excessive nitrates or pesticides.<sup>4</sup>
- In principle, there is a great convergence between agroecology and land stewardship, but in practice some of the agroecological farmers cannot or do not know how to implement advanced conservation practices. There can be tensions between farmers (including agroecological farmers) and naturalist actors due to the urgency of environmental preservation and the long-standing negative impacts of agriculture.

In the Spanish action, land stewardship revolves around voluntary agreements signed between landowners or land managers and a non-profit organisation. These agreements determine and implement a set of long-term actions aimed at preserving or improving the natural values in a specific estate. IAEDEN's agreements with hay meadows' landowners ensure that low-intensity human intervention (reaping) takes place, which contributes to preserving the rich fauna and flora present in these habitats. Agreements on hay meadows currently involve 22 landowners, covering 60 hectares. Concerning TDL, the organisation signs

---

<sup>4</sup> See data on the impact of intensive agriculture on erosion, soil and water pollution and biodiversity loss: <https://www.accesstoland.eu/-/Infographics-Access-to-land-in-Europe->

environmental rural leases (ERLs<sup>5</sup>) with the farmers cultivating its 250 farms across France. These leases include clauses aiming to specify common objectives of TDL and the farmers regarding the protection of soils, water resources, biodiversity and landscapes. These environmental clauses are selected out of a legally-defined list of 16 clauses that can be included. While the clause to practice organic farming (which TDL integrates into all ERLs) allows to maintain soil quality and preserves certain forms of biodiversity, it does not, in itself, guarantee the maintenance or improvement of all the dimensions of biodiversity. Therefore, TDL regional associations, land-owning structures (TDL Foncière and TDL Foundation) and the farmers can consider the introduction of other clauses or other forms of agreements and commitments to go further on some environmental aspects.

TDL and IAEDEN are facing diverse situations. TDL is a direct landowner, while IAEDEN has to mobilise and convince numerous landowners, some of whom are receptive, while others ignore the natural values of their property, sometimes even ignore their location, or can be reluctant towards nature conservation. In Spain, most of the hay meadow plots where IAEDEN works are too small to be eligible for the CAP agro-environmental measure. Even in other areas where it is eligible, the measure is often poorly implemented. In France, substantial financial and technical measures for biodiversity preservation generally exist only in priority areas (e.g. Natura 2000 areas). This explains why certain approaches to assess and improve biodiversity on TDL farms have been much further deepened on specific farms which are located in priority areas— such as the Pré-Tords and Maubusson farms documented in the frame of the present work.

### 3.1.2 Description of the actions

#### a. objectives

The preservation of hay meadows is presently too dependent on IAEDEN's action and on external funding sources. This organisation aims for the hay meadows activity to be self-sustained by landowners and farmers on the long run, in collaboration with other actors (local authorities, companies, Regional Government, IAEDEN, etc.). **There is thus a need for a definitive, resilient, self-sustained mechanism to ensure that reaping is carried out and hay meadow values are preserved without over-involvement of IAEDEN.** To address these objectives, XCN and IAEDEN set different tasks (see table 4) to investigate and discuss new mechanisms, which would possibly be more efficient in the long term. More broadly, the action aimed to examine the issue of hay meadows conservation from different angles beyond the usual ones (i.e. naturalist and environmental volunteering), looking at both sociocultural issues (such as the involvement of local communities or new approaches to governance and alliances) and socioeconomical issues (such as fundraising, policies or product diversification and valorisation).

Regarding the land owned by TDL, the organisation does not yet have an integrated approach to protect and promote on-farm biodiversity. Key challenges are therefore to:

- design ERL clauses that are adapted for each farm and support farmers in implementing them;
- assess the initial state of biodiversity and progress over time, in connection with the ERL;

---

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.accesstoland.eu/Environmental-rural-lease>

- support farmers to include naturalist approaches at the heart of their agricultural practices, through assessment, pilot actions, local dynamics, training, etc.;
- assess the overall situation to report to TDL's members who expect the sound ecological management of TDL-owned land and rally people around the TDL project.

Although a number of tools, diagnoses and approaches have been tried out during the last years, TDL has encountered difficulties in implementing a comprehensive and fully satisfactory approach. **Such approach would need to fulfil different objectives of the stakeholders concerned; allow for long-term farm follow-up (concerning assessment, changes in practices and/or the implementation of specific measures); and favour involvement of partners and farmers.** In the light of this situation, the action carried out in RURALIZATION consisted of desk and social research on actors biodiversity perceptions and successful biodiversity projects and the co-construction of a multi-layered, concerted, and adaptable approach to guide TDL's future work on farm biodiversity.

### b. tasks and work plans

The tasks undertaken within the pilot actions to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table 4 below.

Table 4 - tasks included in the work plan of XCN and Terre de Liens

XCN	Terre de Liens
<p><b>1 – Identifying and assessing mechanisms that could contribute to a resilient and self-sustained conservation of hay meadows</b></p> <p>1.1 – Reviewing the mechanisms and approaches used in similar initiatives in other contexts</p> <p>1.2 – Analysing the potential effectiveness of such mechanisms in the local context (strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities)</p>	<p><b>1 – Analysis of the perception of biodiversity issues on farms within TDL and construction of an adaptable approach on farms</b></p> <p>1.1 - Analysis of objectives and “imaginaries” of members/structures of TDL and inventory of tools and approaches among the TDL organisations</p> <p>1.2 - Construction of an adaptable approach to assess and enhance biodiversity on TDL farms</p> <p>1.3 – Exchange/partnership with the ITAB (Technical institute for Organic Farming) on the different issues regarding biodiversity depending on production systems</p>
<p><b>2 – Coming to an understanding with all the stakeholders involved in the management of hay meadows, defining thus a plan for the long-term conservation of this habitat in l’Albera area</b></p> <p>2.1 – Identifying all the stakeholders potentially involved in the management of hay meadows in l’Albera area and sorting out some data (role, position, vision, etc.)</p> <p>2.2 – Organising different sessions to share and debate on the issues involved in this action and to draw common conclusions*</p>	<p><b>2 – Documenting advanced initiatives on TDL farms in Pays de la Loire and forecasting the adaptable approach on TDL farms in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté</b></p> <p>2.1 – Information sheets documenting both the farms of Maubusson and Pré-Tords</p> <p>2.2 – Production of a sociogram on the farm of Maubusson</p> <p>2.3 – Information sheet on a partnership on the “Paysan de nature” assessment</p>

<p>2.3 – <i>Elaborating a plan for the long-term conservation of hay meadows in l’Albera area</i></p>	<p>2.4 – Forecasting of the adaptable approach (task 1.2) on two specific TDL farms in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region*</p>
<p><b>3 – Improving the political willingness and commitment to conservation of hay meadows</b></p> <p>3.1 – Elaborating a set of proposals for policy-makers at the Catalan level and local authorities.</p> <p>3.2 – Organising meetings with policy-makers to channel the set of proposals and debate on its implementation.</p>	

\* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out.

### 3.1.3 Results and outputs

#### a. Action results regarding the action on hay meadows

##### i. Identification and assessment of mechanisms for long-term conservation of hay meadows

After reviewing literature and consulting different stakeholders, a list of possible mechanisms was produced, including a variety of ideas, some of which were complex to implement, apparently unviable, peculiar or even naïve in the Catalan context. However, thinking out of the box was indeed the purpose of the first reviewing and brainstorming exercise. Once the list was produced, the different mechanisms identified were classified in six categories, as illustrated in Figure 4. Some of those categories related to mechanisms that could increase field organisations’ resources or ability to act while others could improve the chances of success at the governance level.

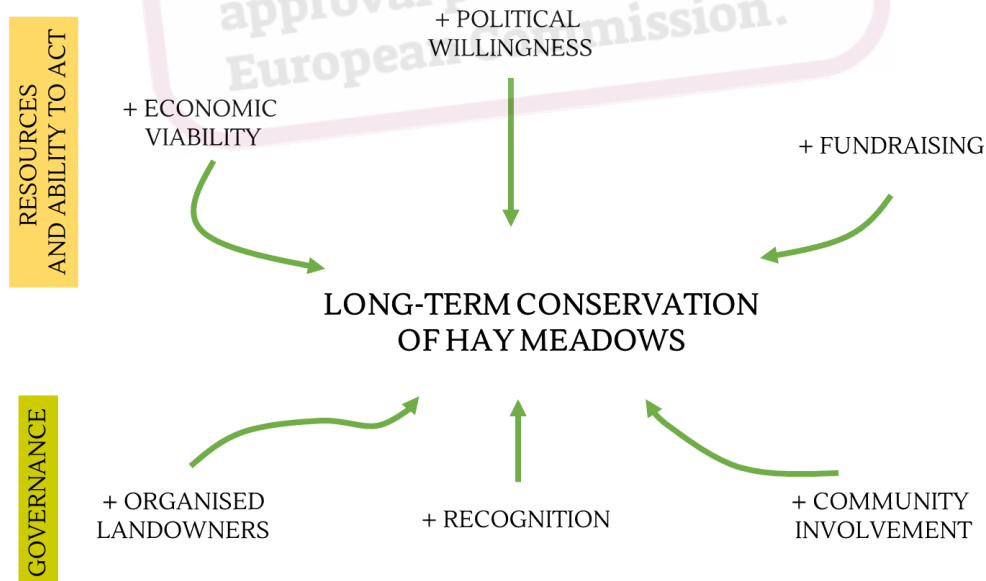


Figure 4 - Conceptual framework used to classify the different mechanisms identified

This assessment mechanisms illustrates the complexity of preserving hay meadows in the current context. If we take the example of mechanisms to increase the economic viability of hay meadows for instance, XCN and IAEDEN observed that enhancing the forage quality (and

sale price) by sowing leguminous species would alter the floristic composition of the meadows, and thus go against conservation objective. Producing smaller grass bales for better valorisation would be technically difficult (requiring other machines, etc.). Similarly, other factors hamper the targeting of new strategic markets like equid fodder, seeds production, basket making or vegetal material for green building purposes. Relying on market valorisation alone therefore appeared as a strategy subject to many uncertainties. Enhancing landscape valorisation to promote nature tourism in this location could also be a considered strategy to diversify income and valorise this habitat. This should however be further examined to 1) define how the financial capital stemmed from tourism would impact positively on farmers, landowners and/or IAEDEN, 2) which type of tourism would be compatible with the preservation of hay meadows. Regarding political willingness and commitment to hay meadows conservation, local real estate taxes channelled towards hay meadows conservation were evoked, combined with more inter-departmental involvement. The private sector was also mentioned among potential actors who could be involved, invoking their corporate social responsibility for companies that might be sensitive to nature preservation.

Concerning aspects connected to governance, fostering the coordination among hay meadows' landowners was discussed and raised conflicting opinions. While some stakeholders consider that creating an association of landowners would facilitate the collective management of hay meadows, others think it is quite unviable due to the average age of the landowners and their low sensitivity to the natural values of their lands. In addition, the fact that hay meadows plots are so small makes it harder to convey the necessity to manage them properly. Landowners will hardly see advantages in getting organised as a collective. There is, however, a common objective between the average landowner and IAEDEN: the willingness to preserve the meadow as an open space, and prevent it from being abandoned. In parallel, IAEDEN and XCN explored options allowing to increase the recognition of hay meadows' values, through awareness-raising activities or scientific assessment of the ecosystemic services they generate. The involvement of citizens was also raised, targeted to local communities or high school students, in order to both create a common concern around hay meadows preservation and, in some cases, to reduce the management costs by organising reaping with the community at some strategic moments of the year.

## ii. Policy proposals regarding hay meadows long term preservation

Policy proposals stemming from this action have focused on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). One of the underlying issues of this policy is related to how payments are made. The structure of the CAP has long been dominated by uniform payments based on farm size, the number of livestock heads or historical rights. However, uniform payments are the least effective approach in terms of nature conservation (Lankoski 2016). Under the World Trade Organization framework, the Agriculture Agreement allows payments for environmental services, such as soil preservation. As the environment and biodiversity are public goods, a greener CAP would require payments to be uncoupled from production and instead linked to environmental objectives. This could improve cost-effectiveness and increase the likelihood of reaching nature conservation goals. Box 1 summarises the main policy proposals discussed during this action, inviting to revisit some socio-environmental criteria to design adapted measures for hay meadows conservation.

### Box 1. summary of main policy proposals targeting hay meadows conservation

- **The definition of “hay meadow habitat” to which the existing agro-environmental measure is targeted should be specified** (notably how they differ from grassland pastures in general). The new version of this measure should include a typology of hay meadows based on the Habitats Manual of Catalonia and on the Habitats Directive.
- **The current measure lacks habitats representativity**, as it is limited to mountain counties and does not include lowland or mid-mountain hay meadows (the reason why Alt Empordà hay meadows are not eligible for this aid).
- Areas characterised by small and scattered hay meadows, although they may have a high ecological value, will hardly be able to benefit from this measure if a minimum eligible area of 3 ha\* is established. **This criterion should be changed towards about 0.5 ha.**
- **Management commitments should be defined in terms of grazing and reaping seasonality.** In a similar vein, it would be interesting to include commitments related to the floristic composition, since this is the main indicator of this habitat’s state of conservation. Developing a results-based payments approach would be suitable.
- Only farmers are potential beneficiaries\*\* for these measures while, in many cases, high-natural value hay meadows are not part of a formal farm anymore (precisely because they are being abandoned due to their low agronomic potential). For this reason, and also taking into account that hay meadows in many areas are small, **the new measure should include the possibility to develop “collective approaches”, targeting landowners associations or land stewardship organisations.**

\* The 3-ha threshold corresponds to 3 ha used by one specific farmholder, whether this threshold is attained with one plot or with several plots (possibly rented from different landowners)

\*\* CAP agro-environmental measures can potentially apply to non-farming stakeholders at the Spanish level, but in the Catalan region specifically, the Government of Catalonia decided not to activate this option.

## **b. Action results regarding biodiversity assessment on TDL farms**

### i. Identification of co-existing visions regarding biodiversity preservation on TDL farms

TDL’s survey of its members (staff or volunteers) highlighted the seven following types of rationales or motivations for biodiversity enhancement and monitoring:

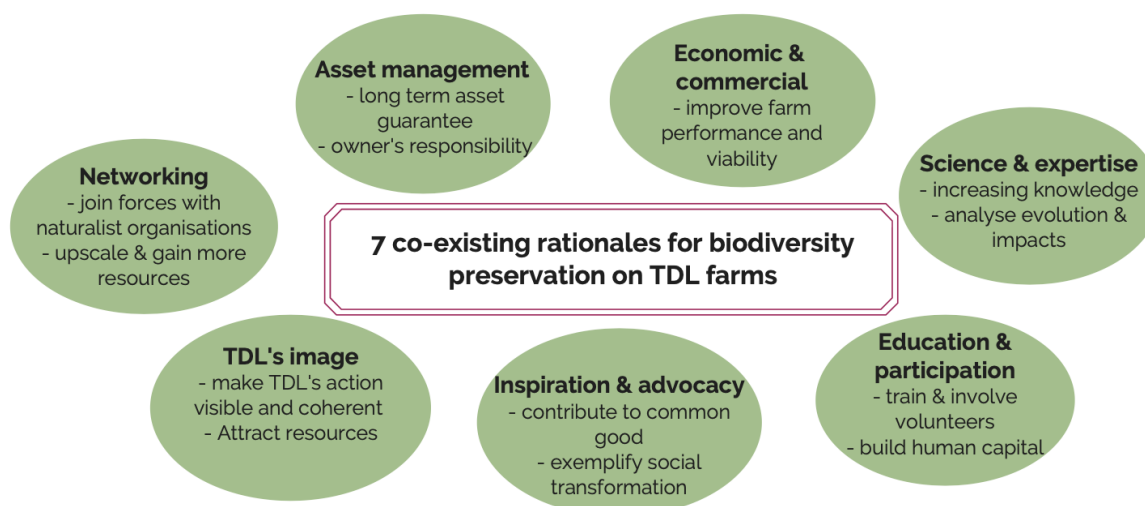


Figure 5 - Seven co-existing rationales for biodiversity preservation on TDL farms

Social representations play a role in understanding and explaining reality, orienting and justifying behaviour, etc. Depending on the dimension they focus on among the seven rationales described, visions can either lead to consensus and cooperation or, on the contrary, to disagreement or even conflict. Among the consensus highlighted through the survey is the idea that biodiversity diagnoses carried out on the farms (beyond the initial appraisal of farm natural resources and infrastructure) should ideally be established by an external partner (i.e. not representing the TDL landowning organisations) with the possibility of adapting it to local issues/objectives. The approach adopted should also be simple and inexpensive in order to facilitate participation. In this respect, however, many interviewees emphasized points of tension between simplicity and scientific validity/comparability of biodiversity approaches. The less consensual aspects relate to the involvement of farmers (both financially and in terms of participation in the diagnoses and their implementation), the level of involvement or training of volunteers, and the way practices implemented on the farm are guaranteed in the long term. For the latter, approaches oscillate between “control” (via organic farming certification for example) and “social construction of trust” (through the social inclusion of the farm in the territory, for example, in connection with various local environmental actors—conditions that cannot be met in all circumstances).

#### ii. drawing lessons from two advanced cases

Studying in-depth the two case studies of the Pré-Tords and Maubusson farms made it possible to draw lessons on how “biodiversity” is considered on TDL farms. They fed the adaptable approach by illustrating “one end of the spectrum”, i.e. the furthest consideration of biodiversity that has been implemented so far on TDL farms. These experiences show that building partnerships over a long period of time, beyond isolated and one-off interventions, and around a concrete objective (e.g. fostering agricultural projects that favour biodiversity) is a major factor of success for these projects. In the case of Maubusson, the possibility of financing time (via funding from a foundation) in order to foster multi-actor dialogue was a key factor to federate stakeholders and allow them to develop a common culture prior to the concrete actions. In both projects, the *Paysans de nature* approach developed by the LPO (the French member of Birdlife) facilitated a convergence of objectives and means between TDL Pays de la Loire and the local LPOs around the idea of “biodiversity-oriented agricultural projects”. *Paysans de nature* is indeed an approach focusing on strengthening inter-knowledge between farmers and naturalists and on disseminating and implementing agricultural production systems putting the preservation of wild biodiversity at their core. The dialogue on biodiversity was also facilitated by the presence of “go-between actors” who could bridge diverse social circles and perspective. IN the cas of Maubusson for instance, the vice-president for the environment in the department was also mayor of the municipality where the farm was located and had a farming background. In Pré-Tords, a livestock farmer had a naturalist approach and was president of the local LPO.

The Pré-Tords case study highlights issues of policy coherence. When the Pré-Tords farm was transferred in 2020, the best successor project according to the Water Agency's criteria was not necessarily the priority project according to the policy regulating the establishment of

farmers.<sup>6</sup> In this case, this contradiction was resolved by the fact that the successor preferred by the Water Agency also agreed to go through a formal process to validate her farming experience, therefore obtaining more favourable position with respect to the farmers establishment regulatory body. Finally, in Maubusson, as in Pré-Tords, the possibility of combining public and private financial resources (like donations and shareholder investments in TDL's Foncière - land shareholding company) has been key to carry out these projects strongly engaged in biodiversity preservation. Public investment gave these projects a strong legitimacy in the territories.

### iii. Establishment of a multilayered and adaptable approach to on-farm biodiversity

To take into account the diversity of points of view and rationales and the heterogeneity of local situations, an adaptable approach that could be implemented on all TDL farms was designed, proposing three different pathways. As illustrated in the diagram below (figure 6), the different pathways can be intertwined, so that the chosen approach can integrate several aspects, or evolve over time. The logics of all three pathways are described in box 2.

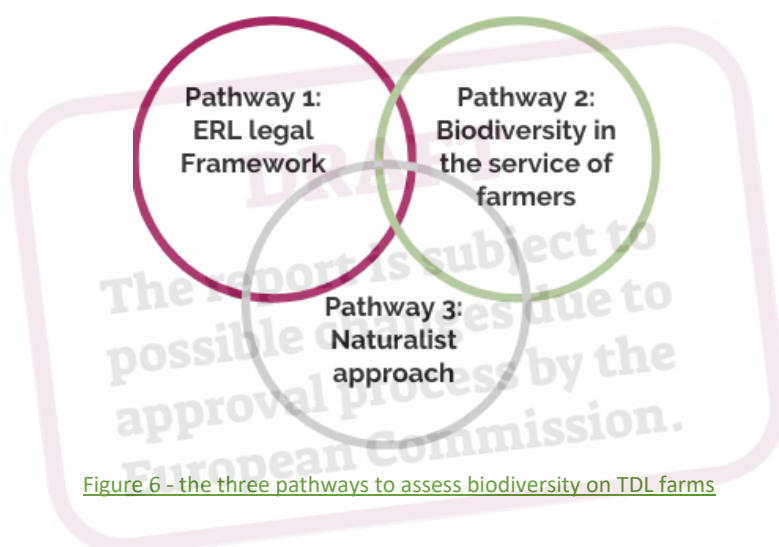


Figure 6 - the three pathways to assess biodiversity on TDL farms

<sup>6</sup> In France, the "structures' policy" determines who will have priority in obtaining authorisations to farm (see chapter 8 of the D6.4 Ruralization report, Korthals Altes *et al.* 2021)

### **Box 2: the three pathways to assess biodiversity on TDL farms**

#### **Pathway 1: Making the best of the ERL Legal framework**

The first pathway proposed can be adapted to all TDL farms in France, as it is compatible with rural law and requires relatively low farmer involvement. To improve the way the ERL clauses are selected and agreed upon, an initial inventory of the ecosystem diversity would be made (composition and size of hedges, landscape mapping, ponds...), along with an analysis allowing to better understand the integration of the farm in its territory (e.g. nature protection zoning). This would be done jointly by the members of TDL (staff, volunteers) and the farmers. In a second stage, this pathway involves updating the farm's data, integrating questions on biodiversity on the farmers' annual meeting questionnaire: evolution of ecosystems, genetic biodiversity, farmers' intentions regarding biodiversity issues. This pathway involves a reasonable amount of work for TDL regional associations and landowning organisations for an interesting result, as it could allow gathering data common to all farms, which could then be communicated on a large scale.

#### **Pathway 2: Promoting biodiversity in the service of farmers**

This second pathway requires a strong involvement of the farmers, who would participate in defining and implementing thereafter the management recommendations. Recommendations would concern both agricultural practices and/or modifications of the ecosystems to favour biodiversity that is useful to farmers (the creation of semi-natural habitats like hedges or ponds for example). The diagnosis chosen, which should be carried out by a legitimate stakeholder, must take into account to the farmers' concerns, territorial issues, and the cropping system. It is therefore difficult to select a single diagnosis which could be used on all farms. This pathway does not include extensive inventories of specific biodiversity, as it is based on the assumption that improving habitats and practices will necessarily lead to improved biodiversity.

#### **Pathway 3: Adopting a naturalist approach**

If desired and possible for TDL regional associations and the farmers, it is possible to go even further by taking into account, in addition to the identification of "habitats" (pathway 1) and the biodiversity in the service of the farmer (pathway 2), ordinary and remarkable biodiversity via "species" inventories. This third pathway can be a way to scientifically highlight the added value of TDL farms in hosting biodiversity. Combined with the restoration of semi-natural habitats, it can also be a way of showing the effects of the implementation of specific practices on the evolution of farm biodiversity. Farmers could be invited to host volunteer naturalists on their farms and possibly receive management recommendations to enable biodiversity—particularly regarding remarkable species to be preserved or promoted.

## 3.2 Commons and public farmland

The second approach, carried out by Shared Assets in the United Kingdom and Eco Ruralis in Romania, looked at the role of public and common lands in two regions: England for the former and north-centre Transylvania for the latter. Local authorities play a crucial role in ensuring these lands are used for to benefit local communities and new entrants, as owners of public land in the UK or as they often administer common pastures in Romania.

### 3.2.1 Context and issues related to the actions on commons and public farmland

Agriculture covers an important area in both countries: 72% of the UK's land, 17.3 million hectares, and 58% or 13.4 million hectares in Romania (World Bank 2018). The land distribution is however very different. In 2016 the UK had only 185,060 farm holdings while Romania counted with nearly 3,5 million (Eurostat 2016). Such disparate land structures—with 90% of Romanian farms under 5 ha versus an average of 87 ha for UK farms (DEFRA *et al.* 2021)—imply that different stakes are attached to the use of public land. In Romania, there is a tradition of “common pastures” held by local authorities or groups of users. For the large number of small farms practising mixed farming, these commons provide key access to grazing areas for sheep and cows, which cannot be raised on the small plots of land farmers own privately. They fulfil a crucial role in the maintenance of traditional agricultural systems, cattle being a main source of revenue for peasant farmers. However, commons are increasingly being privatised through concessions and leases to large-scale agricultural enterprises. Their status as large and “apparently” uncultivated areas with often unclear legal status makes them particularly attractive and vulnerable to agribusiness investors. In the UK, most land is held privately by a majority of large farms oriented towards specialisation and intensification. In a context of low land mobility where many farmers continue to hold on to land after retirement age—a third of all holders are over 65 years old, and just 3% are under 35 years old (DEFRA *et al.* 2021)—public lands have the potential to support the entry of a new generation of farmers, a transition towards more ecological agricultural models, and renewed links between citizens and agriculture. This is rooted in the long tradition of county farms, i.e. farms usually owned and run by local councils, which were set up at the end of the 19th century to provide a way into farming (Willis 2021). Yet, like in Romania, these lands are a dwindling asset. Research found that over 80,000 ha of land held by local councils in the UK has been sold off over the past 40 years (Graham *et al.* 2019). The remaining “county farms” cover about the same area but remain threatened by the effects of privatisation and public budget cuts and the lack of vision on their key role and potential for public good. Both SA and ER in their respective contexts tackled the issue of public land in an innovative way, putting at the core of their work principles of justice and shared governance to protect and provide better access to these lands. They used dialogue and co-construction with stakeholders to design new approaches to managing public and common lands, while working to highlight their value beyond market price—i.e. how these lands may support economic, environmental, social and cultural goals such as preserving rural employment and landscapes.

### 3.2.2 Description of the actions

#### a. Objectives

The action carried out by SA aimed mainly to **support the development of a holistic vision for the future of council farmland in England**. Prior to this work, SA had been involved in research which helped put together a list of farm holdings owned by local authorities by area and culminated with the production of a report jointly with *Who Owns England?*, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The publication of this report, *Reviving County Farms* (Graham *et al.* 2019), was a first step to showing the role and value of these estates in the current broader UK farm ecosystem. Nevertheless, more work is needed to prevent further sell-off of this asset and encourage a rejuvenation of council farmland, notably by **developing proposals and policy recommendations** collaboratively with stakeholders. In Romania, Eco Ruralis' action aimed to **increase official safeguarding of the multiple social, economic and agroecological roles that common pastures fulfil** and to make progress towards **ensuring democratic access to the commons for future generations** of farmers. To make steps towards this ambitious goal, the action combined research on the topic of common lands with stakeholder dialogue and awareness raising actions, in an attempt to begin narrowing the gap on this crucial Romanian issue.

#### b. Tasks and workplans

The tasks undertaken within the pilot actions to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table 5 below.

Table 5 - tasks included in the work plan of SA and ER

Shared Assets	Eco Ruralis
1 - Power mapping of stakeholders	1 - Legal and social analysis
2 - Workshops with relevant stakeholders to develop the vision	2- Engagements with stakeholders (workshops/seminars)
3 - Drafting the vision	3 - Piloting out one initiative in a selected region
4 - Feedback on/adjusting the vision with stakeholders	4 - Disseminating results*
5 - Preparing tools/resources for stakeholders to use	
6 - Disseminating/publicising outputs	

\* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out within the action timeframe but are since underway.

### 3.2.3 Results and outputs

#### a. Results of the action on Council farmland (UK)

SA's work culminated with the creation of a vision entitled "Reimagining council farms in 2040" which will serve as an advocacy tool to engage a large number of stakeholders in supporting greater investment in council farmland and better use of this land to fulfil social and ecological goals. This work was the result of 1) broad stakeholder engagement, 2) collective and strategically crafted writing of a forward-looking document on council farms.

##### i. Engaging stakeholders to discuss council farmland

As mentioned, SA's work on council farmland followed some prior collaborative work with CPRE and NEF. These strategic partners also formed the core group involved in the RURALIZATION action which favoured synergies and broadened impact. They could leveraged complementary skills in new economic thinking and analysis (NEF), specialist social and community insight into land issues (SA), and environmental and land use know-how (CPRE). In the first stage of work, the partners listed as many stakeholders as possible with interest in, or power over, council farmland in England. A diagram helped the group map actors according to how their values were considered to be aligned with those of the core team and according to the degree of power or influence over council farmland each actor holds (see figure 7). This exercise helped lay the groundwork for who the partners would most productively engage with throughout the rest of the action, both through workshops to inform the drafting of the strategic vision on council farmland and through a wider dissemination campaign. Two sociograms (one representing all stakeholders and a simplified version) were also elaborated to represent the stakeholder ecosystem connected to council farms (sociograms 3a and 3b in Annex II).

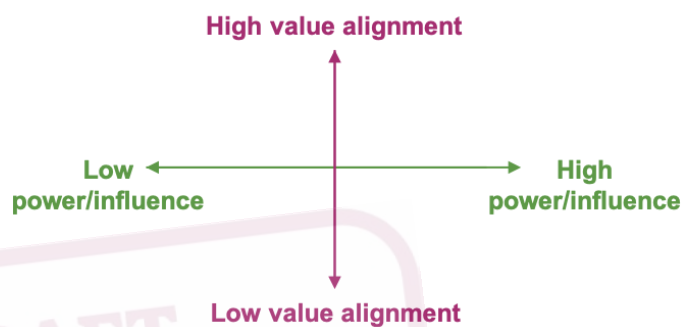
Workshops were organised with tenant farmers, agroecological farmers and prospective or new entrant farmers;<sup>7</sup> and the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector. The goal was to draw out issues, challenges, and barriers that the vision would address. The methodology also relied on forward-thinking exercises, asking participants what council farmland might look like 20 or 30 years in the future, and what tools would be needed to help realise this vision.

Workshops were organised with tenant farmers, agroecological farmers and prospective or new entrant farmers;<sup>7</sup> and the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector. The goal was to draw out issues, challenges, and barriers that the vision would address. The methodology also relied on forward-thinking exercises, asking participants what council farmland might look like 20 or 30 years in the future, and what tools would be needed to help realise this vision.

##### ii. Drafting a forward-looking vision for council farms

Insights gathered through the workshops informed the drafting of the vision by SA, NEF and CPRE. Throughout the action an advisory group of experienced actors (including members of the Land Workers' Alliance, Who Owns England/Rewilding Britain, the Tenant Farmers' Association, and the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector), as well as local authority officers, farmers, new and prospective growers, and other interested groups (e.g. environmental and educational charities and community groups)

Figure 7 - Shared Assets' power mapping diagram



<sup>7</sup> As well as the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' team developing the New Entrants scheme

was also involved in the vision co-design process. This helped sharpen the document for lobbying and coalition building work. Such work triggered stakeholder negotiations on the level of radicality versus mainstream appeal to adopt for the vision. Compromises were found to, on the one hand, uphold the core principles of leading organisation to create a vision putting forward people's relation to the land and, on the other hand, take into account the realities of local authorities who have to take budgetary issues into account. Terms like "net zero" (zero emission farming) were introduced to fit in the political agenda of local authorities yet regenerative and agroecological farming are also mentioned as promising approaches in the vision. By July 2021, a draft vision document was achieved. It proposes an innovative way to tackle the issue of council farms, framing the potential of this land from the perspective of three types of actors: 1) councils themselves, 2) farmers, growers and the land-based sector (including tenant farmers and new entrants), 3) local communities. The main arguments developed for each type of actor are summarised in box 3. Furthermore, the document outlines policy changes, initiatives and mechanisms needed to make the vision a reality. This will be the lever and the baseline to engage with a wider body of sector stakeholders to encourage sign up to the vision (i.e. stage of dissemination and further development of key partnerships to counter the dominant trend of council farmland sell-off). The recommendations include several aspects, such as:

- Bringing **coherence and guidance** in national policies on the value of keeping farmland in public ownership. Tools such as a five-year national action plan or new national purposes (aligned with the UK climate change budgets and councils' climate plans and targets) should guide councils, while annual reports to Parliament on council estates should ensure the monitoring of this coherent approach.
- **Increased and sustained investments** in innovations to capture public value from council farm use should be put in place. This implies more research on new entrants and county farms tenants' needs for new skills and avenues for improvement of opportunities in the land-based sector.
- **Investments in county farms should be carried to expand local benefits**, for instance by modernising the built fabric of farms, investing in farm processing and retail to diversify and add value, buy out tenancies and offer new ones to restructure estates, etc.
- **Local communities should be more involved**, both through wide consultations on goals and management of the land and through more transparent processes of acquisition and disposal of council farmland (to allow oversight and privilege community-led alternatives to take over land for sale, instead of enabling privatisation).

### **Box 3: Key statements of the vision to “Reimagine council farms in 2040”**

#### **1. By 2040, council farms are working better for local authorities**

- Council farms have clear, holistic objectives framed in national legislation, policy and guidance.
- These objectives underpin council farmland strategies developed through wide and inclusive consultation, and which are tailored to local needs and estate features.
- Council farmland is a secured asset that is valued and growing (no net loss policy, towards a ‘net gain’ land policies).
- Councils use a shared and comprehensive framework of public value to assess the contribution of their farmland holdings to the lives of their citizens.
- Managers of council farmland estates collaborate through a joined-up network of skilled professionals and have access to shared expertise and advice supporting strategy development and engagement with national policy and programmes.
- Councils publicise plans for disposal of estate assets widely and consult on proposals transparently and democratically with the local community, who are given the chance to raise funds to keep the land in locally-led community or charitable ownership.

#### **2. By 2040, council farms are working better for farmers, growers and the land-based sector**

- Councils have structured their estates into parcels of land and equipped farms of all sizes to offer greater opportunities for people with different levels of experience to grow and farm in sustainable ways.
- Councils manage their farm estates to support new entrants but balance this with enabling experienced farmers to progress to stable longer term tenancies on the estate or elsewhere in the area.
- Experienced council tenants renew their tenancies and stabilise their businesses by providing parcels of land, mentoring, share-farming or other forms of partnership and support for new entrants.
- Councils work in partnership with tenants to identify and develop new opportunities and income streams within a clear strategy to deliver wider public benefits, including through revitalising local food production and distribution (e.g. through public procurement opportunities).
- Tenants are actively linked by the council into networks of council farms where they share knowledge and good practice.
- Council farmland supports a greater variety of types and scales of land-based businesses through establishing—alongside larger farms—networks of smaller-scale incubator holdings.
- Councils support their tenants to access government and other support to produce food in climate and nature-friendly ways and deliver multiple other public goods.

#### **3. By 2040, council farms are working better for local people**

- Council land is valued by local people as an asset held in trust by their council to increase equity and respect the rights of those who helped purchase it, of current beneficiaries, and to secure the well-being of future generations.
- Everyone has access to clear, reliable and accurate information about the land their council owns, where it is and what it is used for.
- Local people are informed, engaged and meaningfully consulted in deciding the long-term future of council farmland, its purposes and how it should be managed.
- There is a greater supply of healthy, fresh, sustainable food available to people through their local supply chains at an affordable price, and in public institutions, meaning people also feel more connected to their local food producers.
- Local people now have more and better opportunities than for many decades previously to be trained to and work on the land in rewarding, fairly-paid jobs and to set up new land-based businesses.
- Councils and tenants are working hand in hand to ensure their land is stewarded to produce zero carbon and nature-friendly food and other goods and services.

## b. Results of the action on Romanian commons

Key outcomes of the action carried out on common pastures included 1. the production of knowledge about the commons system in Romania, and 2. engagement with stakeholders on strategies to best protect and manage the commons. In the future, these first results will continue fuelling a strategy of putting this issue on the agenda at national level.

### i. Producing knowledge on the system of commons in Romania

Commons in Romania have very specific management systems that anchor them locally and distinguish them from other types of European systems. The specificity of Romania is also that these pastures still concern very wide areas of land. Although no exact figures on the distribution of common pastures are available, a rough approximation suggests that over half of the 3.4 million ha of permanent pasture in Romania can be considered common land, i.e. over 12.6% of the country's utilized agricultural area (UAA). These lands are a crucial link in the fragile chain to sustain peasant agriculture. Indeed, due to its communist history and following 1990s land privatisation programmes, Romania has very fragmented land. Most farms (90%) rely on plots of less than 5 ha of individually-farmed land. ER estimates through its research that on average 6.5 ha are needed to sustain a cow and 1 ha for every four-six sheep. As previously mentioned, these animals provide milk and meat products that are a key source of income when sold and contribute to diversified diets of Romanian rural populations. However, they can only be sustained if peasants have access to common pastures. Throughout the RURALIZATION action this knowledge on the value of public lands was further completed by harvesting stakeholders' insights. It was also doubled with desk research on the Romanian system of the commons, looking at the three main managing systems: *islaz*, *composesorat* and *obste* (see table 6). Following workshop discussions, ER resolved to zoom in and generate more knowledge on the *islaz*—the model deemed most promising given the central place it reserves to local authorities and its potential for democratic management. *Islaz* are indeed legally considered public property and the process of their management involves both the local community and the local municipalities (instead of just a close-circuited local community), ultimately having a strong potential in involving new entrants and young farmers as local community members.

Commons type	Property rights	Use rights	Administration	Main distribution
<i>Composesorat</i>	Private property of the local community	Can be restricted to members (although not always); membership usually inherited	Elected members	(Hungarian speaking) Transylvania and Northern Romania
<i>Obste</i>	Private property of the local community	Restricted to members; membership sometimes inherited, sometimes through residence	Elected members	Regions of Wallachia and Moldavia
<i>Izlaz</i>	Public property of the local community	Any inhabitant of the municipality	Mayor and elected pastoral committee	Throughout Romania

Table 6 - Overview of the three main types of common pasture use in Romania (based on Mantescu 2009)

## ii. Engagement with stakeholders

Engagement with stakeholders allowed harvesting farmers' testimonies on the role that commons fulfil in specific local communities. To start the engagement process, ER directed a short survey at its members (over 15,000 people), including three simple questions: "1. Do you raise animals using common pastures?, 2. Are you part of a local commons organisation?, 3. Would you like to be involved in group discussions on the situation and future of commons in Romania?". The survey provided a shortlist of 35 farmers interested and with grassroots experience on the stewardship of commons. In addition to survey respondents, ER identified external actors for discussions and dissemination (NGOs, public authorities, etc.). Subsequently, two online discussions gathered first farmers and second civil and farmers organisation representatives and local authorities. In addition to offering perspectives on the value of commons for local development, the workshops helped harness stakeholders' view regarding best practices in managing commons both from a practical and organisational viewpoint. The main leverage points as well as threats and weaknesses identified include the fact that:

- Access to common pastures in Romania is still widespread and represents an important agricultural and ultimately economic resource for small, local farmers offering much needed green fodder throughout the season and substantially reducing the production costs while obtaining high nutritional and qualitative agricultural products.
- The stewardship of commons represents a unique alternative farmland management system for Romania, but one that has only a moderate degree of formalisation due to which it is more vulnerable to opaque management and commodification.
- Predominantly, local authorities are central stakeholders in the management of the commons, having a strong legal and administrative role, but also decision-making power over who has or gains access to the commons. Greater level of democracy in their management can be ensured through consultative processes towards local farmers.
- The commons are transforming into leased or concessioned lands that are privately managed. This is due to lack of successors and new entrants, industrial approaches to farming, but also to abusive management by certain local authorities and lack of negotiation powers of the local farming communities.

These first findings formed the background of further engagement, including:

- a joint online workshop held with Shared Assets, where the role of local authorities was benchmarked using the two UK and Romania realities;
- an online event held with cattle breeders using one specific model of commons, the "islaz";
- bilateral engagement with local authorities;
- and an online meeting with young farmers looking to integrate in the local farming landscape and to access the commons.

Through these events Eco Ruralis provided spaces where farmers expressed their difficulties and desires but also where local authorities exposed their competences in administering the commons and highlighted bottlenecks. Nevertheless, these conversations were carried out separately in a first stage, to enable freer expressions of concerns and individual opinion. A first set of policy recommendations emerged from this work (summarized in box 4), which can be further enriched and formalised in the coming years through dialogues bringing together different perspectives. The wide mobilisation achieved by ER was also a stepping stone to start building and legitimising a national-level narrative on how to best protect and manage commons.

**Box 4: A set of recommendations towards local authorities and possible actions to improve the situation of the commons in Romania.**

- **Formalise local producers groups** that steward the same commons. Creating local cooperatives would enable farmers to have a higher bargaining power regarding land management and access in front of local authorities.
- **Measure biodiversity indicators on the different uses of the commons**—benchmarking the biological efficiency of local farming communities jointly using and accessing the commons in comparison with industrially-managed and privatised uses.
- **Increase the participatory process in the development of grazing plans and in the management of unused public land** as a way to tackle the issue of low farm succession and depopulation (i.e. find community alternatives instead of going for swift privatisation processes when confronted with these situations).
- **Promote a more comprehensive inventory of the commons in Romania**, taking into consideration the different informal tenure and customary rights and agreements attached to these lands.
- **Ensure through transparency and local authority involvement that public support in form of subsidies** (especially agro-environmental and high nature value farming ones) are directed towards the stewards of the commons—i.e the local farming communities and new entrants that enter in these collective management systems.

### 3.3 Farm restructuring

The third approach, carried out by Kulturland in Germany and TDL in France, focused on analysing the possibilities of restructuring existing farms, particularly medium-size to large farms, which entail specific challenges. Indeed, many of the A2L grassroots organisations have primarily worked on acquiring smaller plots dedicated to vegetable gardening. Entering the market of larger farms, mixed farms, or in cereal-production areas has proven more difficult, competitive, and expensive. Land organisations increasingly have opportunities or a drive to work with large farms, so as to act on more mainstream farm structures, increase their impacts, and foster the agroecological transition. It sometimes involves transforming a conventional farm to change its production and commercialisation models towards agroecology, but also to unlock its potential benefits for the wider community (in terms of educational activities, nature preservation, etc.). Larger farms also represent a specific challenge in terms of acquisition and maintenance costs and management of buildings. TDL and KL have therefore conducted on-farm actions to explore these two aspects:

- A former large cereal farm in the French region of Auvergne, called *Ferme de Sarliève*, is in the process of being reoriented to host different agricultural activities and a farm.
- KL is involved on several farms scattered across Germany where restructuring has taken place or is being considered to experiment new arrangements regarding the ownership of farm buildings.

#### 3.3.1 Context and issues related to the actions on farm restructuring

The average farm size has rapidly increased in both France and Germany over the past decades. Acquiring farms represents increasingly large amounts of capital which makes access particularly difficult for new entrants with no agricultural background (Loveluck *et al.* 2021).

In parallel, the increasing development of territorial projects to favour local food production cannot only be based on existing farms involved in short supply chains. They imply, in some cases, to reorient farms historically involved in long supply chains, as it is the case for the *Ferme de Sarliève*. At the same time, while some land organisations propose to acquire farms to facilitate access to land, acquisition and long-term management of farm buildings is more complex and hazardous. In this respect, KL wonders how users could keep control over building management while having easier access to the assets themselves. To be true to the cooperative's missions this requires preventing speculative building sales by the users and ensuring that buildings stay connected to the agricultural land to guarantee farm functionality in the long term.

The initial *Ferme de Sarliève* farm (about 150 ha) belonged to five family members. One of the joint owners had been strongly involved in TDL, and convinced her brothers and sisters to hand over their family land to TDL. The Sarliève plain where this farm is located is divided between only three to four landowner families. Being located in the immediate outskirts of the city of Clermont-Ferrand, it is subject to various forms of pressure in terms of urban development. While territorial development plans mention the need to preserve the plain's farmland and to work on the issue of food self-sufficiency, these local policies fail to define clear orientations regarding agricultural and food models to promote and bring coherence in sometimes antagonistic projects around the relocation of the agri-food system.

Regarding the legal and financial arrangements implemented by KL on farms located in different places in Germany, a central contextual aspect of this innovation comes from a network of experienced actors on ethical and solidarity-based acquisition of buildings. Partners like the Mietshäuser Syndikat or the Ackersyndikat e.V. enabled KL to develop new models of building management. In some cases, in particular for the Luzernenhof farm, the question of the political stance of the local authorities also interacted with building issues.

The situations of the farms can be summed up as follows:

<i>Farm</i>	<i>state of affairs</i>	<i>successors</i>	<i>previous owner</i>	<i>Specificity of the operation</i>	<i>comments</i>
Luzernen-hof	acquired 2014	group of 3	private farmer	Purchase pre-financed with a private loan that had been offered by a lady that the young farmers had contact with, and refinanced by acquisition of KL's cooperative shares	<b>5 years experience, case for review</b> Local authority against the purchase at first place because: 1) The KL cooperative is not a farmer 2) They were fearing risks of disconnection between the farmland and the buildings
Ries-Hof	purchase planned 5/2021	clarified: 1 family	private farming couple	High price of the farm, with KL and the successors respectively buying the farmland and the buildings + inventory	The most advanced current case
Hof Stedebach	concept in discussion	almost clarified: group of 2	non-profit association and private couple	Farm initially belonging to an association: land, farmers' house, commercial buildings and other housings separated with different rights / forms of ownership	Complex social situation, with several candidates for farm succession and disagreements between the farmer and some landowners.
Schafhof	concept in discussion	clarified: group of 11	private couple	Community of 11 young adults and 5 children (one bank account, all revenues shared) wanting to take over a farm run by a family	Kulturland "competing" with other land organisation

Table 7 – Situation of Kulturland's farms concerning changes in building ownership

### 3.3.2 Description of the actions

#### a. objectives

We can distinguish objectives at two levels: 1) concerning the **operational project**, 2) in the work consisting in **summarising and formalising knowledge acquired** during the project. KL and TDL worked on both levels, with a particular focus on **documenting the actions** in the frame of RURALIZATION. For the *Ferme de Sarliève* innovation, the main operational objective is to mobilise a large surface of land in an area of high land pressure to allow the setting up of several people involved in community-based agriculture, on the same location, thus facilitating the pooling of resources (operational but also human, etc.), while converting to another farming model. These objectives involve **developing an innovative agricultural model** and **strengthening a multi-actor approach in a peri-urban area**. For KL, the main aim is to **develop new solutions for farm building ownership that meet the requirements collectively defined as desirable and ethic**. These can be summarised as follows:

- 1) *the farmers are free to decide about and invest into their buildings,*
- 2) *there are no remaining management obligations for land organisations,*
- 3) *the right of use of buildings remains connected with the use of the land,*
- 4) *the takeover of buildings by further successors is possible with low capital requirements,*

5) the capital extraction from property is limited to retirement needs and further profits are invested in the farm.

Faced with these complex challenges, documenting these actions is a central issue for KL and TDL in order to take a step back as the projects are implemented and to prepare the dissemination and future developments of these initiatives. For the *Ferme de Sarliève*, the project was documented on two main aspects: 1) the project as a whole 2) a specific focus on the transfer and preservation of agricultural land (a specific sociogram analysed this issue). Concerning KL, the work consisted in documenting 4 different forms of building ownership: 2 advanced cases and 2 ongoing cases.

## b. tasks and work plans

The tasks undertaken within the pilot actions to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table 8 below.

Table 8 - tasks included in the work plan of TDL and Kulturland

Kulturland	Terre de Liens
1 - Status quo description by farm: context analysis and sociograms*	1 - Construction of the methodological framework: Design of the " <i>Chronique</i> " method and validation
2 – Discussing different options with strengths and weaknesses (workshops with stakeholders of advanced and on-going cases)	2 – Data acquisition 2.1 - Compilation and organisation of the accumulated data (May 2019 – Dec 2020) and test of the “Chronique” method 2.2 - Informing the “Chronique” method 2.3 - Participatory observation in the working groups of <i>Ferme de Sarliève</i> and compilation of reports
3- Working out concepts and Memorandums of Understanding*	
4 – Documenting agreed contractual and financial structures (vzualisation and calculation)	3 - Analysis and production of resources 3.1 - Formalisation of the governance diagram and its evolution* 3.2 - Formalisation of the “Chronique” method in a synthetic timeline 3.3 - Taking a step back from the <i>Ferme de Sarliève</i> case, with the comparison with another similar case in another region
5 - interpreting results in the light of requirements (evaluation)	
6 - documenting process, realized solutions and outcome	

\* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out.

### 3.3.3 Results and outputs

#### a. Action results regarding the *Ferme de Sarliève*

##### i. Acquiring and reorienting a large farm in a peri-urban area

The implementation of a new agricultural site, initially based on a large cereal farm, required the establishment of a specific work organisation and governance. This governance had to be in line with had to be line with 1) the local demand from new entrants for agricultural facilities in the area and 2) the necessary development of new partnerships and economic connections to develop new productions and ways of working. Furthermore, new skills and ways of conducting the project were needed to rethink economic and legal models to enter farming (e.g.: incubator, more protective social status for farmers). One of the issues therefore became to integrate, with a new approach, a diversity of actors who were not necessarily used to cooperate. In addition, this approach had to be developed in a context of difficult negotiations with landowners and a difficult political situation (including, as we will see, competing interests over the Sarliève land). To welcome new forces (citizens, associations, environmental organisations, researchers, etc.), and reflect on the various issues, the structuring illustrated in figure 8 was adopted, including various "thematic commissions", "working groups", and "committees" with definite roles.

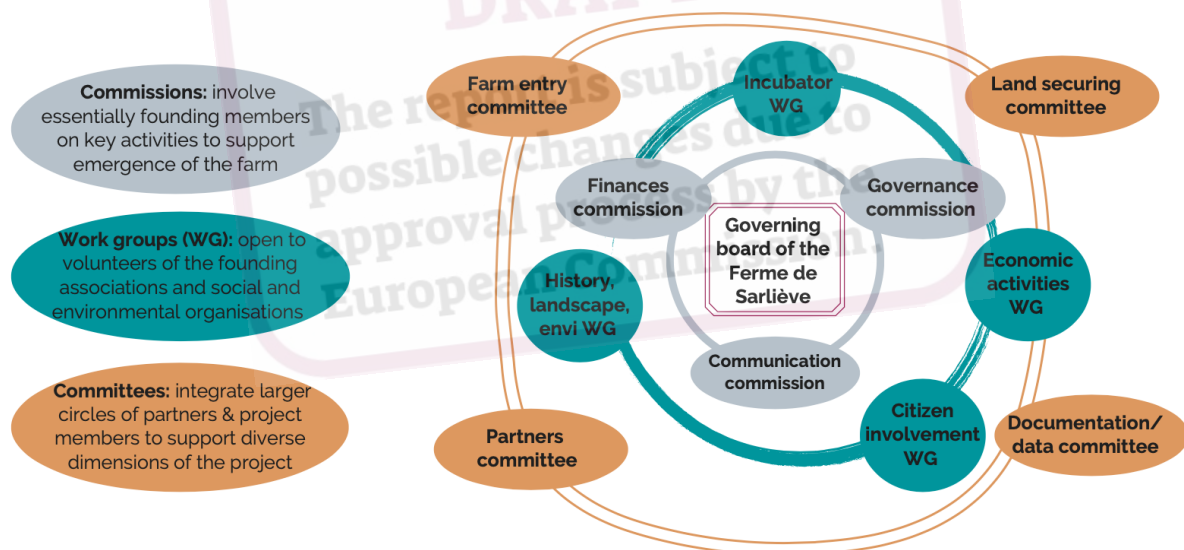


Figure 8 - Governance and work organisation at the *Ferme de Sarliève*

The working groups (WG) are dedicated to deepening core aspects of the project. The WG on landscapes, history of the site and environment, for example, implements biodiversity assessments and plans for "re-naturing" the site (e.g. planting multi-functional hedges with citizens). The WG dedicated to citizen involvement organises of thematic meetings (nature, agriculture, partnerships, etc.) around the farm to involve citizens in the farm in the longer term. As for the committees, their role is to integrate a greater diversity of partners who can contribute to the implementation of the project in all its dimensions. The farm entry committee currently brings together the three founding associations and welcomes new entrants who wish to start farming.

By Fall 2021, the *Ferme de Sarliève* project had succeeded in securing finances to hire two staff members. This is the result of intense collaboration, where TDL, Îlots Paysans, and Bio 63 worked to build a shared discourse and achieve recognition from local authorities and funders. One of the staff members is a former farmer, who participated in the first reflections on the project. He has extensive experience around collective farming, a strong commitment to creating innovative structures, and is well inserted in local networks. These include agricultural networks, but also networks linked to solidarity-based economy or local politics, allowing to foster the legitimacy of the project and the aggregation of skills around the *Ferme de Sarliève*. This employee therefore became a key player in the development of the project.

As far as the citizens' dynamic is concerned, it was gradually structured (following a long process, as explained in section 5.5.2), and brought an additional advocacy dimension to the *Ferme de Sarliève* project.

ii. Using sociogram to take a step back on the land transfer and land preservation

Another key aspect of the project was the partnership with researchers and the unprecedented effort to document the innovation process. A tool called "Chronique", documented in section 5.5.2 of this report, was built to report on the experience. In addition, an analysis of the interactions among stakeholders was carried out using a sociogram examining the following issue: "how to transform the use and preserve the land of the Sarliève plain?" (Figure 9).

The analysis was conducted at two different levels: the preservation of land facing urbanisation risks and the transfer of land from the joint owners to TDL. All levels are linked in different ways: 1) the joint owners both transfer agricultural land, and convert other surfaces into building land on the plain, 2) the transfer of land to TDL depends on the good relationship with the joint owners, 3) the *Ferme de Sarliève* wishes to secure the 80 ha concerned by the transaction with owners but its objective is also to preserve the whole plain. The sociogram can therefore be read from a twofold strategic perspective: 1) a short-term strategy of compromise concerning the transaction of 80 ha, 2) a long-term strategy consisting of building coalitions with partners to ensure the preservation of the plain.

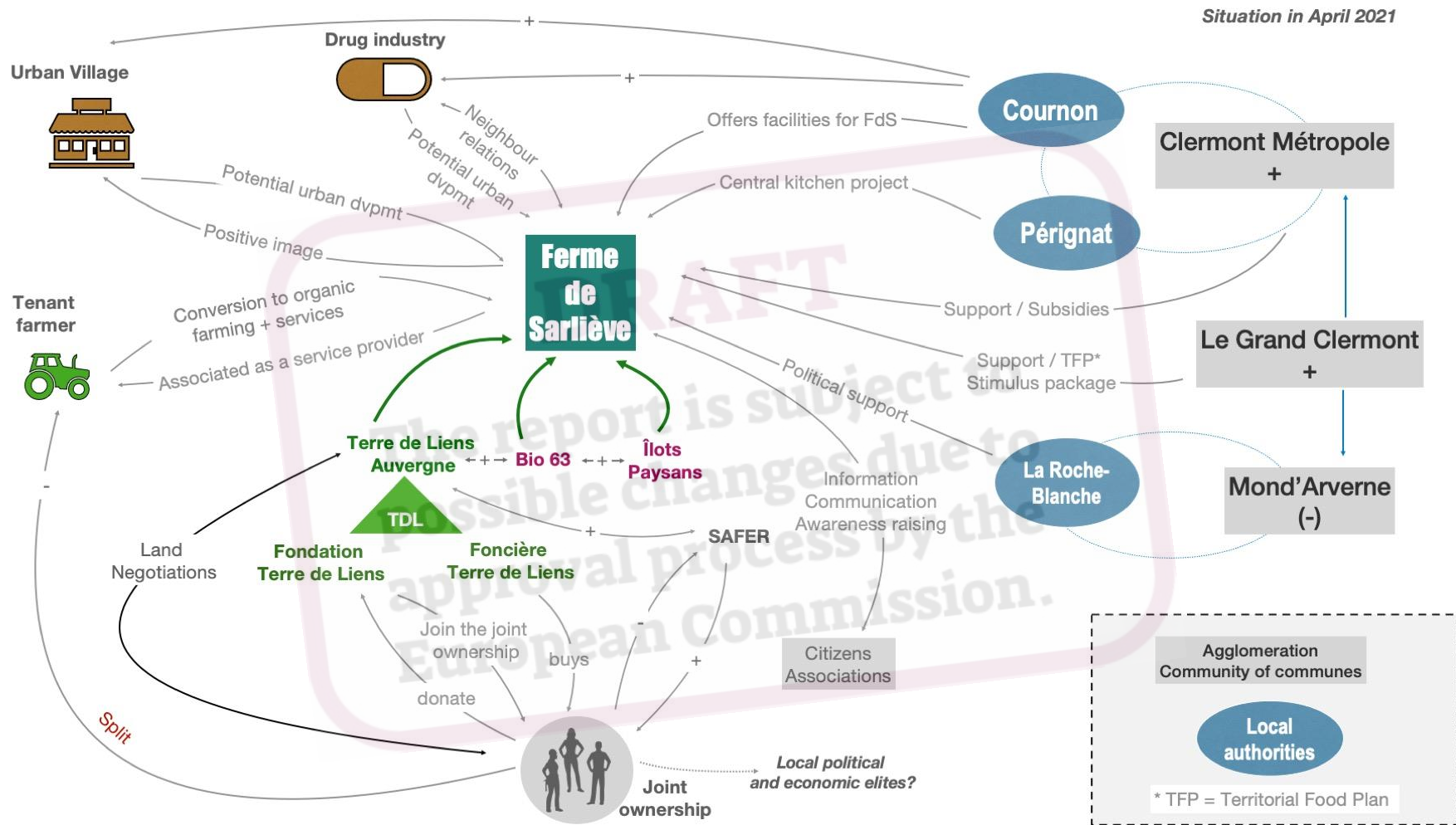


Figure 9 - Sociogram on land issues regarding the *Ferme de Sarliève*

Four types of stakeholders are interacting on the Sarliève plain: (i) agricultural stakeholders, (ii) socio-economic stakeholders linked to the development of the plain, (iii) local authorities and (iv) civil society.

i) Concerning interaction with agricultural stakeholders, the strategy for securing land is complex, with:

- joint owners having difficult relations with the farmer currently using their land, and remaining ambiguous until today on the amount of land they actually want to transfer (oscillating between “philanthropy” and “asset valuation” strategies);
- a contradiction between the projects of TDL Auvergne (which wishes to preserve the agricultural use of the whole plain) and those of the joint owners (who seek to turn part of the agricultural land into building areas), putting the association in an uncomfortable position to design its project;
- an important role assigned to the current farmer from the start. Indeed, when the *Ferme de Sarliève* project was launched (before 2019), this farmer was not ready to convert to organic farming and his lease on the 155 ha was due to end in November 2021. TDL Auvergne however decided to include him in the reflection, which helped address various strategic issues: maintaining dialogue with the “agricultural profession”, supporting the conversion of the land to organic farming, and enabling gradual transfer of the land as new entrants start farming.

(ii) Concerning socio-economic stakeholders, a local medical logistics company established nearby contacted *Ferme de Sarliève* in order to envisage joint actions, for example the recovery of rainwater from their large roof or the possibility to free land belonging to the company for the farm. On the other hand, a project to create a commercial and leisure complex (to which the members of the *Ferme de Sarliève* are more directly opposed) threatens the availability of agricultural land bordering the farm. In both cases, the strategy for securing land for the project must be based both on short term neighbour relations and on long term of building a coalition to preserve the agricultural use of the plain.

(iii) Ambivalent interactions with the local authorities: some of them support the *Ferme de Sarliève* project while at the same time validating the leisure complex project.

(iv) Interactions with local citizens have grown over time, in line with the project objectives. They have already been involved in a large-scale action to begin the site natural restoration (140 participants planting the first “citizen hedge”), showing a form of appropriation of the space even prior to concrete transfer of ownership to TDL.

### **b. Action results on new models for building ownership**

In the frame of this report, we will present only one full example of the type of farm restructuring carried out by KL, taking the example of the Luzernenhof farm (see box 5). Luzernenhof is one of KL’s most experiments, which best illustrates the possibilities of achieving the ethical requirements set by the cooperative regarding farm building ownership.

After difficult negotiations with both the local authority and the Mietshäuser Syndikat, the solution found regarding Luzernenhof met most of KL’s requirements. While the Mietshäuser Syndikat was not aligned with the idea of restricting some parts of the building to a specific use (farmers’ housing and farmers’ activity), this is precisely the purpose of KL, i.e. maintaining a farming activity on the land they invest in. However, the organisations—who otherwise shared many common values—found compromises to settle these conflictual visions.

**Box 5: the example of Luzernenhof (also see sociogram 6 of Annex II)**

An organic farm producing vegetables, meat and dairy products held by a woman involved in a community-supported agriculture scheme (CSA) was sold for € 750,000 to a group of three farmers. The purchase was pre-financed with a private loan (offered by a prosperous person the newcomers were in contact with) with the idea that KL would progressively reimburse the loan. The purchase contract established a hereditary right for the buildings, meaning that the land underneath the buildings and the buildings themselves would be separated and could belong to different owners (as it is possible in Germany according to a specific legal framework).

However, the local authority of Landwirtschaftsamt:

1. denied permission for this purchase because Kulturland eG was not an active farmer (and the local authority, in line with regional and federal land laws, wanted to reserve land purchases to active farmers);
2. denied permission to disconnect land and buildings, as they feared the risk that the farm buildings lost the connection with the farmland.

The agriculture ministry (by the time led by the green party) acted as a “go-between” actor. They supported KL’s intentions and recommended to find a legal solution allowing the young successors to become tenants (rather than being forced to take up large loans and acquire the farm in private property).

1. The first issue about privileging active farmers for land purchase was overcome by establishing a partnership company between the three new entrants and Kulturland in the form of a “Kommanditgesellschaft” (“Luzernenhof Boden KG”), which is a certain type of private company limited by shares. This legal form establishes a partnership with different roles: the first partner (komplementär), representing the farmers, acts as the society and takes all entrepreneurial decisions. The second partner (Kommanditist), represents KL, provides the capital, and shares financial benefits and losses, but has no decision-making power (besides leaving the partnership). Providing the capital for land purchase, KL kept influence over the land use for ecological and community-connected purposes through internal societal statutes. In addition, an extraordinary right for expulsion of the farmer was given for the case where basic agreements on land use would not be respected.

2. The second issue about separating land and buildings was resolved by legally reconnecting the two properties in the land register. For this, different contractual rules were set:

- a pre-emptive right for both parties in the case the other property was sold;
- a right of use for at least one apartment in the residential part of the buildings for the farmers;
- a right of use for the farming/commercial part of the buildings.

The farming buildings and at least one apartment could therefore always be used by the active farmers who held the lease of the land.

These solutions were accepted by the local authority. “Luzernenhof Boden KG” became the owner of the land, including the parcel underneath the buildings and “Weingarten 18 GmbH” became the owner of the buildings (using the initial private loan, which was split up for this purpose). Four years later, the purchase was entirely refinanced by a successful crowd invest campaign which simultaneously acquired cooperative shares for Kulturland eG (the land) and small private loans for Weingarten 18 GmbH (the buildings). Weingarten 18 GmbH is a limited company with two partners: Weingarten 18 e.V., a registered association including all the inhabitants of the residential part of the building (farmers and non-farmers) holding 51% of the capital, and Mietshäuser Syndikat e.V. holding 49% and serving as a “guardian”, meaning an external guarantee for the long-term devotion of the project as a self-governing social housing project. Mietshäuser Syndikat was established by a group of social housing projects with the sole purpose to provide this external guarantee against speculation. This, in turn, established donors trust to finance these housing projects since they can be confident that their generosity will never be turned into private profit later on.

In the other three farm cases the initial model of Luzernenhof was repeated and taken further to complement to additional requirements. The case of Ries-Hof showed (slightly) diverging interests between the successors and the cooperative division of the purchase price between buildings and land, and established an additional differentiation between two building owners (the private premises being owned by the farmers, the commercial part by a society to allow more farmers to participate in the frame of a farming collective).

The last two examples could not be finalised during project time. Hof Stedebach involves a complicated social setting with personal conflicts but shows promising (though even more complicated) organisational options for ownership structure. Schafhof is equally in discussions between the family owner and a collective of 11 people willing to take over, with interesting and constructive options ethically more fundamental but financially less viable forms of ownership by the competing Ackersyndikat.

### 3.4 New models to fundraise for land

The fourth approach, carried out by KLulturland in Germany and Eco Ruralis in Romania, focused on new financial models regarding access to land issues.

- For ER, it consisted of exploring the idea of developing a community-based land ownership organisation for agro-ecology.
- for KL, it consisted of documenting two approaches where retirement savings of older generations help finance land access for the new ones.

Therefore, in these actions, KL is already experimenting solutions and planning to scale them up while ER is at the previous stage, consisting in designing and discussing a potential solution.

#### 3.4.1 Context and issues related to the actions on new models to fundraise for land

In Romania, transfer of land property is difficult for several reasons: land fragmentation is very high, with the average size of a parcel being 0.45 ha; there is a lack of land registration in the official cadastral system (only 59% of the land registered in 2021); and land is also subject to increasing concentration and land grabbing<sup>8</sup> dynamics. Regarding concentration, 0.3% of Romanian holdings represent 34% of the UAA, with the 100 biggest farms controlling more than 500,000 ha of the country's UAA (out of 13.3 million ha). The rate of intra-family succession only reached 26.5% in the past years. Worryingly, 66.4% of peasants are over 55 years old. Low farming retirement pensions<sup>9</sup> are leading some older farmers to sell their land to the highest bidders (often to agribusiness players) rather than passing on the farm to next generations. While current economic policies encourage small farmers to release their land in Romania, ER and some of its partners develop alternative propositions to create government-funded incentives for young agroecological farmers coupled with succession assistance that ensures land goes to young, small, and local farmers. The idea of a community-based land ownership solution is part of this dynamic. In Germany, agricultural pensions are also

<sup>8</sup> Land grabbing understood as the control – whether through ownership, lease, concession, contracts, quotas, or general power – of larger than locally-typical amounts of land by any persons or entities – public or private, foreign or domestic – via any means – ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ – for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights” (ECVC, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> In 2020 the average monthly pension in Romania was only €280, an amount that is very difficult to live on.

relatively low. When farmers leave their farm, they need money to buy or rent a house, to cover their living costs, but also to pay children how did not take over the farms an “inheritance compensation”. With today’s considerable life expectancy, a retirement stipend of € 1,500 per month for a couple aged of 65 years old amounts to over half a million euro at net present value. Adding the amount needed to finance housing, compensate the heirs, as well as taxes, notary costs etc., the total amount needed to “pay-out” a retiring farming couple often reaches a total of €1 million or more. This amount cannot easily be raised through classical crowd-investing campaigns selling cooperative shares, this is why Kulturland has been working on a new funding model involving retirement capital. This aims to overcome bottlenecks in upscaling forms of community-based land ownership for extra-familial new entrants. However, people who would invest retirement savings with the aim of “freeing land” could neither expect to gain interest (this would make land lease prices unaffordable to the new entrant), nor could they expect to get their money back from the resale of the land, which would be contrary to the goal of securing the land on long term.

### 3.4.2 Description of the actions

#### a. Objectives

ER’s action to pioneer the establishment of an access to land **initiative in Romania involved exploring legal, political and organisational perspectives while federating more stakeholders around this project.**

KL, on its end, has stated as the following main requirements for the use of retirement money in land purchase:

- investment of retirement savings leads to guaranteed and continuous repayments in some distant future;
- investment enables land purchase, with the land serving as corollary (security);
- the land shall not be sold for repayment, i.e. the investment must be replaced by new investment;
- the real value of the retirement savings investment must be secured against inflation, i.e. there must be some interest or value increase;
- an exit option for the investor in case of failure of the model is needed, guaranteeing the security of rental payments.

KL has developed and implemented two pilot models to finance a land purchase. One approach consists of land purchases against life annuities granted by KL for the retiring farmer, while the other was conceived as an intra-farm generational agreement between the retiring generation and the young farming generation saving up for their retirement. The RURALIZATION action consisted in documenting and clarifying these models, to understand if they could be combined or scaled up from intra-farm agreements to models allowing the inclusion of external retirement savings.

## b. Tasks and workplans

The tasks undertaken within the pilot actions to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table 9 below.

Table 9 - tasks included in the work plan of Kulturland and Eco Ruralis

Kulturland	Eco Ruralis
<b>1 – Description of the situation of 3 different cases</b>	<b>1 – Legal and social analysis</b> 1.1 - Internal discussion in Eco Ruralis about the task and about the importance/political implications in setting up an access to land initiative in Romania 1.2 – Desk research and legal expert consultation / comparative analysis 1.3 – Surveys to benchmark the needs of new entrants / retiring farmers
<b>2 – Discussion regarding different options with strengths and weaknesses</b> (board and team meetings)	
<b>3 – Working out concepts, documenting contractual and financial structures*</b> (encounters and consultancies with experts: tax accountants, a life insurance company, etc.)	
<b>4 – Interpretation of the results in the light of the objectives set in terms of economic and social principles</b>	<b>2 – Engagement with stakeholders</b> 2.1- Encounters with different stakeholders 2.2- Webinar on new models for access to land
<b>5 – Documenting the process</b>	<b>3 – Building a shared vision</b>

\* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out.

### 3.4.3 Results and outputs

#### a. Results of the action on a community-based land ownership structure in Romania

Throughout the action, several other organisations were involved, either on a political or practical level: the Coordination Committee of Eco Ruralis (on political reflections especially); NGOs working on agroecology and access to land; young and old farmers.

The action was based on previous work to establish "Acces la Pământ pentru Agroecologie" (ALPA). This association, created in 2019, aimed to secure equitable access to land through ethical means and empower resilient agroecological farms. Nevertheless, it faced many hurdles. A first step towards exploring possibly more successful schemes was to work with ALPA founders to co-analyse reasons for past failures. The main conclusion was that ALPA's NGO status brings limitations in its ability to develop fundraising. Only donations (either in form of farmland or in form of funds) could be received, and the status did not allow private citizens, companies or farmers to become shareholders of farmland. A different legal form of organisation is therefore needed, with the capacity to issue out stock or equity and grant more horizontal and collective decision-making to shareholders in the process of buying and putting land into the service of agroecology. To this aim, two legal entities were found to be good starting points for upscaling and organising fundraising for farmland: a shareholder company unlisted on the stock exchange market or an agricultural production cooperative.

In order to generate a wider network debate on the issue of fundraising for securing farmland in Romania and to better identify the needs of its target groups, ER led a survey among 513 new entrants and retiring farmers. It gave a deep perspective on farm succession in Romania (highlighting the lack of succession plans) and also reflected the fact that young farmers, and especially new entrants in farming, saw new forms of collectives as a way to alleviate their strong need to access land without the strong desire to gain private ownership over farmland. This survey laid the ground work to tailor a community-based land ownership structure to the Romanian context. Indeed, one must take into account the communist past which has made collective ownership “compulsory” during the collectivisation phase and left negative impressions in the population’s memory.

Despite the baseline work carried out, further discussions related to the idea of developing a community-based land ownership solution with principles such as ALPA’s have met many limitations. As an example, engagement with the Foundation Conservation Carpathia, which fundraises to conserving forests via large-scale non-profit land acquisitions, did not bring to light obvious bridges between their initiative and ALPA members’ intentions. Indeed, for the latter, the Foundation Conservation Carpathia’s collective management approach for these lands is limited, often falling into simple private control.

Above all, the political factor which represented the major bottleneck was internal. Indeed, ER’s coordination committee, which oversaw the development of this action, was divided. While the ER members who initiated ALPA proposed fundraising for access to land as an immediate solution to the problems faced by peasant farmers, especially the young, other members underlined that this approach would not create a large impact. Ultimately, they argued that solutions should be focused on changing the national policy climate and safeguarding legally land for peasants and future generations.

## **b. Results of the action on retirement savings**

### **i. The Heggelbach Model - a one-farm generational pension agreement**

Regarding the Heggelbach farm, five farming families are working on a biodynamic farm of 160 ha. Fifteen hectares of land (priced at € 500,000 including taxes), which have been cultivated by the farm for many years, came up for sale. Farmers needed purchase them to continue their activity.

The land was purchased utilising KL’s standard model to fund a subsidiary entity by creating a private company limited by shares (Kommanditgesellschaft or KG, see box 5 in section 3.3.3).

- KL financed around 40% of the purchase through cooperative shares (around € 200,000).
- Two of the retiring farmers and one elderly person from outside the farm invested the additional € 300,000 needed for the land purchase in the form of silent partnerships with the KG;
- Three active farmer families made agreements to invest monthly payments of different amounts over the time span of their remaining farming activity (about 22 years), representing € 300,000.
- The monthly payments of the active farmer families received by the KG are then forwarded to the elderly investors as monthly pensions (therefore, the ownership of the land gradually

shifts from the old to the young generation, while the land is still secured as a commons by KL).

- When the active farming families retire, they can negotiate a price to sell their stakes in the landholding KG company to their successors, getting this amount paid out as monthly pensions too (the “economic” ownership shifting again from one generation to another).

The sociogram n°7a in Annex 2 gives an illustration on how the Heggelbach model is functioning.

**Difficulties to cope with in this scheme are the following:**

- Retirement pensions are typically in the form of a guaranteed life annuity, thus insuring against the risk of longevity. In the Heggelbach Model, however, payments made from the young to the old generation are happening over a defined period of time (22 years), which means that at a certain age, the old generation will stop receiving payments and might face financial difficulties.

- Inflation also bring difficulties. In Germany, money has lost around 1/4 of its purchasing power through inflation over the past 20 years. Thus, the retiring generation needs an inflation adjustment for their investment. Annual lease payments for the land can partially compensate this, but because the lease paid by KL’s partner farms is low, this would not be enough to compensate for inflation. Therefore, the retiring generation needs to sell their stake in the KG company to the young generation for an adjusted value (while in accounting terms the value of the land remains nominal). This potential increase in the value of the shares when negotiated with successors is however subject to income taxation, which lowers benefits and can lead to an unbalanced economic model.

- The model assumes that there will be next successors to pay the pensions of the retiring generation. Actors therefore need to have confidence that there will be a next generation, who is willing to purchase their share in the KG for a fair price. Kulturland gives a limited guarantee for pension payments (up to € 40,000 p.a.) at nominal value (no inflation adjustment).

**ii. The life annuity model**

If the retiring generation wants to see the farm maintained as a whole, then the partial sale of land to finance retirement pensions is irrelevant, as the farm must be transferred completely. However, as outlined above, the total sum involved when the whole farm is sold might easily reach € 1 million, which is too high for both new entrants and KL. The proposition made by KL, and tested on 3 KL farms so far, was therefore not to pay out the net-present value of the retirement stipend, but rather to enter into a life annuity agreement with the retiring farmers. The purchase price covers pay-out of heirs, a lump-sum for housing or health risks of retiring farmers, payment of remaining debts, taking over tax obligations from the sale and, above all, granting a life annuity, i.e. a monthly pension to the retiring farmers until the end of their lives which is adjusted annually for inflation. The annuity granted by KL is secured in first place the land registry, which means that, in the worst case, the transferred land can be partially sold to ensure payment of the annuity. As this agreement is secured by a tangible asset (as opposed to regular financial pension contracts), the risks involved in this sort of pension agreement are low and do not warrant additional regulation by the German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority. The sociogram n°7b in Annex 2 represent this life annuity model.

**Some challenges associated with accounting for life annuities are connected to life expectancy issues. These include:**

- The fact that correct estimation of life expectancy for a specific population (retiring organic farmers) is a difficult exercise and there is an obligatory “discounting” in accounting terms of the life annuity obligation.
- Classical insurance providers are protected by “the law of large numbers”: the bigger you are, the lower the risk that the life expectancy deviates from the expected median life expectancy by chance. KL expects to make only 50 to 100 pension agreements in the next 25 years, which means that KL needs to account for additional security margins.

Other challenges are connected to the fact that the German Tax Authority requires life annuity providers to discount some the net present value of its annuity obligation (assuming that life insurers are able to generate a “market return” on the capital they have received in the frame of the annuity contract). Kulturland however does not generate any net returns from the land it purchases because 1) lease payments from the farm only cover running costs and do not generate any profit and 2) land is also not to be sold in the future. Consequently, KL lacks a source of income to absorb the discounting of the life annuity. KL solves this problem by making an agreement with the retiring farmers, where the “discounted” amount of the life annuity is paid out to the farmer and then immediately donated back to KL. This allows the cooperative to form a balance sheet reserve for future retirement payments.

The following sociogram (figure 10) illustrates the reflections at this stage on what could be a “generalized model” mixing both solutions developed (life annuities and the generational model on Heggelbach farm).

*the report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.*

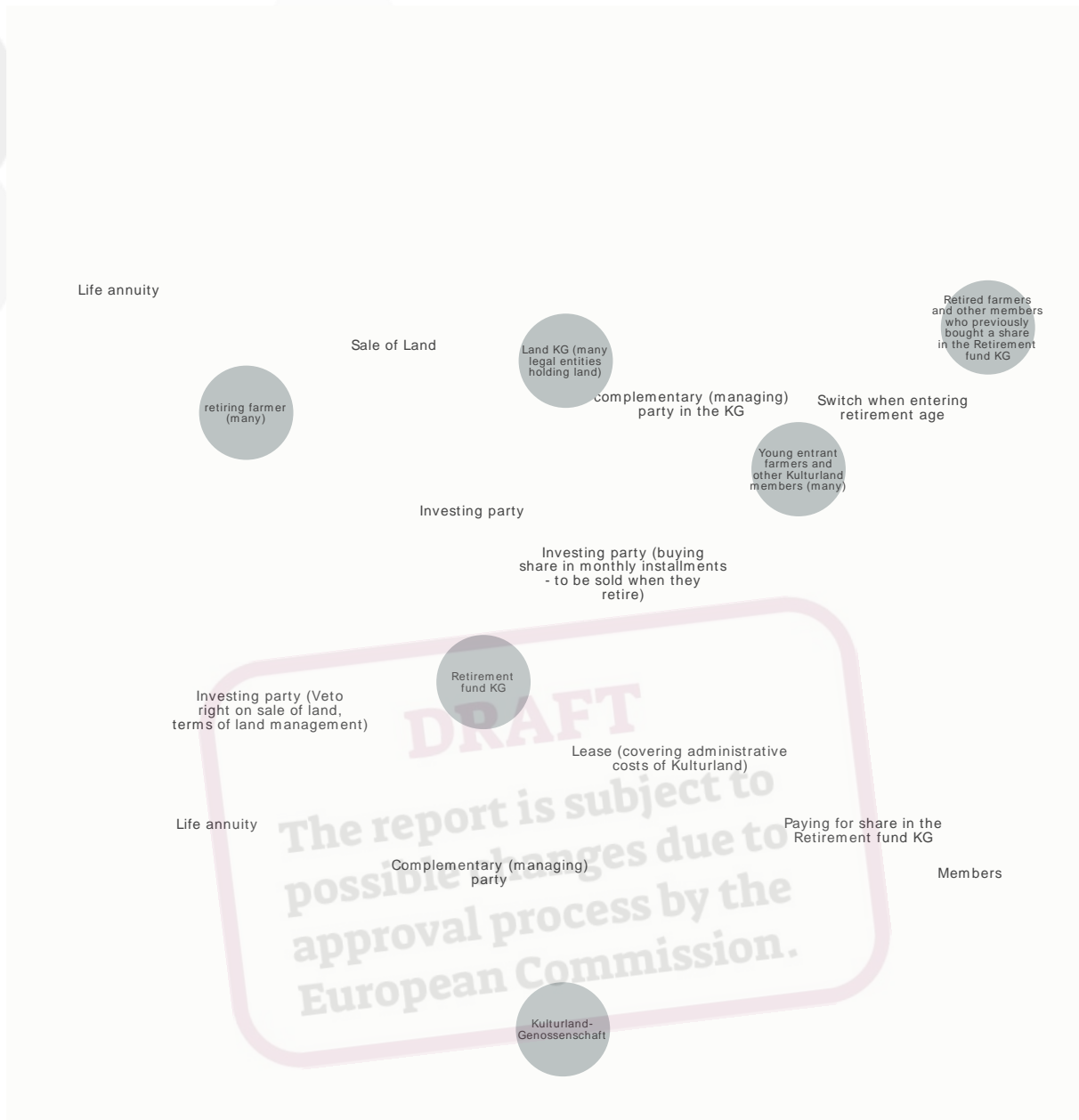


Figure 10 - Sociogram of a “generalised” retirement savings model

Working out the all the complex questions laid out above required the continuous attention of two Kulturland employees for over a year, interacting with many organisations and experts to understand all the financial, legal and tax implications of annuities. This process has resulted in a situation where only two Kulturland employees fully understand the model, while especially the volunteer supervisory board (most of whom have full-time jobs and other obligations) did not have the necessary time to understand all the issues at stake and all potential risks. A three-day internal workshop was therefore prepared and conducted early August 2021 to harmonise internal positions and knowledge. At the time of this report being written, Kulturland is also in the final stages of working out the legal parameters to implement the generalised approach to be able to mobilise retirement savings of larger groups of citizens (to go beyond mechanisms involving retiring farmers, their successors and potential community-connected members).

## 3.5 Farm succession

The last approach focused on the topic of farm succession. Two actions were developed by DLg and XCN in Flanders (BE) and Catalonia (ES) respectively. In Catalonia, the specific area of Vall del Corb “the Valley of the Meandering River” was targeted. It straddles three different counties (Urgell, Conca de Barberà, and La Segarra).

### 3.5.1 Context and issues related to the actions on farm succession

Similarly to the rest of Europe, the target areas for these RURALIZATION actions wrestle with issues of generational renewal in agriculture. In Flanders, only 10% of farmers are under 40 years old, while 16% are older than 65 (Platteau *et al.* 2018). One fifth are between 50 and 54 years of age. Only 13% of the farmers over 50 declare having a potential successor (Platteau *et al.* 2018). In Spain data from the 2009 Agricultural Census already showed an aged sector, where 75% of current farmers will retire within the coming two decades (Monllor 2014). In Vall del Corb, demographic decline goes hand-in-hand with other challenges, including a fall in the primary sector’s gross value added (between -3.8% in Conca de Barberà and -19.4% in La Segarra) and intensification of agriculture. With dominant and expanding cereal and pig farming, the area suffers issues of pollution, landscape degradation, rising land prices, and low land mobility, which makes it little attractive to new entrants. In Flanders as well the tendency is towards enlargement and specialisation of farms, which causes a decline in farm numbers about 3% decline annually (Platteau *et al.* 2018)—and rising land prices, with a 28.7% increase between 2015 and 2019 (Notarisbarometer 2019). In both contexts, access to land is a key bottleneck hampering the transfer of farms from one generation to another, particularly when such transfer must happen outside family circles. While this is not new knowledge, working on succession specifically is still an emerging area of work for most public authorities and civil society organisations, particularly regarding extra-family farm succession. A2L organisations are part of the actors faced with growing expectations (from newcomers, land owners, retiring farmers, local authorities...) and an increasing drive to contribute with facilitating farm succession, while carefully defining their role. It requires, on the one hand, to get to grips with complex and multifaceted succession issues (e.g. fiscal, legal, emotional, psychological...) and, on the other hand, to elaborate a strategy to improve succession dynamics while staying true to organisations’ core objectives to promote access to land and agroecology.

### 3.5.2 Description of the actions

#### a. Objectives

In this context, DLg aimed **to deepen and broaden its capacity to work on farm succession through collective land acquisition**. Prior to the action, DLg had carried out an assessment of how and why it should act on succession issues, based on internal work and dialogue with two other A2L network partners: Terre de Liens and Rurbans (Catalonia). This established that its core work—i.e. leveraging crowdfunding to buy land and rent it career-long to organic farmers—could be an important lever to help facilitate succession processes. Beyond acting as a land financier and bringing legitimacy to successors’ projects, the organisation guarantees the land will be preserved and cultivated organically, which can be an incentive for retiring farmers to transfer land (particularly in the case of agroecological farmers who care about the

continuation of their life's work to care for and nurture the land). Beyond these initial observations, however, DLg needed to **further research how to practically deal with succession cases** when an opportunity arises, notably by being able to fund bigger or more expensive plots (as farmers tend to accumulate hectares throughout their careers). Furthermore, DLg's action sought to **communicate, raise awareness and more broadly facilitate farm succession** at the scale of the Flemish region. The second action was developed by XCN **to contribute to a broader, long-term project called "Territori de Vincles"**, aiming to revitalise the Vall del Corb area through the development of agroecology, the preservation of landscapes and natural resources, and the strengthening of the local economy and services. Working on farm succession is a strategic area of the project, as the dominant agricultural model is intensive but **upcoming retirement of many farmers could create an opportunity for an agroecological transition**. XCN thus worked together with Aresta Cooperative, a local partner involved in "Territori de Vincles", to increase knowledge on the areas' agricultural specificities as well as the needs and desires of retiring farmers and potential successors. An important number of external stakeholders were engaged with or contacted during the course of both actions, including:

- retiring farmers and new entrants
- agricultural and rural development organisations (in Catalonia XCN exchanged with local partners of the "Territori de Vincles" project, local cooperatives, and local institutions, in Flanders DLg engaged with several organisations working on farm succession or with retiring farmers)
- experts (to gather data on the local agricultural context in Catalonia, to receive legal advice on financing scenarios in Flanders).

#### b. Tasks and workplans

The tasks undertaken within the pilot actions to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table 10 below.

[Table 10 - tasks included in the work plan of DLg and XCN](#)

De Landgenoten	XCN
<p><b>1 - Refine DLg's financing strategies to acquire bigger or expensive plots.</b></p> <p>1.1 - Ask expert advice on financing scenarios and their tax implications</p>	<p><b>1 - Improve knowledge on the local farming sector.</b></p> <p>1.1 Gather relevant public data (statistical and geographical)</p> <p>1.2 Identify key missing data and ask relevant stakeholders</p> <p>1.3 Analyse the data sets and draw main conclusions</p>
<p><b>2 - Share or make known the possibilities to organise a farm transfer with DLg, along with the overall benefits of community owned land (targeting farmers, experts, and organisations working on farm succession).</b></p> <p>2.1 - Create a communication strategy</p> <p>2.2 - Unroll the communication strategy*</p>	<p><b>2 - Improve knowledge on the amount, state and expectations of young persons willing to enter the farming sector within the area</b></p> <p>2.1. <b>Narrow down the task scope to 2-4 municipalities</b></p> <p>2.2 - Identify possible new entrants into farming that live within the area</p> <p>2.3. - Define data to be obtained and elaborate a survey or interview template</p> <p>2.4. - Conduct a survey (or interviews) to assess needs and expectations regarding the process of entering into farming within the area</p>
<p><b>3 - Explore in which ways DLg could help facilitate and raise awareness on farm succession</b></p> <p>3.1 - explore the idea of a 'bio business network'*</p>	<p><b>3 - Improving the knowledge on the amount, state and expectations of retiring farmers within the area</b></p> <p>3.1 - <b>Narrow down the task scope to 2-4 municipalities, based</b></p>

3.2 - develop an introductory workshop	<p>on the results of action</p> <p>3.2. - Identify retiring farmers within the area</p> <p>3.3. - Define data to be obtained and elaborate a survey or interview template</p> <p>3.4. - Conduct a survey (or interviews) to assess needs and expectations regarding the process of retiring and transferring a farm.</p>
4 - Assess and adjust an internal protocol to assess farm transfer cases within DLg (by mean actively reaching out to farmers naring retirement or stakeholders close to them)	<p><b>4 - Strengthen the collaboration and/or common understanding amongst stakeholders</b></p> <p>4.1 Organise sessions to share and debate on main results with stakeholders involved in the project design</p> <p>4.2 Organise a session to put in contact potential new entrants and retiring farmers and help identify common goals, synergies and possible setbacks in farm succession</p> <p>4.3 Elaborate public policy proposals related to fostering farm succession with an agroecological perspective within the area, and reach out to local and regional authorities</p>
5 - Improve understanding of the social and emotional aspects that come into play in farm transfers	

\* Tasks or sub-tasks marked with an orange asterisk changed over the course of the action. Tasks marked in orange were ultimately not carried out.

### 3.5.3 Results and outputs

#### a. Results of the action on farm succession in Flanders

DLg's main outputs related to making the cooperative more competent on farm succession issues and more identified as an active stakeholder on this issue. To do so, the main areas of work concerned 1) exploring new financing scenarios to increase the cooperative's capacity to act on generational farm transfers, 2) devising tools to make DLg a more performing and identified actor on succession issues, including an internal protocol on succession cases.

##### i. Financing scenarios to collectively purchase the land of retiring farmers

DLg conducted research highlighting that access to land, which requires increasing amounts of capital, is the largest barrier to entering the European agricultural sector (EIP Agri 2016, Zondag *et al.* 2016). In Flanders land prices are among the highest in Europe, with an average price of about € 63,000 (Notarisbarometer 2021). Existing farms often build up quite an acreage over the years. However, over the past years DLg has managed to crowdfund the necessary capital for only about three hectares per year. The action therefore explored possible ways to increase financing capacity of DLg. That way, the organisation would be able to play a stronger role in facilitating land transfers related to succession. Moreover, land in community-based ownership prevents that each generation needs to finance the land over and over again.

In a first phase of action, DLg consulted different sources and experts to get clarity on all possible financial options. Apart from relevant literature, DLg interviewed experts including: an advisor of a consulting firm, a tax lawyer, a legal expert of a large financial cooperative, and

the organisation's accountant and notary. Much back-and-forth with them was needed to clarify the pros and cons of each scenario for the seller as well for DLg.

The final result was a panel of six possible financing scenarios summarised in box 6. Talking to the financial experts highlighted other issues. It turned out that a lot of the strategies proposed demand flexibility from the owner's side to work, which is a lot to ask when owners are retiring farmers aspiring to a comfortable life and pension after dedicating a whole career to the farm. Therefore, the pre-requisite to act in many situations is that owners feel concerned about what is done on land. Furthermore, farms are very expensive and DLg is not equipped yet to purchase farm buildings. This requires finding successors who have the means to finance infrastructures, which is far from being the case of all new entrants.

#### **Box 6: Six scenarios to increase capacity to purchase transferable farms in Flanders**

With the help of expert advisors, DLg established six legal options to facilitate the takeover of transferors' farms by a community-based land ownership structure:

(1) *Delayed ownership title or put-call option.* Both possibilities allow to postpone the transfer of money to the seller. With the delayed ownership title, it is mandatory to pay registration taxes within four months of signing the ownership deed, however the money due to the seller—if they agree—can be transferred in full amount at a later stage. The put-call option is another possibility where a formal and binding agreement determines how much time parties want to leave between the sales agreement and the final signature of the ownership deed (when all costs will be paid). In this scenario, the actual buyer can be changed (partially) when signing the final paperwork. This leaves room for De Landgenoten to switch between the cooperative or foundation, according to our crowdfunding results.

(2) *Sale with a postponed payment.* In this scenario, the owner agrees to be paid in instalments over a period of time. This is determined by a formal agreement.

(3) *Buying with a financier.* This third scenario could be used in a case where the seller wants to complete the transaction on the short term and where a third financing party is willing to take part in the sale. In this case, DLg and a third financing party can enter an undivided ownership agreement at the start before DLg finds enough funds to buy back the full farm (a similar model was used by KL, see section 3.3).

(4) *Win-win loans.* This option leverages a government scheme where individuals can loan money to medium-sized enterprises like DLg. Up to up to € 75,000 can be lent by an individual during five to ten years. In total DLg could be lent up to € 300,000 which allows to significantly increase cash flow. DLg pays a limited interest to the lenders. The government offers additional tax advantages to the lender and guarantees a part of the loaned amount in case the beneficiary cannot pay the money back. DLg started working with this system over the course of the action and easily raised sufficient amounts for projects of purchase of farmland for an existing farm and for a farm succession.

(5) *Inserting property in cooperative.* This is a scenario where the landowner receives DLg shares in exchange for inserting land in the cooperative and can gradually cash them. This scenario would allow DLg to become owner without paying the registration taxes. However, it requires an amendment of the statutes of the cooperative, so this scenario will not be put into practice on the short term.

(6) *Life annuity sale.* This is a contract in which an owner without direct heirs can receive monthly payment until death, when the farm would be fully transferred to the cooperative. A few questions still remain in regard to this scenario (see similar questions raised by KL regarding life expectancy, inflation, etc.), which DLg chose not to investigate in detail so far.

## ii. Tools to make DLg a more performing and identified actor on succession issues

Another important area of work for DLg was the improvement of an internal protocol to deal with succession cases brought to the knowledge of the cooperative. This protocol includes two separate questionnaires: one for transferors still looking for a successor, one for transferors that already identified a possible successor. The RURALIZATION action allowed to deepen it by incorporating questions on the transferors' openness to alternative financing scenarios. Furthermore, DLg surveyed organisations specialised in supporting transferors, successors and their families to enrich the protocol with an understanding of the social and emotional aspects at play in farm transfer processes. The surveys highlighted a number of sensitivities and difficulties (summarised together with XCN's findings in table 11 below), some being retained as points of attention to consider when assessing incoming farm succession cases.

Furthermore, DLg worked to raise its profile as a succession-supporting organisation through:

- Organising meetings with BioForum and the Kenniscentrum Bedrijfsopvolging to pitch the idea of organising common training sessions directed to retiring farmers.
- Writing a communication strategy and mapping of actors to be contacted (notably actors working with retiring farmers such as veterinarians, suppliers, consultants, financial advisors...).
- Unrolling some communication actions including a dedicated website page on farm succession (with a video and downloadable brochure), and hosting a webinar directed to stakeholders in close contact with farmers (see stakeholders in sociogram 8a of Annex III).

### **b. Results of the action on farm succession in Vall del Corb**

In the Vall del Corb area, XCN's work in partnership with "Territori de Vincles", was mutually beneficial. XCN used partners' local anchorage to mobilise stakeholders and carry out action research, while the project could benefit from XCN's human capacity and experience to get set up (it had not yet secured much funding at the time of the action). XCN provided the project with 1) extensive research on the local area's agricultural and land structure features, 2) first-hand knowledge on the needs and desires of local retiring farmers and potential new entrants (from surveys).

#### i. Improved knowledge on the local farming sector

XCN ran a broad diagnosis of the farming sector analysing public databases and collecting missing data from relevant stakeholders. This demonstrated the predominance of conventional farming in Vall del Corb, mainly focused on pig industry and cereal production. While agricultural trends were not positive in the area, pig and poultry farming maintained a pattern of growing profits most areas. This can lead to further predominance of the livestock sectors, which Territori de Vincles identified as a driver of land concentration processes and low attractiveness of the region for new entrants.

The livestock sector is indeed marked by "integration contracts" systems where the farmers partner with an external company which provides animals, food and some other means of production and in exchange sells their products to the company for a pre-fixed remuneration. This form of "contract agriculture" in Catalonia has been criticised because of:

- 1) the loss of farmers' decision-making capacity over their livestock production (dictated by the integrating company);
- 2) the creation of strong dependency towards the agri-food industry and relationships that are deeply “unequal” between individual farmers and larger companies;
- 3) the decoupling between livestock raising and land, as animal feed is provided by the integrating company and no longer comes from the farm (which causes socio-environmental problems arising from the import of fodder from Latin America);
- 4) the promotion of a large volume of largely export-oriented production, resulting in excessive use of pig manure as fertilizer, water contamination, and soil degradation.

This model strongly influences the agricultural and land structure of area, hampering the entrance into the farming sector for those that seek to develop agroecological projects. The main conclusions of XCN's broad context studies indicate an apparent low potential for agroecological transition and rural regeneration in this area, which was taken into account in realising other tasks (see stakeholders' analysis in sociogram 9 of Annex III).

#### ii. Improved knowledge on retiring farmers and new entrants

Different formal and informal channels were used in order to identify and establish contact with retiring farmers within the area, e.g. the contact network of Vall del Corb associations, local authorities, farming cooperatives and farmers associations... The public data from the previous research was also leveraged to enrich the list. Eight farmers accepted to take part in the investigation from a long list of 28 individuals corresponding to survey criteria—i.e. farmers above 55 years old, in geographically diverse areas, and representing a diversity of productions and production systems. XCN ran about 1h to 1h30-long interviews with each of them. The results are very extensive and qualitative, and can be further consulted in XCN's internal report. Some of the main succession difficulties identified through this work are however summarised in table 11 below, next to DLg's own results for comparison across regions.

Table 11 - Succession issues in Flanders and Catalonia (Vall del Corb)

	Flanders	Vall del Corb
<i>Difficulties related to perceptions of farming</i>	- <b>Farming is considered a way of life</b> , and the business is intertwined with family and other emotional connections, making it difficult to “let go” of the activity.	- Transferors experience <b>disenchantment towards the farming profession</b> and do not want to burden their descendants with taking over the farm (with difficulties related to the need to scale-up, low land security, or personal sacrifices...).
<i>Difficulties related to perceptions of new entrants or successors</i>		- Farmers have the perception that there is a <b>lack of interested new entrants</b> (as young generations are seen as not willing to make social sacrifices to stay in rural areas)
		- They also doubt more generally <b>the capacity, motivation, and viability</b> of new entrants' projects
		- Most interviewees wanted <b>successors with specific skills or characteristics</b> , such as having an adapted

		social background (being from the area, knowing the area) being receptive and sensitive, caring for the land, maintaining symbolic farm elements (dry stone walls, terraces, etc.)
<b>Material difficulties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most transferors want to <b>stay in the farm house</b>, which means the successor has to find housing.</li> <li>- This can also limit the new generation's ability to fully manage the farm, as 'psychological ownership' can remain for the transferor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some farmers might have <b>specific economic expectations after retirement</b>, notably to retain some CAP direct payments</li> <li>- Older farmers pointed to the <b>lack of economic viability of their farms, or other material difficulties for succession</b> (too elevated capital value, issues preventing building renovation, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Difficulties related to family issues or the lack of family successor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transferors may <b>fear delicate family discussions</b> associated with succession (heritage, distribution among children...).</li> <li>- For many successors it is important to ensure that <b>all parties consider the succession process to be fair</b> (including non-successor heirs).</li> <li>- Transferors feel pressure to <b>not be the ones ruining the family farm tradition</b>. This means they delay the process when they do not have a family successor identified.</li> <li>- Planning succession and retirement means <b>farmers need to face their own mortality</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was a <b>lack of planning for succession</b> by most respondents.</li> <li>- Some farmers were <b>unwilling to transfer the farm outside of the family</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Difficulties related to status and "symbolic capital"</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a desire of transferors to stay connected to the farm activity and <b>reluctance to renounce managerial duties and ownership</b>, which provide esteem and recognition (symbolic capital)</li> <li>- Some transferor <b>want to sell the farm property with discretion</b> (issues come up such as fear that the local community will think the transferor is in need of money, shame about the farmers' kids not following into their footsteps, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviewed farmers <b>expect to keep a role in the farm</b>, either staying involved, or transferring knowledge to the successor.</li> </ul>

Furthermore, XCN carried out an online survey targeting new entrants. Disseminating the questionnaire through different channels (social media, youth organisations, etc.), 35 responses were obtained. The sample was divided in three groups for analysis: respondents under 40 years old with some training or experience in farming (19), respondents under 40 years old with no training nor experience (6), respondents over 40 years old (10). Findings related to group 1 were deemed more relevant to understand the needs and desires of potential young new entrants and are summarised in box 7.

### Box 7: Findings of a new entrants survey in Vall del Corb

Nineteen aspiring farmers answered an online survey carried out by XCN. The main finding from this group included:

That these potential new entrants were generally open to diverse type of farming activities (selecting on average 3 types of farming sectors)

They overwhelmingly declared to be interested in organic farming and agroecology (only 2 indicated an interest in conventional farming), and preferred local marketing channels (such as cooperative, shops, CSA, etc.).

They were open to entering a succession process, indicating in general to be open to mentoring from transferors and thinking that farm transfer was an opportunity to not “start from scratch”.

Yet, respondents expressed fear that they couldn’t economically afford a farm (16 of them), that the landowner would keep the CAP subsidies (10), and that the transferor could exert too much power in the decision-making process that might hinder the development of their personal project (11).

All the knowledge produced through the RURALIZATION action was used as a basis for stakeholder discussions and supported the launch of a Twitter communication campaign to raise awareness on generational renewal in Vall del Corb. The actors involved in the campaign are now slightly better known amongst other stakeholders, which might facilitate future networking and increase the chances of success of “Territori de Vincles”. In a similar vein, the action had the ripple effect of further increasing the knowledge of and cohesion between the Catalan project partners, thus building crucial legitimacy for future unfolding of the initiative.

The report is available at: <https://www.ruralization.europa.eu/en/possible-changes-due-to-approval-process-by-the-european-commission>

## 4 Cross-cutting analysis of innovative actions on emerging land issues

The ten actions developed, documented and analysed by the A2L Network members and partners as part of this RURALIZATION work all explore emerging issues and solutions for access to land for agroecological farmers. As already highlighted in the RURALIZATION D6.1 report, these actions also innovate in the way they operate, in the way they transform how land is considered and managed, and in the way they connect land with broader challenges of generational renewal and rural regeneration.

Brédif (2004) insists on the fact that *“the generic term ‘problem’ hides very heterogeneous situations that must be clearly distinguished, which in general is not done. [...] these problems persist or even worsen simply because they are dealt with inappropriately. The preferred solutions to the problems are false solutions, in that they do not seek to change the fundamental, interactional, communicational and systemic structure from which the problem emerges.”* Thus, institutions sometimes tend to address only the most visible part of problems, without analysing its causes in-depth. Conversely, in a number of innovations studied in RURALIZATION, land organisations try to reconstruct the systemic framework of the problem, in order to “reframe” the way it is perceived and the way it is addressed.

They however often have low means to do so, especially when working on an emerging issue, which requires at the same time building expertise and making the new expertise-driven way of perceiving the problem visible to different actors. This is added to the fact that shifting paradigm requires overturning an adverse situation, in the sense that innovators’ vision is often not represented in the main decision-making spheres and is generally going against the objectives and vision put forward by stakeholders with more material means.

Furthermore, at a more operational level, innovators are also trying to build up their legitimacy to attract different forms of territorial capitals and intervene on the issue identified, which is not easy in an adverse situation. They must find ways of strengthening their capacity through different channels—e.g. by mobilising individuals and local communities who share their concerns—while exemplifying change by acting in a concrete and transformative way in the territories so as to increase the visibility of their social and environmental concerns. Rowlands (1995), quoted by Barnaud *et al.* (2010), distinguishes three forms of empowerment in this respect:

- the consolidation of personal capacities, such as an improved understanding of issues or the development of new skills and techniques (which corresponds to the **power to do something**);
- relational capacity building, which corresponds to the development of strategic know-how helping influence the outcome of an exchange, a negotiation or a decision-making process (corresponding to the enhancement of **power over someone**);
- the strengthening of collective capacities to cooperate and achieve more satisfactory results at the collective level (**power to do together**).

The following diagram (figure 11) represents the conditions of emergence of capacities for action observed the actions documented in RURALIZATION. This structures the evolution of

innovators activities: from the identification of the emerging issue to the implementation of concrete solutions to address it. This diagram describes: 1) the specificity of their concerns, questioning the overall framework and dominant trends, 2) the specificity of the conditions in which these organisations operate, in an environment that is often adverse but in which they nevertheless find allies, 3) the specificity of their work to build their legitimacy in order to mobilise territorial resources and gain capacity to act, and 4) the specificity of their concrete actions to transform the territory, often working to achieve stepping stones in a more ambitious transformative agenda (which may bring them in some cases to integrate certain places of governance as they gain higher degrees of legitimacy).

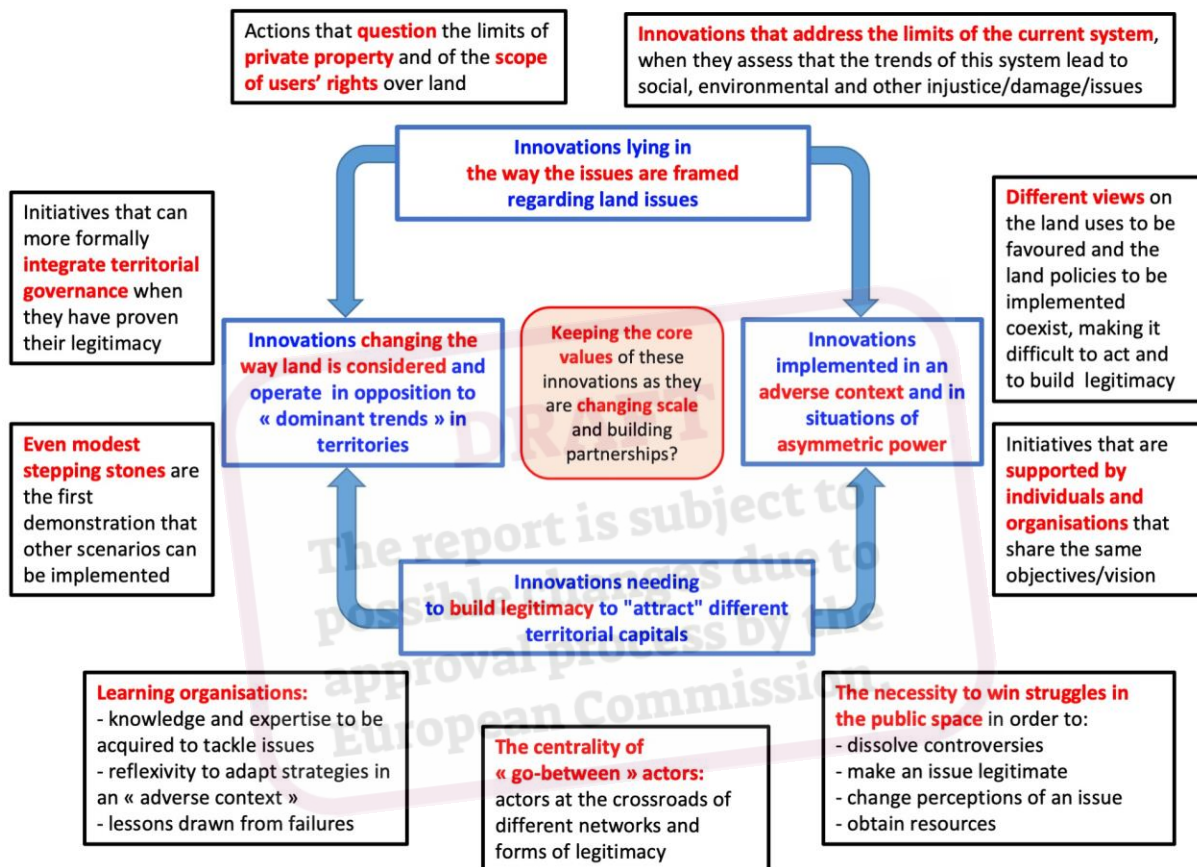


Figure 11 - Conditions of emergence of capacities for action

This section on cross-cutting analyses is structured around the four blue blocks represented at the centre of this diagram, from the way the issue is framed to the concrete transformative actions on territories and their impacts.

The black frames refer to different aspects:

- the conditions of emergence: different views on land uses coexist; winning struggles in the public space is necessary;
- the specific features of these initiatives: they are supported by people and organisations sharing a common vision; go-between actors are central; they are “learning organisations” and rely on the demonstrative value of concrete stepping stones;
- the types of impacts or outcomes related to integrating territorial governance; to questioning the limits of property and use rights; and to addressing the limits of the current system.

## 4.1 Innovation lies in the way the issues are framed

### 4.1.1 Reframing the issue

Barthe (2003) specifies that “problematization” not only refers to “*the general formulation of a problem but also the identification of the paths to follow to address it, and consequently the designation of the most legitimate actors to take charge of it*”. Problematizing therefore involves both “*qualifying the problem*” and “*determining who is supposed to intervene, in what way and with what means*”, while bringing the problem to the forefront of the agenda so that it can have an effective existence and be addressed concretely. Barthe also specifies that this “problematization process”, when carried out adequately, leads to an analysis of the issue from all perspectives: moral, economic, political or technical. Mermet *et al.* (2005), referring to environmental issues, specify that considering all their dimensions implies mobilising different concepts, analysis perspectives, and data borrowed from various disciplines of human and natural sciences in order to grasp issues in the full complexity of the system in which they are embedded. Concerning environmental issues, Brédif states that the “*general feeling of inadequacy of the answers and solutions proposed to it [...] has its origin in the fact that essential dimensions of the ecological problem are insufficiently explored*”. Complex and multi-stakeholder problems are indeed often being reduced to simple technical questions, neglecting the necessary connections between scales (from local to global), and sidestepping the diversity of expectations, needs, and potential proposals (Brédif 2004).

Barthe (2005) specifies that when individuals or organisations call for action regarding potential risks or dangers (connected to environmental or social issues for example, as A2L organisations may do), the data or analysis that would allow this issue to be characterised may not exist, while the identification of those “responsible for the problem” may also be the subject of numerous questions. “*The type of knowledge that should be produced to understand and deal with the issue may not even be known*” (Barthe 2005). The debates and their results (propositions of solutions or scenarios) may therefore be aligned more with certain actors, particularly those with more political influence or resources, since they were biased by the way they were established (highlighting or, on the contrary, omitting certain aspects or knowledge).

The next table (table 12) proposes to summarise to what extent and on which aspects each of the actions documented in RURALIZATION is innovative. It highlights the fact that the way issues are framed can be an innovation *in itself*, being based on the observation of the limits of the dominant land and agricultural system, and on the need to find alternative ways of addressing issues. In this respect, A2L organisations are both trying to characterise the issue and mobilise, as Mermet *et al.* (2005) state, some new frameworks and concepts to shift the perceptions of targeted audiences. In many cases, this involves exploring some of the fundamental principles that govern economic and social logics, e.g. legal frameworks (like private property), political or market organisation, etc.

Table 12 - What makes the action innovative and what is the specificity of the way the issue is framed?

USE OF PUBLIC LAND OR COMMONS	
Commons - ER	County Farms - SA
To study a system often considered as "medieval" and not very formalised (the commons) in order to understand the characteristics that make it relevant today, in light of rising land privatisation and lacking generational renewal. This action is also about making a subject generally dealt with at the local level rise at a national level in order to give it a political existence/visibility.	To develop and apply forward thinking as a lever for political change, integrating into this vision cutting-edge issues such as land justice. Here again, it is a question of giving a "national" existence to a subject which is generally dealt with locally and in a disparate manner by local authorities, while renewing the way of perceiving/valuing public goods (as multi-functional resources in particular).
FARM SUCCESSION	
Farm succession - DLg	Revitalising Vall del Corb area - XCN
To position community-based land purchase as a key to successful farm transfer from one generation to the next and explore financial scenarios to support extra-familial succession. To compile fragmented knowledge on different aspects of farm succession, particularly psycho-emotional factors, to better inform the process of community-based land purchases for successors, including what can hinder these purchases.	Make farm succession one of the main levers of a project aiming at regenerating a rural area (and sustaining its transition to agroecology). Integrating this focus in a multi-partner project involving local authorities and stakeholders in the sector. To this end, highlight information that is not visible, e.g. the profile and expectations of successors and retiring farmers.
FARM RESTRUCTURING	
Building ownership - KL	Large farm reorientation - TDL
Succeed in dissociating the ownership of land and buildings while avoiding speculation and safeguarding the "unity" of farm holdings in the long term (find ways for both land and buildings to remain linked regarding their purpose). Make users responsible regarding the use and improvement of the buildings while limiting the financial burden of the purchase and management of buildings.	Restructuring a peri-urban farm and making it a territorial/multi-partner development platform, acting on local decisions regarding land uses. Develop a new model of farm governance and of access to the farming profession. Restore natural resources in an area where biodiversity has been eroded by years of conventional farming. Document this social innovation with research frameworks, for both dissemination and operational purposes (e.g. mitigating conflicts).
LAND STEWARDSHIP	
Hay meadows conservation - XCN	Biodiversity on TDL farms - TDL
To think "out of the box" to find ways to make a nature conservation model economically sustainable in an unfavourable context (small plots, land abandonment, lack of subsidies...). To seek levers for autonomy through stakeholders' involvement and building policy proposals.	To explore ways to better articulate agroecology and biodiversity conservation, with a modular approach based on the involvement of local stakeholders. Make sure this approach enables to take into account the various representations of the stakeholders involved within TDL. Study some remarkable experiences and analyse the economic and social logics which makes them possible.
NEW MODELS TO FUNDRAISE FOR LAND	
Community-based land ownership - ER	Retirement savings - KL
To explore the feasibility and modalities of a community-based land ownership organisation, in a country context where the implementation of solidarity-based tools for land acquisition in a post-communist situation is difficult (reluctance regarding collective property). Develop partnerships to this end between farmers' organisations and land conservation organisations, which currently do not exist in Romania.	To explore several funding models to offer retirement payments to farmers whose land is owned by a land trust, hence who do not have any assets to sell to pay for retirement at the end of their career. Explore several micro-models of payments (synchronous or deferred), based on collective investment in land.

#### 4.1.2 Bringing these issues to the forefront of the agenda

Beyond reframing the debate, A2L partners need to act strategically to bring these issues to the forefront of the agenda of other potentially involved stakeholders. In some cases, they need to convince actors who previously felt disconnected from the issue that they are also part of the equation, and can potentially help influence the situation to a more favourable outcome.

Bobbio and Melé (2015) point out that certain types of issues, such as relations between workers and employers (through trade unions) or international conflicts, have long been institutionalised. They are dealt with through participatory procedures in which the concerned stakeholders directly seek a solution to the conflict, thus avoiding the need for external intervention of a political or legal authority. In some of the issues considered here, such as environmental issues or urban development conflicts, Bobbio and Melé state that *“the creation of participation bodies is much more recent and their institutionalisation appears more uncertain”*. In this context, Lemieux and Barthe (1998) state that recourse to “experts” can, in certain cases, be an aspect of political and social domination. For innovative land work, it may thus be appropriate *“to question the modes of legitimisation that allow professionals to distinguish themselves from amateurs”* and to *“collectively claim their monopoly of legitimate technical expertise”* (Lemieux and Barthe 1998).

The following diagram (Figure 12), intends to show a common trajectory observed in the different RURALIZATION actions concerning the process of bringing an issue to the forefront of the agenda (up to undertaking concrete actions). It insists on the strategic and cognitive dimensions necessary for this process, i.e. putting together or producing new knowledge. This diagram remains a model, and processes, of course, do not necessarily follow strictly this cycle.

As indicated in the comments on figure 2 in section 2.2.1 on the initial processes of social innovation, the questions and issues that land organisations address have a clear origin. They are either directly related to their vision and social mission, resulting from a political and practical analysis of needs and the role of these organisations in relation to these needs, or related to a previous action or a new concrete situation, leading these organisations to address a new topic or a newly identified need.

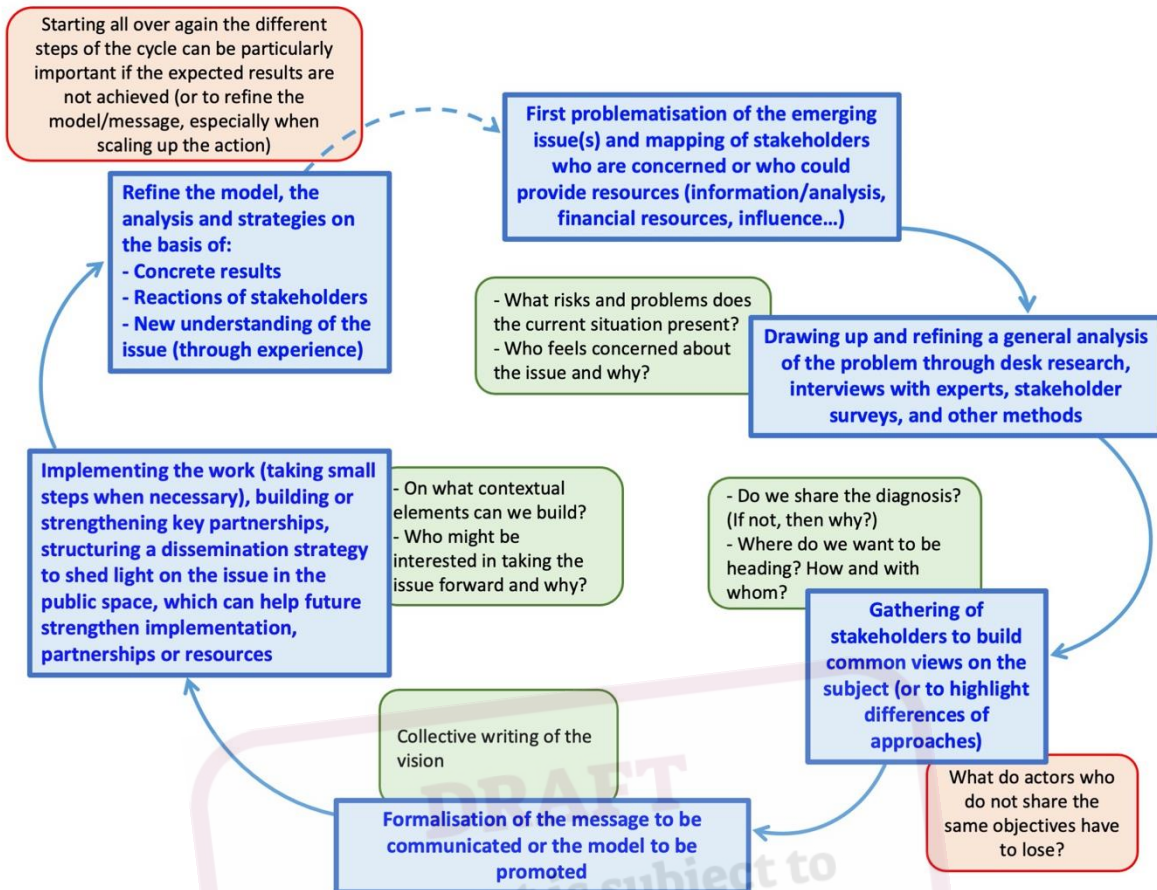


Figure 12 - Process allowing to bring an issue to the forefront of the agenda

In some cases, as we can observe in this diagram, land organisations may experience failures at the end of the cycle, in the sense that their attempts to set the agenda may not be successful. But these failures, in a reflexive process, are also sources of learning that will enable the cycle of strategic and analytical reflection to be revisited with a new understanding, informed by previous experience.

We can also consider that in this process, loops bringing to the previous steps can happen at all steps. For example, a stakeholder meeting can lead innovators to go back to their problem analysis or gather new stakeholders to explore aspects that were not in the scope of the practice at first sight, etc.

As an example, XCN's action on hay meadows has gone through this cycle in relation to their proposition to reframe CAP agro-environmental measures with the following steps: the problematisation, the general analysis, the gathering to build common views and the formalisation of the message. Then they have communicated and delivered the message to the institution and policy makers.

## 4.2 Innovations implemented in an adverse context

Brédif (2004) insists on the fact that the identification of the causes justifying the inadequate management of environmental issues varies enormously depending on actors and their mindset. For some economists for example, *"the core of the problem lies in the absence of a signal sent to the market allowing to value environmental goods or resources"*. For the

advocates of “Deep Ecology”, “*the dominant anthropocentrism is responsible*”, while for others, “*the ecological crisis is above all a political crisis, as the great division between science and society, the profane and the expert, and nature and culture, prevent us from thinking about the problem in the appropriate way*”. Thus, depending on the approach, “*the ecological issue is not felt with the same seriousness, does not imply the same urgency to act, and does not give rise to the same recommendations*” (Brédif 2004). Therefore, the debate on how ecological issues should be handled (but the same question arises for social, political and economic issues) takes place in a sphere in which a plurality of points of views are expressed, some of which may lead to potential compromises while others are more fundamentally antagonistic.

Concerning this adverse context—and this echoes the constraints outlined in report D6.1 concerning the difficulties of operating on “certain types of land”—the more the land on which these organisations operate is at the crossroads of multiple uses or interests, the more adverse the context might be. This is the case for the *Ferme de Sarliève*, located on a plain coveted by various economic actors; for actions in public land, dealing sometimes with publicly-held parcels located in strategic areas; for farm succession in some cases, especially when farms are located in areas that are considered particularly productive. In the same way, the more land organisations are involved in actions that fall outside their “usual” field of intervention, the more the context they face can be adverse, involving stronger needs for alliances and legitimacy to carry out their actions.

Furthermore, beyond these differences in points of view regarding the use of land or the issue in general, the actors able to take charge of an issue and those wishing to participate in handling it often find themselves in very asymmetrical power relationships, with imbalanced capacities to act both on the material level as well as on the debate of ideas. In this respect, Mermet *et al.* (2005) emphasise the strategic dimension involved in the concrete resolution of environmental problems in an “adverse context”. They insist on the fact that this resolution implies, for the actors aiming to bring about change, to unfold strategies which can overcome the resistance to change of the actors effectively leading the “socio-ecosystem” in place. Mermet *et al.* also mention the fact that, in many current public policy evaluation processes, there is a contradictory situation in the sense that the same system of actors that causes the environmental problem and resists change finds itself in the position of assessing of the public authorities’ actions aiming to change it. On agricultural issues in particular, Busca (2003) concludes that the implementation of environmental measures in the agricultural sector is subject to a dynamic of strategic appropriation by dominant professional organisations, which results in alteration of the initial environmental purpose of public interventions in order to preserve agricultural economic interests. Indeed, in many cases, ideas promoted by innovative organisations advocating for agroecological land use are not represented in the main governance and decision-making bodies. Their ideas often conflict with the mainstream trends and ways of thinking, embodied by actors which are more integrated in decision-making centres, have more resources and who, most of the time, also resist change. The following table (table 13), based on the RURALIZATION actions, shows the different ways in which this adversity is reflected depending on the issue tackled, distinguishing between aspects that are more specifically contextual and aspects that relate to the actor system itself.

Farm succession	Farm restructuring	New models to fundraise for land
<p><b>Elements of context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Predominance of conventional farming / intensive livestock breeding considered as « the only viable activity » for many stakeholders (Vall del Corb) / retiring farmers</li> <li>- Land can keep on representing money resources through CAP payments after retirement...</li> <li>- Difficulties in accessing housing for new entrants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Elements of context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The classical legal framework is not always shaped for the objectives pursued and needs to be " distorted "</li> <li>- Transforming this framework requires seeking new skills from actors who need to be convinced in order to benefit from their knowledge/support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Elements of context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regarding ALPA: the forced collectivisation during the communist period can generate reluctance towards collective acquisition solutions.</li> <li>- <i>Regarding solutions on retirement savings: the overall context appears to be less adverse to making progress on this issue</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholders &amp; power relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties to reach retiring farmers directly (information kept by stakeholders)</li> <li>- It is easier to discuss with the actors already involved in the transition, but generally representing the minority</li> <li>- Neighbours or big corporate farms can be ready to propose high prices for land</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stakeholders &amp; power relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of mainstream users (large landowners, established farmers, urban uses, etc.) in competition for land use</li> <li>- Difficulties to clearly read the strategies pursued by the different stakeholders (landowners, transferors, successors, local authorities when they are involved)</li> <li>- Difficulties to build trust among stakeholders while preserving main principles (long term preservation, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stakeholders &amp; power relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties, within the organisation itself, in enabling everyone to be at the same level of information on technical, often new, subjects</li> <li>- Difficulties to find partners or potential allies sharing the same statements and the same vision to move forward</li> <li>- Low political support</li> </ul>
Use of public land or commons	Land stewardship issues	
<p><b>Elements of context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low means of local authorities</li> <li>- County farms: not a priority compared to Brexit, climate change or covid...</li> <li>- The low rate of intra-family farm succession and the general rural depopulation in Romania can legitimise local authorities to concession out large parts of the commons to industrial investors or to privatise the commons for non-farming purposes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Elements of context (XCN)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low political willingness to act on these aspects in regions which are not considered priority</li> <li>- Low knowledge of landowners and descendants (value and location of hay meadows) and no cooperation between landowners + Low agronomic potential of hay meadows (IAEDEN)</li> <li>- A heterogeneous appropriation of the subject and little coordination between the different structures of the TDL movement until now (TDL)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stakeholders &amp; power relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industrial farming projects or local farmers directly negotiate with local authorities</li> <li>- Lack of bargaining power of local communities</li> <li>- Ideological differences of stakeholders on the role/management of commons</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stakeholders &amp; power relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some conflicts or different views between environmental organisations and farmers</li> <li>- Some landowners/farmers are reluctant to biodiversity issues (IAEDEN)</li> <li>- Which level of autonomy / which role of the farmers regarding choices on land uses?</li> <li>- Problems "endogenous" to the TDL movement with distinct visions on the deployment of this activity and the capacities of the different stakeholders to appropriate the subject are not the same (TDL)</li> </ul>	

Table 13 – Contextual and social aspects of adversity for each issue

As we will show, faced with this adverse context, land organisations 1) rely on various forms of involvement of local communities in order to rebalance the forces at work and to support them in the concrete implementation of their actions; 2) analyse the interactions between actors in order to develop a strategic position to drive forward the issues they wish to resolve.

#### 4.2.1 Involving local communities

Mermet *et al.* (2005) specify that the question of “*who can act, and how, to preserve or restore desirable characteristics of ecosystems?*” finds its legitimacy in 1) the expectations of citizens and social movements that raise the questions of the need for environmental action, “*expecting a concrete and legible efficiency regarding the state of ecosystems*”, and 2) the official commitments made by the public authorities, from the local territories to international conventions, supposed to allow meeting these expectations.

Social studies examining motivations of stakeholders to act in favour of biodiversity—whether farmers changing their practices or citizens engaging in these issues—often make a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations correspond to incentives (financial, legal, social) that push people to act, while intrinsic motivations, which generally represent more powerful drivers for change, correspond to deep-seated convictions. Brédif *et al.* (2017) specify on that aspect that “by leveraging the intrinsic motivation of stakeholders and their preferential links to certain aspects of biodiversity, their positive involvement and

eagerness to improve biodiversity in general can prove to be more fundamental, concerted and sustainable.”

Therefore, if the general context of “adversity” described makes it all the more difficult for A2L organisations to gain legitimacy, the principles and values they defend can resonate strongly with some individuals and local communities. In their innovative practices, the potential or prescribed involvement of local communities takes a wide variety of forms. This includes strengthening participation in land governance, reinforcing communities’ economic involvement in collective land acquisition, implementing the work collectively, pooling together diverse skills needed to deal with complex political, organisational, and technical situations through collective intelligence, etc. On the political level, Bherer (2011) indicates that in order to act effectively in political decision-making spaces, it is indeed necessary to have sufficient knowledge of the rules and cognitive frameworks that regulate often complex public policies. Thus, in some cases, only organised and mobilised citizens can constitute themselves as *legitimate stakeholders* entitled to discuss and negotiate public policies.

Below are a few examples, taken from the RURALIZATION innovative practices, of how **human capital** can be involved (through trainings, encounters, dialogue, etc.) towards skill-building or collective organisation and of how the involvement of local community is seen as a perspective to make progress on specific land issue.

- In the vision that SA and its partners propose for council farmland: local people are encouraged to engage as key stakeholders, through a range of community groups, in the development of council farms management plans, in understanding and evaluating the benefits it provides, and in engaging in opportunities to connect with their local farmed countryside and with those working to steward the land.
- In the work DLg has led regarding farm succession: local communities are mobilised to participate to crowdfunding to finance farm successions. The perspective envisaged by DLg in the future is that volunteers could accompany succession processes to release the staff’s work and multiply the impact of the initiative, involving the need for a training policy aimed at these volunteers.
- Regarding the Ferme de Sarliève, a large part of the work was carried out by the volunteers involved in each of the project’s three founding associations (especially as the project waited to obtain initial funding). The project was strengthened through wider communication and a governance involving multiples instances (thematic work groups and committees) to encourage the participation of volunteers according to their interests. At the same time, documenting the action through a methodical approach encouraged the transmission of the project’s history/philosophy among volunteers (even if maintaining the overall vision for the less committed ones remains complex).
- Concerning the action led by XCN and IAEDEN, one of the central difficulties was to involve the landowners who are scattered, not organised as a group, and sometimes not aware of their land (location, natural value, etc.). Beyond owners, however, other forms of local community involvement were considered in the discussions such as involving of volunteers or high-school students to help maintain meadows for example.

#### 4.2.2 Determining stakeholders’ strategies to drive an issue forward

Both the adverse nature of the context that we have described and the difficulties to make some issues emerge in the public sphere involves reinforcing these skills. The need to build legitimacy to attract capital to implement approaches that do not rely on a simple “business approach” also make it all the more necessary to develop specific strategies to raise the issue

in the agenda and/or to analyse the different material, relational or contractual interactions that link stakeholders to the issue (Chambron 1995). These strategic analyses, either conducted as the action is implemented or afterwards, can foster its emergence or long-term development. We will present some of the strategic analyses conducted in RURALIZATION through the realisation of sociograms, taking the examples of the actions on land stewardship.

The following sociogram relating to “the need to improve hay meadows state of conservation” (see figure 13 on next page) provides information about current state of power relations on this issue. This sociogram can help guide next steps for field organisations, mainly at the governance and alliances level.

Not a single negative relationship is however represented in this sociogram (even if some relations are neutral or nonexistent). This is due to the fact that the current reasons for the unfavourable state of conservation of hay meadows is not directly linked to any specific social actors, but rather to broader socioeconomic patterns that have to do with productivity-oriented decisions, which are antagonistic with the low agronomic potential of hay meadows.

As a result, the strategy to foster their conservation could be to build new relationships, for example between IAEDEN, some socioeconomic actors and local authorities (which currently do not have links to the local project) or to strengthen existing ones, like the relations between XCN, land stewardship organisations and Catalan public bodies. Some new connections among local social actors like natural protected areas’ managers, education community, tourism sector or local companies which are not currently in touch with each other could be further explored. Some of them apparently do not yet have a position towards the issue of hay meadows, but could be made aware of the subject. Relying on a single farmer to reap the hayfields can also create a vulnerability in the overall system, which may need to be further strengthened.

Landowners remain key stakeholders, that are difficult to reach. At this stage, IAEDEN considers it more effective to focus on strategic engagement with owners that already hold an agreement with the organisation or those who own plots of particular natural and cultural interest. This could pave the way for action on other plots with other landowners in the future. In parallel, land stewardship organisations working on hay meadows conservation should continue to collaborate and work together to increase the chances of success, especially in terms of knowledge sharing and political impact.

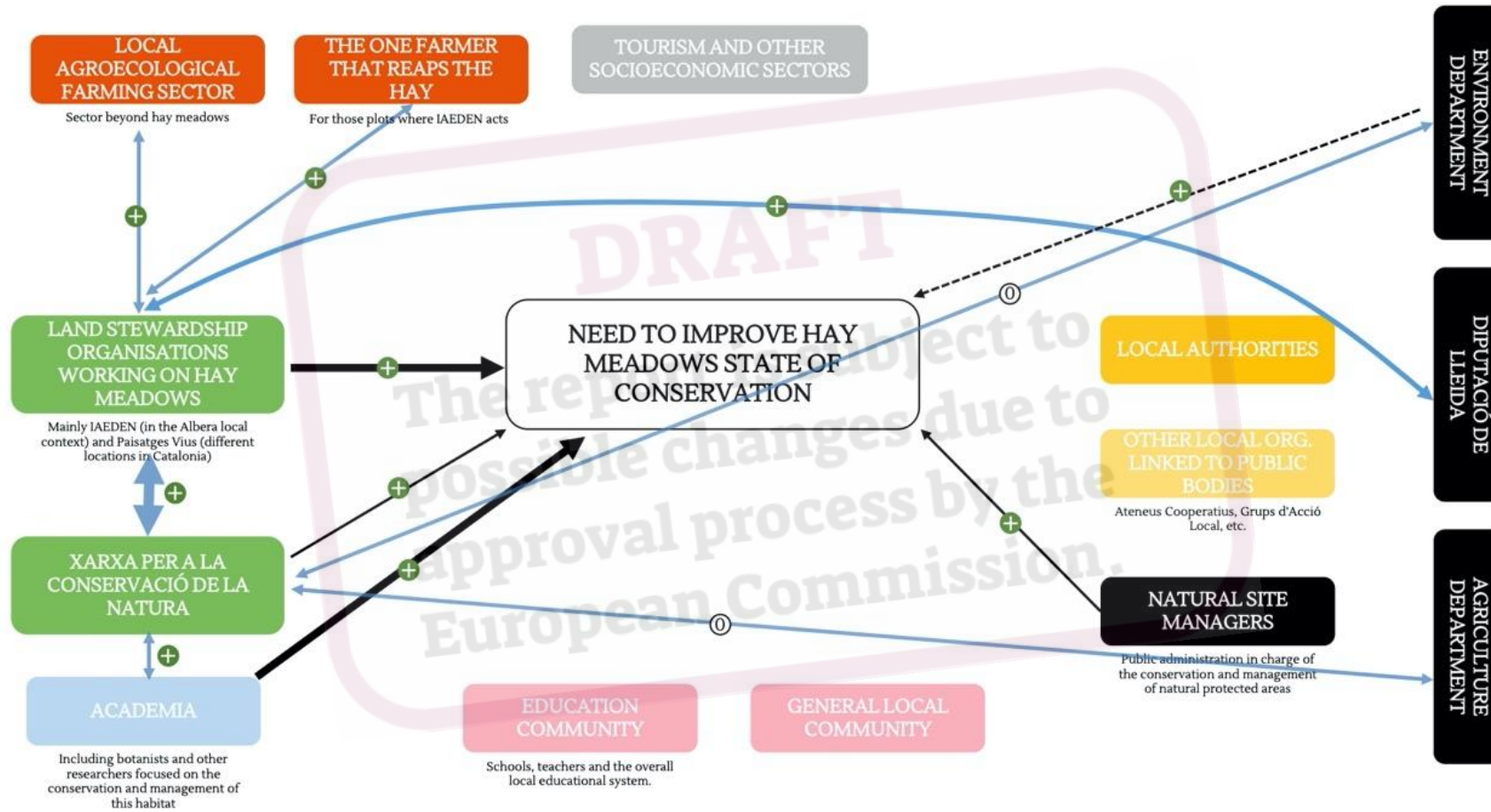


Figure 13 - Sociogram on hay meadows' conservation in Albera

The sociogram exposing the way land stewardship is ensured on Maubusson's farm (figure 14) shows the relationships between actors in terms of land use rights, administrative and/or financial cooperation and concrete activities in terms of land management. It highlights the diversity of actors (public, private or non-profit) at different scales (local, regional, national) and with different interests: primary production (agricultural, fish farming, forestry, leisure – with the hunters), citizen mobilisation, protection of the environment and of water resources.

Certain actors are at the centre of some relations: the regional association TDL Pays de la Loire (TDL PDL) has a pivotal role and coordinates the administrative relations, which are delegated by the TDL Foundation, while the latter coordinates financial relations by managing grants and donations and their re-allocation, particularly in the form of payment for services. There is a division of roles (action/funding) according to the types of legitimacy (local/national) and according to areas of competence. In addition, there is a multiplication of contractual relations to mobilise all possible mechanisms, while concrete field actions allowing good land stewardship mainly rely on farmers, forestry workers, and the local bird protection association who all share common objectives.

The initial territorial dialogue on this farm, which combined several work axes (agriculture practices, water and habitat management) had a strong influence on the sound stewardship of land and on stakeholders' relations, through joint acculturation and the identification of a certain number of "desirable" uses of the site, on which stakeholders agreed. This dialogue, involving actors more distant from environmental concerns, such as hunters or fish farmers, made it possible to develop a compromise between private commercial activities and the preservation of the environment. Several environmental actions involved them indirectly, like the construction of a platform on the pond to protect fish against cormorants and the renegotiation of the hunting lease. One of the interesting results of such coordination between actors is that the "control" of good practices is socially ensured rather than contractually. In this case, the voluntary commitment of stakeholders is more effective than "legal" tools would be.

These findings concerning the Maubusson farm confirm some of the conclusions of the work of Brédif *et al.* (2017) on biodiversity preservation issues, in which they state that stakeholders are sometimes "*not aware that they [share] such convergent objectives and goals with regard to their territorial project*", and that after discussions on biodiversity issues, groups of stakeholders may conclude that the problem is less connected with "*antagonistic mind-sets than with insufficient contact, communication and negotiation between stakeholders.*"

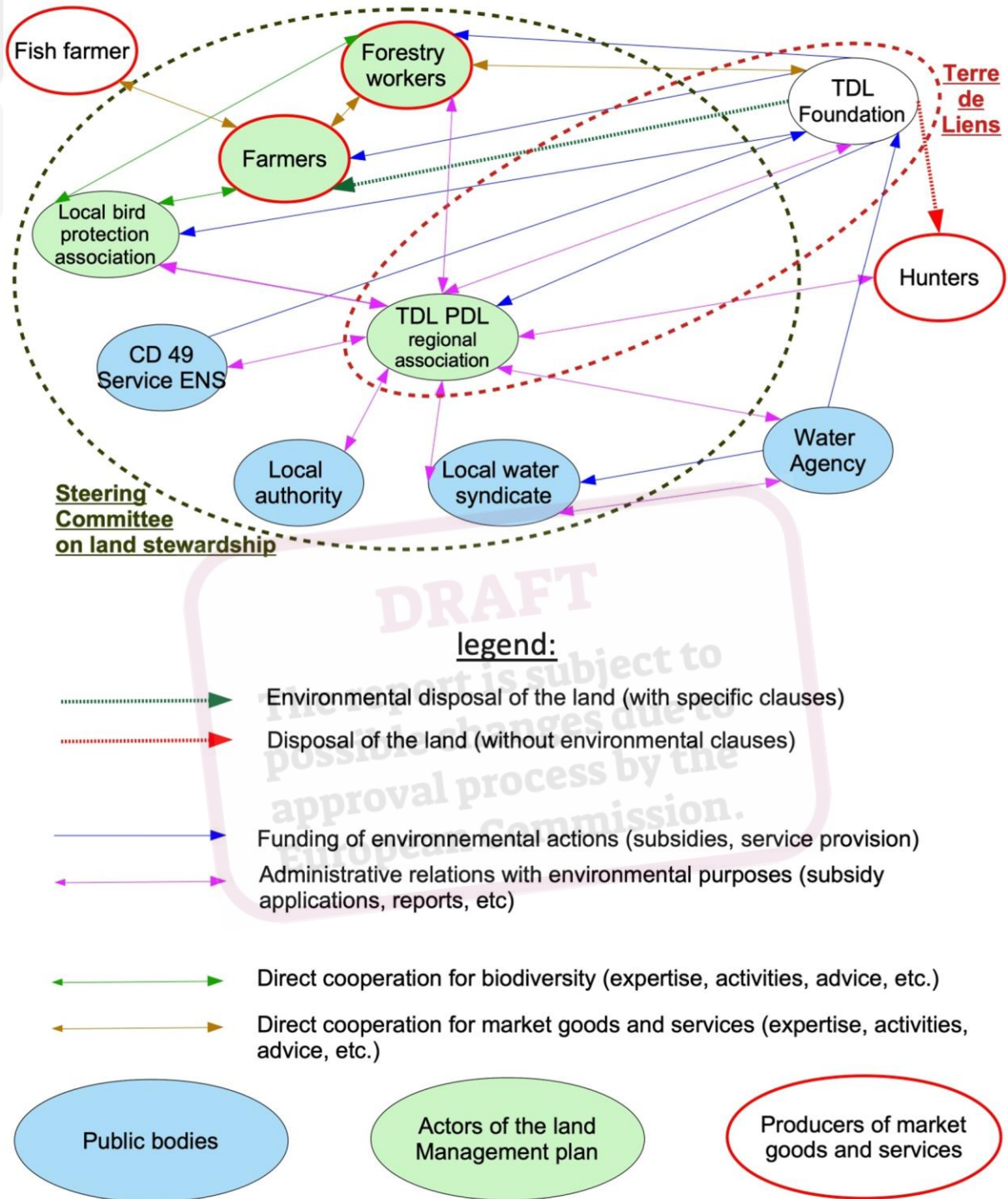


Figure 14 - Sociogram of land stewardship on the Maubusson farm

### 4.3 Building legitimacy to “attract” different community capitals

Brédif (2004) proposes a way of looking at the territory that does not correspond to “*the various divisions conceived a priori, according to political norms or criteria of engineers or specialists*”, which leads to considering a territory according to exogenous criteria. Rather, he suggests to consider it as “*a reality lived from the inside by its inhabitants*”. Territories therefore evolve according to history, threats and crises, people's commitment, opportunities seized or missed, with territorial configurations sometimes proving more favourable than others “*to envisage a recovery or manage certain features of the environment*”. With this lense, building legitimacy comes from reinforcing the alignment of actors and resources who were sometimes historically unconnected. Boltanski and Thévenot (1991), quoted by Barnaud (2013), consider legitimacy as the “*interactive and evolutionary result of compromises between principles and values that gradually lead to a convention to which actors will refer to justify their choices*”, thus giving concrete social value to a given practice.

In this section, we propose to describe how land organisations 1) implement certain processes to establish this legitimacy and 2) rely on this acquired legitimacy to mobilise different forms of capital as their initiatives progress.

#### 4.3.1 Building legitimacy to cope with emerging land issues

We propose to review different kinds of actions and processes that allowed to strengthen this legitimacy in the different actions led by A2L organisations.

##### a. Legitimacy through knowledge and analysis

In numerous cases, land organisations are strongly involved on desk research, field surveys and reflective thinking on grassroots experience. This preliminary work often sharpens the answers they put forward, concerning both practical approaches and political propositions they bring to the fore. Such knowledge is indeed often reintegrated by these “learning organisations” to inform both practices and discourses. In some processes, they often call on experts (lawyers, other field organisations, etc.) and allies to deepen and complexify their analysis of the situation and design appropriate solutions.

As an example, ER led desk research on commons to gain legitimacy on the subject and make the discussion on commons emerge at a broader, national level. In the case of retirement savings, strong analysis and robust solutions, considering the different possible risks (both social and financial) were deepened through the help of experts. This was a first step to convince stakeholders who would eventually become involved in the scheme (investors, retiring farmers and successors). These scenarios, to ensure the commitment of all stakeholders, required a certain level of technicity to preserve the core values of KL: e.g., no speculation and no resale of the land, maintaining the agroecological use of the land.

DLg deepened the understanding of some aspects of farm succession, such as emotional and social aspects, through both desk research and meetings with numerous experts. SA relied on the knowledge of its core organisation but also of the advisory expert panel. XCN's method to increase knowledge on hay meadows was original, consisting of a wide scanning of all possibilities—even those appearing immediately irrelevant—as a tool for collective brainstorming on strategies that could contribute to the resilience of the hay meadows conservation project.

Knowledge sharing is also an internal issue. The right level of information sharing and the ability to have everyone on board on strategic issues is important for the success of these initiatives. As an example, the regional TDL associations need to get a harmonised level of information regarding biodiversity assessment to adopt approaches developed in other regions or at the national level while KL's employees have to keep their board informed on the highly technical subject of retirement savings to maintain their ability to take decisions on the subject.

### **b. Legitimacy through concrete actions and the development of own resources**

Another form of legitimacy is linked to the nature of these organisations, which are grassroots organisations with a capacity for direct action, partly independent from public grants through citizen and solidarity-based funding.

Regarding the experiments made on retirement savings or farm buildings, KL's legitimacy for example is built through concrete experiments, carried out on a small number of stakeholders trying to answer difficulties and to find solutions as the issues arise. Concerning retirement savings, the fact that this experiment is led at a small-scale has advantages on the way trust can be built for example, but also drawbacks KL cannot rely on the "law of large numbers" to evaluate certain risks.

### **c. Legitimacy through network facilitation and ways of working**

The capacity to mobilise citizens beyond their financial support, on a practical and a political level, is also an important factor of local and national legitimacy. Concerning the *Ferme de Sarliève* case, a citizen dynamic gradually took shape and was able to bring this project of general interest into the public arena despite the fact that the land transfer had not yet taken place. *Ferme de Sarliève* has now upscaled from a project anchored in a local farm to an innovative structure acting a local political actor of the transition and participating to negotiations concerning the future uses of the Sarliève Plain. The concrete acquisition of land will increase its legitimacy on the territory. Nevertheless, the internal legitimacy of taking a position on the preservation of the entire plain (beyond the mere management of the farm) is still a topic of discussion and will need to be constructed among members of the project.

Network facilitation also participates in bringing together different social worlds, potential catalysts for social innovations. Beyond this, land organisations also build their legitimacy by tackling issues in all their dimensions (particularly as they gain significant work experience in a territory). As an example, IAEDEN has 35 concrete land stewardship contracts with farmers or landowners but also complements its actions with advice on farming practices, implementation of measures for nature conservation, promotion of short supply chains for their products, organisation of training activities, and engagement with the community.

### **d. Legitimacy through strategic partnerships**

The legitimacy is also built through the construction or integration of strategic networks of organisations (including the A2L Network), which are sources of support, experience sharing or policy convergence. For example, the action on county farms relied on the combination of the skills of three organisations: Shared Assets on facilitation, CPRE on advocacy and NEF on research. The combination of all these skills allowed to tackle the issue of public farmland though all its dimensions: technical, social, political, etc.

For XCN in Vall del Corb, the legitimacy was both linked to the context, with the strong involvement of local authorities and of some local actors facilitating the legitimacy of the action, and to the way XCN built the “knowledge” regarding the territory and the issue, sharing main results with various stakeholders.

In some cases, to unlock situations, land organisations can also rely on individuals or organisations which did not seem to share their vision or goals at first sight. As an example, there finally was a strong association between *Ferme de Sarliève* and the former cereal farmer cultivating in the plain, which responded to various strategic issues of the project: maintaining dialogue with the “agricultural profession”, converting the land to organic farming, progressively transferring land as new entrants arrive on the farm.

In some cases, they may develop strong partnerships which require substantial trust to be maintained in the long run, such as the co-construction of a common company/organisation with partners. This was the case concerning the *Luzernenhof* farm bought by KL: to avoid having KL considered as “the active farmer” (as the local authority was against the idea of having a legal entity farming), a partnership between the three active farmers and KL was established through a “Kommandigesellschaft”.

#### **e. Legitimacy through the promotion of strong societal values**

Finally, these organisations’ capacity to mobilise both citizens and some strategic partnerships is closely related to the legitimacy of their vision, their social mission, and the values they carry. Their ability to create collective narratives that address issues of concern to many stakeholders (especially civil society), while documenting their analyses to remain credible, contributes to the construction of this legitimacy.

#### **4.3.2 Mobilising other types of capitals**

In the D6.1 report, which focused on the analysis of existing practices, the conclusion highlighted questions concerning the forms of mobilisation of capital according to the development stages of practices. Without being able to provide all the answers to these questions, the current research was an opportunity to further examine these aspects, with a particular focus on the emergence phase (while keeping in mind some more mature forms of practices based on the analyses led in report D6.1).

The following figure (figure 15) shows, based on the analysis of the different action trajectories, the reasons for and ways of mobilising different kinds of community capital at different stages of the construction and implementation. Indeed, depending on the stage concerned (identification of the issue, experimentation, etc.), the needs and capacities to attract resources (material, human, cognitive, etc.) are generally different (Thou *et al.* 2018). In the same way, the concrete use and allocation of these resources generally varies according to the phase considered.

The phases of appropriation, but above all of up-scaling and institutionalisation, do not correspond to phases that have been reached in the RURALIZATION actions, which as mentioned focused more specifically on first two. However, the boxes in this table concerning the last phases have also been filled in on more a “theoretical” basis. They may correspond to potential objectives that the actors set for themselves, guiding the orientation of the first stages.

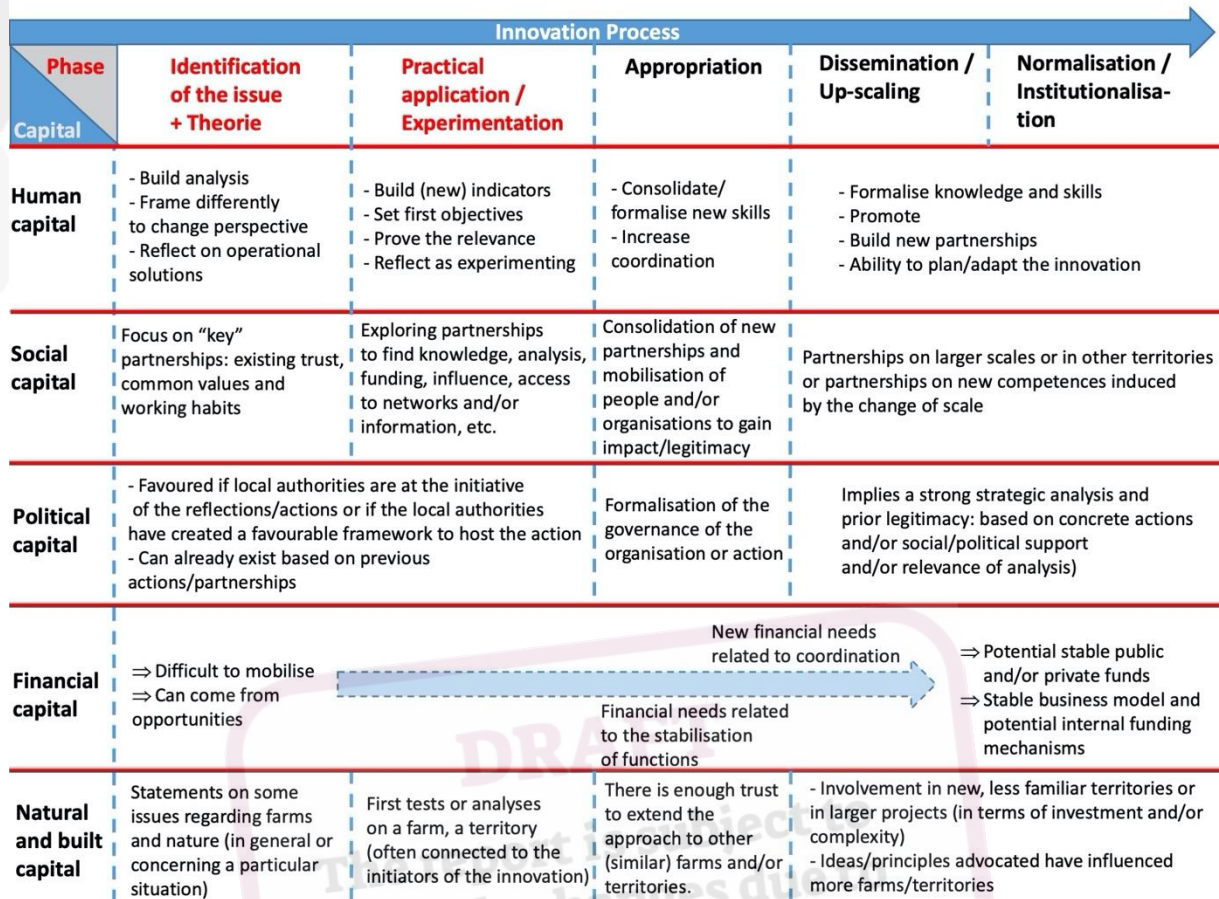


Figure 15 - mobilising different kinds of community capital at different stages of the innovation process

Depending on the issue, the trajectory will not be the same, as some actions are more "material" (concretely restructuring farms for example) while others correspond more to immaterial work (building a vision for county farms).

For each step, there are potential risks linked to each type of capital:

- Very specific and rare skills can disappear if their transfer is not ensured
- Partnerships can break down if ideological trajectories diverge or if certain initial values are not maintained
- A political situation can be disrupted or a more "legitimate" actor can emerge and grab influence and financial resources
- Etc.

#### 4.4 Innovations change the way land is considered

Innovative land actions work to transform the way land is considered. They operate in areas where trends are often market and finance-based—with dominant land privatisation, speculation, concentration—and aim to shift perceptions, use, and management of land generally for better preservation and more democratic access. This, in turn, can be a lever for wider transitions as changes towards more socially and environmentally-sound land management can support broader rural regeneration trends (Loveluck *et al.* 2021). More

precise indicators are however needed to measure the impact of access to land work on rural development. In the frame of the RURALIZATION project, after debate, it was deemed inappropriate to devise indicators to assess the impact of the innovative actions. Firstly, as previously mentioned, work to change the dominant paradigms is long-lasting and hampered by the resistance of institutionalised trends and markets. The period of innovation development (eight months) was therefore considered a too short to measure contextual changes that are incremental. Secondly, innovation partners had little means to build a robust impact measuring methodology (notably one which distinguishes impacts stemming from innovations versus those linked to broader environment change) while also having to mobilise stakeholders, implement ambitious workplans, and perform observations of their own actions in a short period. To illustrate the transformative power of innovative land actions, we will thus base our commentary on the qualitative results of innovations (and sometimes explain in a more theoretical way how such results could perhaps lead to achieving impact in the future). These results are framed in the context of the land issues they attempt to address (see table 14 on next page).

#### 4.4.1 Addressing dominant land trends

Due to the complexity of land systems, land innovations usually must address simultaneously multiple inter-connected issues to achieve their objectives (Loveluck *et al.* 2021). For clarity, we however categorised some of the “main” problems they tackled within RURALIZATION. These related to shifting dominant trends of 1) lacking farm transfers between generations, 2) natural resources being threatened by intensive agriculture and other practices, 3) perceiving land as a mere financial asset (instead of one that may support broader regeneration), 4) declining local land-based economies. A summary of the results innovations achieved regarding these dominant trends is available in the table below, followed by more detailed description of these results.

Table 14 - Summary of results: how innovative land actions transform dominant land trends

PROBLEM	RESULTS	MAIN CAPITAL GENERATED
Lack of farm transfer between generations, notably due to high land prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased knowledge on farm succession bottlenecks;</li> <li>- built legal and financial schemes to favour land transfer between generations;</li> <li>- raised funds and secured land for new entrants;</li> <li>- disseminated knowledge, built synergies, and encouraged collective action on this issue.</li> </ul>	Human and social capital, economic capital (land for new generations) <sup>10</sup>
Environmental degradation and lack of oversight on farming practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased knowledge on environmental challenges and environmental perceptions;</li> <li>- designed concrete scenarios to improve on-farm conservation practices;</li> <li>- contributed to preserving (or potentially preserving) organic farms, natural resources and local landscapes;</li> <li>- promoted solutions such as adapted partnerships and policies to support thriving biodiversity on farms.</li> </ul>	Human capital (learning on biodiversity challenges and perceptions), natural capital on farms
Perceptions of land as a financial and lack of consideration of society's interest in sound land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learned about and generated new models to manage land as a multifunctional asset;</li> <li>- involved local communities in defining approaches for land in the service of broader social goals;</li> <li>- facilitated inter-knowledge and strengthened partnerships to support transformative land visions.</li> <li>- highlighted current political flaws and established recommendations to make land work for a socially and environmentally sound transition.</li> </ul>	Social capital (bottom-up, coalition approaches), human capital
Declining rural and land-based economies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diagnosed issues and generated knowledge on options to improve farm viability or create new economic activities in local areas;</li> <li>- secured resources (or built legitimacy prior to securing resources) for local projects with the potential to revive the local economy;</li> <li>- maintained or created activity on locally-purchased farms;</li> <li>- promoted sustained and sustainable investment in land and better-adapted public aid.</li> </ul>	Human and economic capital

<sup>10</sup> The transfer of land to agroecological new entrant is also favouring

### a. Making land work to renew farming generations, in particular by tackling the issue of high land prices

As Europe is undergoing a wide phenomenon of ageing of its farming population, studies have pointed to the lack of successful schemes to foster land transfers between generations (Rioufol and Diaz de Quijano 2018, Korthals Altes and de Wolff 2021). This is particularly the case for new entrants, for whom access to land is a major barrier (EIP Agri 2016, Korthals Altes and de Wolff 2021). Most innovative actions tackled this issue at different levels.

Increased knowledge farm succession bottlenecks. DLg in Flanders and XCN in Vall del Corb ran surveys which highlighted factors hampering land transfers including those relating to cultural, psychological, and emotional aspects of farm succession (see section 3, table 11). XCN further used databases and desk research to understand how farm structure and capital may affect generational transfers. These assessments were shared with local stakeholders or informed follow-up actions—e.g. how to adapt an internal protocol on farm transmission for DLg—thus diffusing into broader circles and uses to start informing and transforming more broadly how stakeholders act on farm succession (in particular by putting land at the centre of the succession analysis). In the frame of its ALPA action, Eco Ruralis also benchmarked the needs and desires of new entrants and retiring farmers (survey with 513 answers). The findings legitimised Eco Ruralis' enterprise to create community-based land ownership initiative in Romania since young respondents, faced with difficult land markets, saw new forms of collective land management as a potentially promising pathway to enter farming.

Built legal and financial schemes to favour land transfer between generations. Various innovations proposed schemes and scenarios of collective acquisition as transformative solutions to facilitate land transfers between generations. KL (retirement savings), DLg (farm succession) and ER (ALPA) in particular explored legal and financial matters related to this. While ER investigated different juridical forms<sup>11</sup> to structure a community-based land ownership organisation, KL and DLg, who are already established land cooperatives, rather worked on ways to increase their land funding and acquisition capacity. For both organisations, this was a significant achievement, resulting from conversations with dozens of lawyers for KL and from deep work with four expert organisations for DLg, showing the degree of internal learning required to appropriate intertwined land and financial issues. Another step performed by these organisations later consisted of (or will consist of) translating such expert knowledge into simple terms to convince farmers and citizens to buy into the schemes proposed. In this way, new knowledge is created but also transferred and incites endorsements of new collective acquisition models in the face of private markets failing to solve succession issues.

Raised funds and secured land for new entrants. KL and DLg successfully ran actual experiments with some of the fundraising models they designed with expert advice—e.g. using a government scheme of win-win loans to medium-size enterprises for DLg. This showed tangible achievements from innovations in terms of facilitating a generational land transfer. TDL also fundraised successfully in the span of its action to acquire the large *Ferme de Sarliève* near the city of Clermont-Ferrand, where the land will go from sustaining one single farmer to hosting several new entrants as well as a farm incubator. The TDL action therefore represents an effort to “upscale” the work of land organisations in terms of how many people they can

---

<sup>11</sup> Mainly the shareholder company unlisted on the stock exchange market and the agricultural production cooperative

support on a larger track of land. Such transformative change of scale may be disseminated more widely through the careful work done to document the model created.

### **b. Environmental degradation and lack of social oversight on farming practices**

Providing access to land to new generations also depends on the possibility to transfer quality land, a growing challenge on a European continent. Worldwide, around 12 million hectares are lost to degradation each year, one of the areas most affected by degradation being Western Europe (IPBES 2018). While all actions studied aimed at guaranteeing sustainable land use, two of them focused more specifically on the ways to ally conservation and agricultural practices: TDL's approach for biodiversity conservation on its farms and XCN's action on the conservation of hay meadows in Catalonia.

Increased knowledge on environmental challenges and environmental perceptions. TDL began with an internal survey to understand the motivations underpinning conservation projects and strategies among its different branches. This highlighted no less than seven different types of objectives actors pursue in conserving and monitoring biodiversity (as explained in section 3.1.3). This fragmented landscape informed the basic principles of TDL's common approach to biodiversity conservation on its farms. To be adopted by stakeholders, the approach would need to respond to multiple goals, be adaptable and rooted in local realities, and involve local actors. This illustrates a learning process where TDL used diagnosis to adapt its work for a more transformative action. Important knowledge was generated in the process, which can inform other areas of environmental work within TDL. The same need for background identification of challenges and desires didn't arise in XCN's action, which supported a local partner who had pre-identified difficulties in hay meadows conservation. Nevertheless, this local knowledge of difficulties (e.g. low economic yield, fragmented plots, lack of eligibility to CAP funding...) also oriented the action, which aimed to rise above them. In some other cases, research also highlighted key environmental perceptions and challenges which guided them throughout the unrolling of actions e.g., in Vall del Corb the strong local belief that intensification is the only way to make farming viable was revealed—a bottleneck to farm transfer to new generations of organic farmers. A key transformative element of the visions for land stewardship developed by A2L organisations was that none opposed conservation and farming practices, rather promoting better synergies between both for a wider impact.

Designed concrete scenarios to improve on-farm conservation practices. Both TDL and XCN's biodiversity actions yielded toolbox-type products, with a three-pronged approach to biodiversity conservation on farms for TDL and six categories of measures to increase the economic viability of hay meadows, increase political commitment to conservation, develop fundraising strategies, etc. for XCN. These outputs emphasize that actions sought positive externalities for the environment (generating natural capital) but also for farmers (generating economic capital, e.g. through improved yields, revenue, or aid). As explained, allying both is considered by A2L organisations a condition for greater impact. Without farmer incentive, there would be no adoption of conservation practices.

Contributed to preserving (or potentially preserving) organic farms, natural resources and local landscapes. Beyond the biodiversity-focused approach, other actions investigated options to enable more transfers of organic farms to new generations (DLg, KL, ER on ALPA) or to convert intensive farms into agroecological ones upon transfer (XCN Vall del Corb, TDL

Sarliève). Land acquisitions and transfers carried out or potentially enabled by these actions directly contributes—though often at a small scale, one farm after another—to long-term land preservation. Regarding the TDL action in Sarliève, as we saw, nature restoration actions on site were a first step beyond mere preservation, towards generating additional natural capital locally.

### **c. Making land work for the majority: transforming the vision of land as a market-based asset**

Preserving land for locally-oriented agroecological farming generates positive externalities for local communities and society at large. This is emphasized in the actions run by Eco Ruralis and Shared Assets, which show how common and public land—if well managed and dedicated to agroecology—can help meet multiple objectives from tackling climate change to improving health, well-being and the provision of local food. Beyond public land, initiatives on private farms like the *Ferme de Sarliève* also pursue goals to maximise multifunctional agriculture services.

Learned about and generated new models to manage land as a multifunctional asset. For both ER and SA the work started with prior assessment<sup>12</sup> of the state of public and common lands, to highlight degrees to which these assets are threatened as well as their key value—for instance how common pastures in Romania are crucial to sustain small-scale peasant farms. Highlighting these lands’ diverse historical, cultural, landscape, economic functions was the basis on which partners could more effectively demonstrate the negative impact of privatisation trends and devise for these assets new objectives and management models adapted to current realities. Both organisations also framed access to these public lands as an issue of justice, a way to shift dominant perceptions of land. Indeed, with this lens, access is no longer a question of markets and financial capital but a question of rights and social organisation. Regarding private land, TDL’s action in Sarliève resulted in creating an effective model of “territorial farm”, which aims to fulfil many goals from increasing local food production and distribution (potentially enabling the demand for public catering to be met in the long term) to enhancing landscape and biodiversity (“re-naturing” a peri-urban environment) and supporting entry into farming for a new generation (incubator). TDL co-constructed with local partners tools to analyse the model and co-developed a discourse to present it to institutions, funders, and the public. Hence, this concrete project is used to embody and disseminate widely a new narrative around farmland, presented as a key asset and lever for wider social and ecological transitions of territories.

Involved local communities in defining approaches for land in the service of broader social goals. As explained previously, a key stake for some actions was to involve local communities to incite larger support for alternative land visions that counter dominant market-based narratives around land. Community involvement is not only a tool for gaining political weight but is also a goal in itself as it can help 1) reinforce the links between farming and non-farming populations, 2) ensure democratic debate and governance for an asset that benefits society at large, 3) fight against trends of opacity and exclusion in land systems. Therefore, SA and ER used bottom-up workshops where a diverse panel of actors were invited to fuel transformative visions for public and common land (leveraging local human capital). The

---

<sup>12</sup> largely carried out prior to the RURALIZATION action start in the case of SA, see the “Revising county farms” report (Graham et al. 2019)

*Ferme de Sarliève* project also concretely involved volunteer and citizens in governance, fundraising, and work on the farm. More generally, all actions worked for greater involvement of the public in land management, with collective acquisition models linking farms and community (KL, DLg, ALPA), approaches to biodiversity involving landowners, farmers and citizens (XCN and TDL), or territorial transition projects involving the possibility of greater public oversight on the type of use and management of farmland (XCN *Territori de Vincles*).

Highlighted current political flaws and established recommendations to make land work for a socially and environmentally sound transition. A final stage in actions promoting multifunctional land visions was often engaging in wider campaigning. SA worked with an advisory panel experimented in lobbying to adjust its vision for council farmland, and now plans to launch a campaign to encourage sign-up to this vision. ER explored the *islaz* system of commons allowing for more democratic management and established a set of recommendations to improve the situation of the commons in the future. XCN's work in Vall del Corb highlighted current political constraints or design flaws impeding a land-based ecological transition (bureaucratic procedures, lack of remuneration for ecosystem services, lack of support to extensive or grazing farms...) and led to discussions among actors on policy recommendations. TDL also launched advocacy work to make the Clermont-Ferrand territory more resilient, preserved, and self-sufficient. Advocacy step is key, not only to incite more public endorsement of transformative visions but to devise concrete proposals to change the wider policy and institutional environment which tend to support dominant trends.

#### **d. Addressing the decline of local land-based economies**

Diagnosed issues and generated knowledge on options to improve farm viability or create new economic activities in local areas. From the diagnosing of very specific problems (e.g. the problem of managing farm buildings (Kulturland) or the low rentability of hay meadow conservation practices (XCN)) to a wider diagnosis of an areas' economic landscape (Vall del Corb), all the actions generated basic knowledge on local economies. This was the basis to build concrete transformative solutions to diagnosed issues. Among the economic solutions put forward by the innovations we can cite:

- a set of measures to improve profitability of sustainable hay production in Alt Empordà;
- a functional model to allow farmers to own and invest freely in farm buildings (be they means of production or farm habitat) while still preserving farms unity (KL);
- pro-conservation practices relying on "functional biodiversity" that can help increase farm profitability and yields (TDL);
- a reflexion on supporting farmer pensions and more largely making large amounts of retirement money present on financial markets work for social and ecological goals (KL).

Secured resources (or built legitimacy prior to securing resources) for local projects with the potential to revive the local economy. Additionally, beyond the RURALIZATION funding, innovations managed to secure more economic resources to carry out their projects. Money was mobilised for farm acquisition (DLg, Kulturland), for retirement savings schemes (KL), for territorial projects (Sarliève, SA, etc.). This concretely brought additional economic capital to the areas concerned, thus fighting the dominant trends of declining land-based local economies.

Maintained or created activity on locally-purchased farms. On the farms acquired or supported by the innovations, jobs were created (or could be in the future). In *Sarliève* for instance two people are already recruited to manage the farm and project. Furthermore, it is expected that many new entrants will establish or incubate their business on site, thus achieving important job creation on land previously managed by a single farmer. A specific committee was created to manage economic aspects. It is charged with supporting the interweaving of possible economic activities on the farm with a look to responding to territorial demands for diversified food and services. The project also secured the counselling of an expert organisation called “URSCOP”, to also help structure the upcoming economic activities in a way that is compatible with the political project of the *Ferme de Sarliève*. All this brings new and cutting-edge social and solidarity economy knowledge to support local agricultural development in an area where farmland is seen as a reservoir for urbanisation rather than a mean to generate economic activity and profit from farming. Another example of wider regeneration effects stemming from local farms comes from KL’s farm buildings action. This had the positive effect of allowing mixed-dwelling on farms, which now host not only farmers but also collectives of people including rural entrepreneurs involved in creating economic activities external to the farm. Finally, from an advocacy perspective some actions argued against trends of public disinvestment in land, showing that sustained public support and aid for access to land can generate positive regeneration effects (ER on commons, SA council farmland, XCN in for locally-adapted investment policies in Vall del Corb and Alt Empordà, etc.).

#### 4.4.2 Adapting strategies to achieve more impact

The above commentary highlights the various stages that innovations go through to obtain results, which corresponds to those exposed in figure 12 (process allowing to bring an issue to the forefront of the agenda).

First, we have seen that generating knowledge and an internal analysis of issues was a common feature of addressing all “main problems” listed. One should not underestimate the difficulty to build such expertise in a complex and often opaque land system. More than one innovator was confronted to this issue over the course of their actions. DLg, for instance, had to review ambitions of the farm succession action after finding out that building financial scenarios to increase farm purchase capacity would take much longer than initially planned. Instead of interviewing one expert, as initially imagined, they had to cross sources and piece together knowledge from repeated interviews with one consulting firm, one tax lawyer, one large financial cooperation legal expert, and DLg’s own notary and accountant. Similarly, KL interviewed many experts but also went through a long “learning-by-doing” process in its farm buildings action where the model had to be refined with key organisations like the *Mietshäuser Syndikat*. XCN was faced with difficulty to get information on the profiles of retiring farmers in the Vall del Corb area and had to go through a number of channels (local cooperatives, local authorities, etc.) to obtain a list of possible farmers to interview. DLg could not reach retiring farmers directly and thus turned to expert organisations working with them. All this shows that building knowledge is a key step to creating a strong message and gain legitimacy on a topic. It is also a resource to enable organisations to reflect along the implementation of the innovation and adapt practices and solutions when needed. Beyond this however, the new expertise generated in these innovations is also a result in and of itself. It generates impact by bringing more transparency and the potential of more democratic functioning of land systems.

Secondly, an important step for innovations is to rally stakeholders around their project. As we have seen, this can take the form of involving local communities, strengthening relationships with close partners, or building bridges with new civil society partners, expert organisations or with more difficult to reach partners such as policy-making institutions. Most often, a combination of these different alliances is needed for innovations to achieve their objectives. In the effort to build new multifunctional land models, innovators particularly worked on two fronts. On the one hand, strengthening “natural partnerships” between key supporters of these innovations so that strong stakeholder coalitions may carry their cutting-edge visions—e.g. the weaving of tight collaborations between Shared Assets’, NEF and CPRE or TDL, Îlot Paysans and Bio 63; the work to federate the *Territori de Vincles* actors for XCN, etc. On the other hand, they had to go beyond the natural partner circles to convince external stakeholders: funders in the case of Sarliève, local authorities and official bodies such as the Association of Chief Estate Surveyors for Shared Assets, funders and institutions for XCN... This double inward-outward movement is key to achieving transformative impact. It however requires careful strategising: it is usually a priority to consolidate core alliances before confronting the project to external people. Yet, at the same time, the money and legitimacy coming from external validation of the project can be key assets to reinforce the inner collaboration work. This inward-outward work rests both on knowledge acquired about the specific land issue (to share the diagnosis and build a common transformative project) as well as on knowledge innovators must build about the stakeholder context. Hence, for instance, DLg used a sociogram to better target its communication strategy, SA mapped actors based on the degree of power they have over council farmland and on their supposed alignment with its own values, TDL’s sociogram brought learnings about the role of go-between actors in successful biodiversity project and the ecosystem of partnerships needed to make these projects thrive. These actor mappings thus also included findings about the general environment: constraints of partners, general perceptions that need to be overturned, etc. This work is later complemented by wider dissemination strategies to upscale stakeholder support. Thus, both DLg and XCN complemented their farm succession approaches by communication work—including a twitter campaign for XCN and the creation of a website page on farm succession for DLg—, awareness on the specific situation of hay meadows was also raised within general naturalist and ecologist public through a communication campaign (XCN), etc. This brings concrete and already transformative results: social capital is built, more people are informed (and thus local and non-local human capital increases), and growing support and awareness about land specific issues is in the making (political capital).

Thirdly, the implementation phase generates concrete transformations of the natural landscape (protecting resources and landscapes), economic situation (creating jobs and opportunities for new or diversified economic activities in the area), resilience and culture of territories (producing local food, local knowledge, preserving or enhancing existing small-scale agroecological practices...), etc. This is more relevant as implementation will be adapted to:

- 1) continued adaptation to stakeholder reactions, which may change as conflict or tensions arise with innovation implementation;
- 2) continued learning on the context, which may be influenced by conjunctural situations or also rendered more complex as alternative visions gain leverage;

3) concrete results, which may or may not be achieved, thus generating learnings on levers and obstacles to implementing an innovation. For instance, SA will measure whether its vision for Council farmland is discussed in strategic political spaces, DLg will assess if it is able to increase its financial capacity and enter in contact with more farm transferors, ER will take stock of whether it can integrate new partners and dissolve internal controversies about the idea of an community-based land ownership structure, etc.

Based on these first results, a learning process is engaged where innovations may deem necessary to further work on building knowledge or explore blind spots, to reinforce previous alliances or build new ones, to adapt implementation or the model devised, or to adjust objectives.

To conclude, the learning and adapting process we illustrated is the road toward concrete transformation of dominant land trends. As we previously commented, dominant paradigms resist change and innovations insert themselves in complex land systems. Achieving stepping stones is thus the first demonstration from innovations that other scenarios can be implemented (see figure 11 on conditions of emergence of capacities for action). Another key dimension of achieving impact in complex land systems lies in innovations' capacity to adopt systemic approaches. Such capacity is reflected in the analysis of the relationship between the actions documented and the "access to land pathway" (figure 3). While the pathway is a conceptual framework that proposes to categorise innovations' main areas of work (one block of the pathway covers one area of work) it also demonstrates that each block is deeply connected others (Loveluck *et al.* 2021). A2L organisations' own analysis highlights that while their work is related mainly to one or several blocks, it often has ripple effects on others. For instance, beyond increasing its capacity to secure land for individual farmers (block 3 of the pathway), DLg's work has resulted in better defining its role and internal procedures with regard to succession cases, thus potentially offering better downstream support to farmers (block 4). SA and ER's action have focused on preserving common and public lands, prioritising sustainable and multifunctional uses for these lands, and securing access to them for new entrants and agroecological farmers (block 1, 2, 3 of the pathway). However, in the future, if a holistic rural and agricultural vision is applied to these lands, they could host agricultural training and education activities (block 0 "upstream support to farmers") or farm diversification and marketing support activities (block 4 "downstream support to farmers").

In a nutshell, to achieve the transformative changes and transitions they aim for, A2L organisations have often no choice but to meet complex land systems with innovative approaches that address many facets of them. Remarkably, however, some dimensions of these overarching systems are very long and complex to overturn (e.g. generating more interest in farming profession, training more new entrants, changing market trends in land prices but also in valuing agricultural products—such as hay from Alt Empordà—and making farming viable...), which can render innovations' impact invisible in the short term and impede the leveraging of funding and support for transformative work. More generally, limits to the transformative impact of innovations very much relate to the resources available to create change. Ill-adapted public aid, especially in the context of CAP in Europe, means that that the bulk of public money goes towards reinforcing current trends of high land prices, low land mobility, intensive farming, and privatisation. Meanwhile very little public funding remains available to counter the negative impacts while few attempts are made to restructure the system leading to such effects.

## 5 Consolidation of methodologies and tools on innovative land work

### 5.1 How can documenting ongoing actions help innovation processes?

#### 5.1.1 The benefits of methodical documentation of actions

Documenting innovative actions as they are being implemented is not necessarily an easy task. It requires constant arbitration between the time dedicated to the implementation itself and the more reflexive time dedicated to formalising the lessons learned and refining the analysis. However, these reflexive moments are already part of the habits of the actors involved in land issues. Within the framework of RURALIZATION, partners had the opportunity to further develop this dimension. A common framework of analysis was built and collectively discussed, and common moments of identification and exchanges on cross-cutting subjects connected to the emerging issues tackled were scheduled. Such general framework of exchanges among peers and with certain researchers enabled the partners to de-centre their vision and sometimes to think “out of the box” by sharing preoccupations or delving into specific aspects of the work. Collective concepts were also mobilised on innovation pathways, community capital, strategic stakeholder analysis or some previous RURALIZATION results (e.g. regarding the access to land pathway or the centrality of human capital in land innovations). This reinforced the possibility to look at and analyse one’s own work with a different lense, dedicating time to dimensions often left aside when implementation needs take over.

In the case of Sarliève, the issue consisting in “documenting the action” was at the very heart of RURALIZATION work. For the participants involved in the action, it is clear that methodically documenting the action has been:

- a means of taking a step back in the course of the action (RURALIZATION brought means to compile, organise and analyse the information which had been accumulated over time);
- a way of associating pragmatic questions (e.g. favouring new entrants in agriculture) with political issues through a collectively constructed analysis and narrative;
- a way to facilitate the transmission of the principles of the project to new members while avoiding to divert its core values and principles;
- an opportunity to co-construct and share analysis of complex issues and resolve tensions, such as the complex issues related to the difficult negotiations with a landowner who is also a major player in the urban development of the plain or the attempts from the Chamber of Agriculture to disqualify the project in front of local authorities;
- a possibility to offer resources to other collectives, not necessarily in the form of a “ready-to-use model”, but illustrating how to put forward core principles (securing land, giving access to agricultural activities, involving citizens, etc.) while taking into account local specificities;

- a process allowing the researchers who are members of the founding associations and strongly involved in documenting the process to refine/construct their position as researchers/stakeholders;
- a possibility of building narratives and cross-analyses to promote the project in front of institutions and local authorities (demonstrating that the question of theorisation of the action and the action itself are not dissociated).

Most of the observations made by TDL members working on the *Ferme de Sarliève* concerning the benefits of documenting the action seem to be shared by all the organisations involved in this phase of the RURALIZATION project.

### 5.1.2 Focus on the implementation and the use of the “Chronique” method

We propose to focus on the “Chronique” method (meaning “Chronicle”), used in the *Ferme de Sarliève* project, as this method is likely to respond to a certain number of issues connected to the upscaling of actions carried out by land organisations. It also represents a valuable complement to the sociogram analysis (see section 3.3.3).

The “Chronique” method, developed by French researchers (Rey-Valette et al., 2014) and reappropriated by researchers who are members of the founding associations of the *Ferme de Sarliève*, aims to report on the experience in order to facilitate the appropriation of the project and dialogue with other actors, and imagine future developments of the project. It allows formalising the trajectory of the project through a timeline, which makes it possible—on the basis of historical information collected (reports, notes, etc.)—to reconstruct the progress and identify the different sequences and main elements likely to explain major developments or important choices made. This timeline includes 1) contextual elements influencing the project, 2) the various events that punctuate the life of the project (meetings, actions, etc.) and their results (decisions, partnerships, access to resources, communication, etc.), 3) the actors involved in each of these events. The “Chronique” method also integrates controversies likely to affect the project trajectory, internally or with external actors. From a methodological point of view, the “Chronique” was built in several stages and in interaction between a small working group responsible for documenting the action and a larger group of volunteers and employees of the three associations leading the project. The stages involved 1) the construction of a database of documents containing information relating to the life of the project, 2) the creation of analytical categories to classify events, results and actors in a typology, 3) a first graphic visualisation of all the data collected and classified 4) a final formalisation highlighting the key events and sequences allowing to interpret the evolutions of the project, discussed with the enlarged working group for enrichment.

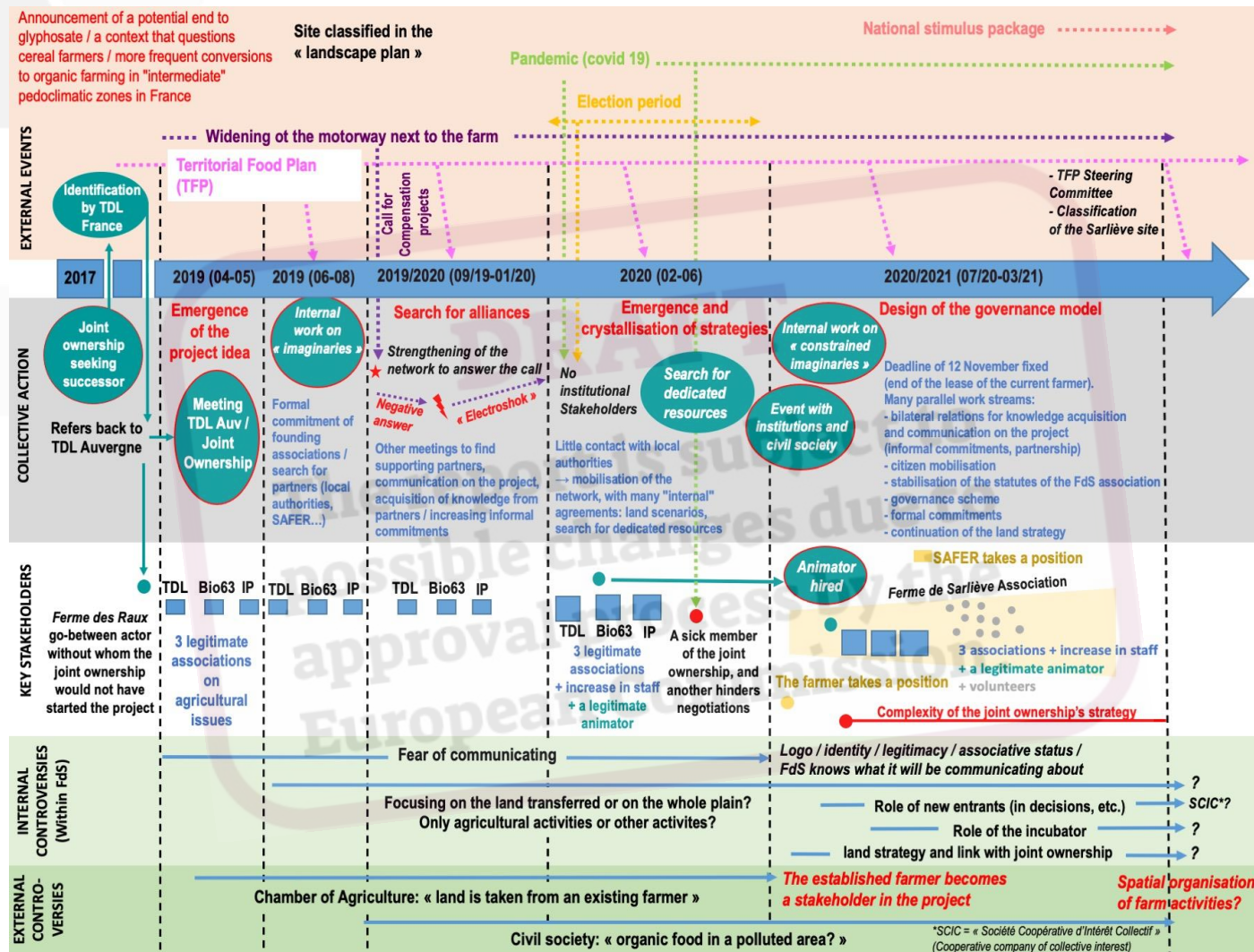


Figure 16 - Visual synthesis of the "Chronique" approach

### Box 8: Main lessons learnt from the “Chronique” method

The “Chronique” allowed to distinguish five main sequences that explain the current organisation of the *Ferme de Sarliève* project:

**1) The emergence of the project**, corresponding to the agreement between the three founding associations to seize this land opportunity to experiment the transition of a large farm towards a new agricultural model.

**2) The formal launch of the project**, during which the founding associations formally engaged and looked for the first partners likely to support the project (local authorities, chamber of agriculture, French land agencies called SAFER).

**3) The search for alliances**, corresponding to a period of meetings with a variety of organisations to identify partners likely to support the project (politically or financially), combined with communication targeted to these partners. During this period contacts were also made with other projects underway in the territory and likely to feed into the reflections of the *Ferme de Sarliève*.

**4) The emergence and formalisation of strategies**: different strategies emerge and are formalised while several internal agreements are reached on scenarios for the land transfer and the search for human and financial resources.

**5) The prefiguration of the governance model**: the land transfer being planned for the fall, several actions unfold in parallel: bilateral relations to both acquire knowledge and communicate on the project (informal commitments, partnerships), involvement of local citizens, establishment of the *Ferme de Sarliève* association's statutes, definition of the governance model.

The “Chronique” allows to underline the main elements of the context which influenced the project, e.g.: during sequence 3 a project to widen the A75 highway, which borders the Sarliève plain, indirectly fostered the consolidation of the *Ferme de Sarliève*. Giving an opportunity to get funding via a call for “compensation projects” (offsetting the negative effects of the highway construction), partners worked to apply to this call. This had two main impacts: 1) organising the answer helped stabilise certain directions given to the project and strengthened the links among stakeholders; 2) the failure to be retained in the call acted as an “electroshock” reinforcing the idea of looking for specific means dedicated to the project (transition from sequence 3 to 4).

Finally, documenting the action using the “Chronique” led to several types of results: 1) the process of building the “Chronique” itself, which involves alternating work in a small group and co-construction in a larger group, makes it possible to initiate a dialogue between the different members of the group, allowing participants to decentralise their point view (each of them entering the project with a limited sight); 2) the tool also allows creating a common narrative; 3) and draws a visual synthesis of a complex story, facilitating both decision-making and dissemination of the project.

## 5.2 Using sociograms to better understand the social context where we are acting

Depending on the specificity of the situation analysed (especially depending on actors' interactions) and the issue addressed, the use of the sociogram proved to be unequally relevant depending on innovations considered. Indeed, as an example, the use of a sociogram is not necessarily relevant to analyse situations where most actors are aligned (low conflict and low strategic stakes). It can nevertheless still help in those situations to highlight material and immaterial connections connecting actors, in order to understand the centrality or non-centrality of some stakeholders (and thus their potential power and/or need for support) (Houdart *et al.* 2011). The sociogram of Maubusson corresponds to this situation, in the sense that the intentions of almost all the actors are aligned with the objective of preserving the land as effectively as possible, but the analysis of material and immaterial connections makes it possible to highlight the pivotal role of some stakeholders regarding specific functions (administrative, economic, etc.). The use of sociograms also appeared to be less appropriate when organisations are at the stage of "mapping actors". Indeed, at the upstream level of concrete actions, the intentions and strategies led by different stakeholders are not necessarily known. But even in these cases, building sociograms allows partners to at least remember key stakeholders and often brings organisations to expand the scope of their analysis.

The cases in which sociograms have proved to be particularly relevant for refining the analyses and reporting them visually are when cases encountered some conflictual issues or gathered heterogeneous stakeholders with various intentions and strategies (Chambron 1995). The sociogram of Sarliève (see figure 9), illustrating the contradictory strategies of stakeholders regarding the use of the land of the plain is an example, as is the strategic table on farm succession developed by De Landgenoten (see table 8b of annex II). In these cases, the sociograms concretely illustrate the difficulties generated by the adversity in the contexts in which organisations are involved. Sociograms can also be interesting in a retrospective analysis approach: if the actions undertaken can be carried out because most stakeholders have aligned visions and can work together, this alignment of objectives is often the result of negotiations (or even past conflicts) preceding the concrete implementation of the action. It can be interesting to conduct an *a posteriori* analysis of this for the implementation of future actions.

Concerning **county farms**, one key conclusion from SA from the first sociogram draft was that the council farmland ecosystem is highly complex. Thus, truly understanding each relevant organisations' position and priorities for council farmland to find common ground would take considerable work. Retrospectively, for SA, doing a collaborative social network mapping exercise at the level of a single farm or county, before potentially attempting to build up a national picture, would likely have been a more accurate and useful process as it would have allowed much more qualitative information to be gathered. SA considers it could also be a useful tool for local communities and councils wishing to change the way their farmland is used as the sociogram would allow identifying the potential supporters or opponents of a specific and locally-anchored alternative vision.

Regarding **farm succession**, DLg considered the sociogram a useful tool regarding the building of its communication plan to get clarity on which partners should be informed. Besides listing them, it helped prioritise them too. Future refinements and additional information could include:

- specifying which partners are active within the traditional farming sector, which ones in the organic or biodynamic sector, or which actors cover both;
- how DLg would like to see them act in favour of their specific purpose;
- articulate the quality and type of relationships between these actors and DLg and capture how the relationships evolve over time while characterising the kind of support DLg can get from the different actors (e.g.: technical, political, financial).

The use of a “strategic table” in order to simulate fictive cases of farm succession and work on them also allowed differentiating the strategies or objectives of heirs, successors, or transferors depending on the type of farm succession considered.

Concerning the *Ferme de Sarliève*, the analysis of the securing of the land transfer through the sociogram made it possible to better understand how two levels of land securing were “connected”: 1) regarding the securing of the land transfer from the joint owners to TDL 2) regarding the potential risks of urban development (with owners who play both sides of the fence). The sociogram also highlighted that the former farmer rallied to the Sarliève project, with his proposition to convert to organic farming and to free land for future farmers, is not simply acting in this way because he supports the discourse and projects of the *Ferme de Sarliève*, but also because of concrete material considerations linked to the near end of his lease and his ambivalent relations with the landowners.

Regarding **retirement savings models** developed by KL, besides helping understand complex legal and financial mechanisms KL developed “from scratch”, the sociograms help understanding some potential tensions the system induces between principles—like limiting land speculation and keeping collective ownership—and the concrete operationalisation, which implies to trace money contributions and consider inflation and other economic injunctions.

After this experiment on sociograms, it seems that conditions for a **better handling of this methodological approach** would be 1) more time and resources to both cope with both implementing the actions and leading stakeholder analysis and 2) more time dedicated to both theoretical inputs on the issue of stakeholder interactions and strategies and methodological inputs on the different steps needed to design them.

### 5.3 How can land organisations improve methodologies and collective work on common issues

As stated, partners considered that flexibility of the framework proposed in this action research work allowed all actors to develop their own approach and partnerships on some specific subjects/issues. To be even more adapted, however, the financial framework on novel practices should be as flexible as the methodological and operational ones. For instance, it seems that such projects should dedicate part of the resources to compensate the participation of stakeholders who can bring relevant insights on the issue but are not always easy to include due to their limited time and means (local farmers or associations for example). In the same line of thought, it is important to specify that actions which have relied on

particularly advanced collaborations (such as the action on county farms led with NEF and CPRE, or the *Ferme de Sarliève*) could not have taken place if the funding for these actions had not been complemented by other funding secured outside of RURALIZATION (notably to finance external partners' times).

Concerning **commons and public land**, the methodology put in place by SA and ER to gather stakeholders and discuss the future of public land is an approach which could be broadened. Indeed, A2L organisation often meet local authorities that own land and decide on their use. They can sometimes be involved as advisers to these local authorities. Beyond this, however, adopting a fully integrated approach where **citizens discuss concrete public land uses represents an interesting perspective**, allowing to create deeper links between citizens and agriculture. **In most countries, seeing communal farmland as a burden rather than an asset is a common narrative**. To perceive it in a distinct way—as an asset local authorities can use to attain goals linked to local development, climate or biodiversity goals—is a shift that requires both the mobilisation of/discussion with stakeholders and an analytical framework that reverses the typical values associated to land (i.e. not focusing only on financial value).

Regarding commons in Romania, however, established farmers, young farmers, new entrants and local authorities respectively were approached as separate circles, without interactions between stakeholders due to:

- the timespan of the study, which did not permit a more uniting experience,
- the poor relationships and affinity among stakeholders, since local authorities administrating commons can sometimes either in an autocratic way or in an isolated way (in a social context of depopulation).

On the other side, active farming communities stewarding the commons accumulate frustration when not properly consulted or involved by local authorities in decision-making over the commons. In these situations, they tend to revert back to customary arrangements to arbitrate on access (which are nonetheless valuable and ensure continued access). The ER experience shows thus that stakeholder dialogue methods can also find their limits in situations of strong power asymmetry or in contexts where mistrust between actors is part of a long history.

Concerning **farm succession**, both the collaboration between XCN and DLg and the collaboration with researchers from the RURALIZATION consortium was the opportunity to deepen the question of the centrality of emotional/personal aspects regarding farm succession. On a methodological level, while DLg interviewed intermediary actors due to difficulties in reaching farmers directly, XCN managed to interview retiring farmers. This may have helped diversifying results regarding emotional aspects. As an example, when asking farmers about attachment to their profession, the animal breeders were more emotional. However, when asked whether they want to have a role in the farm after transfer, the crop farms did want to, but the animal raisers explained they were tired from a life without holidays and wanted to retire effectively, without being involved in the farm anymore. The possibility for DLg to conduct interviews with a multitude of stakeholders dealing with farm succession was also an opportunity to see how fragmented knowledge was on this issue. This emphasised that there was room for a more holistic approach to farm succession, tackling financial and legal issues, but also social aspects, including questions connected to “life after farming”.

Concerning **land stewardship**, XCN was confronted with unfolding a methodology at a time that did not suit the main partner, IAEDEN, in charge of the concrete implementation of the action. Indeed, IAEDEN was in the middle of a major reorganisation at the time, so that people holding the main knowledge (“human capital”) were short of time. XCN also stated, as they implemented the action, that the exercise consisting of identifying and assessing different mechanisms which could help maintain hay meadows had a very transversal nature, which brought them far beyond land and farming, as it potentially entails reflections on tourism, training, awareness raising, fundraising, etc. All dimensions could not be delved into while making the connections between them.

The internal survey on biodiversity carried out by TDL, based on an analytical framework consisting of highlighting social representations, made it possible to objectify the heterogeneity of viewpoints of stakeholders who have otherwise been grasped at first sight as a homogeneous group (all being involved in and supporters of the TDL movement). An additional step in the analysis of social representations within TDL could have been to determine the origin of certain disagreements or tropisms, e.g. when stakeholders acknowledged coexisting visions but in the meantime emphasised a specific one that should be implemented. However, exploring this aspect requires raising a form of taboo: recognising that actors working for the same organisation may have divergent interests, which need to be negotiated. More generally, from a scientific point of view, TDL, like the scientific community working on the subject, notes the difficulty of determining the causality generating a better situation in terms of biodiversity (change in practices? implementation of an environmental lease? implementation of inventories?). The cumbersome scientific protocols required for such demonstrations are beyond TDL's reach, so the demonstration of the positive impact of farms can only be deductive, based on existing meta-analyses concerning the positive impacts of certain practices.

Regarding **farm restructuring** with the implementation of the *Ferme de Sarliève*, the associations that founded the project already have some members involved in the research area. The framework of the RURALIZATION project was an opportunity to 1) strengthen the introduction of scientific methods in the analysis of the project and 2) reinforce the handling of certain methods by the non-researchers of the collective in order to strengthen the co-construction of knowledge.

After some years of experience, KL now considers that separating land, buildings and business for community connected farming makes a lot of sense. The orientation of the use of the building is indeed now considered a matter “too important for the farmers” to be delegated to an organisation that will necessarily remain further away from the daily use. In parallel, the action highlighted limitations of the legal framework e.g., which can impede recognising community land trusts as actors for whom the allocation of land would be justified similarly to allocation for “active farmers”. At present, there are political demands to change this rule, without opening up the land to actors who would not necessarily have the same favourable intentions than KL on land use. Analyses are therefore needed to determine relevant criteria for such land allocations.

Concerning **new models to fundraise for land**, KL tackles a very tricky issue: how could land be seen as a source of support for retirement while not being sold on the market? One of the lessons learnt from their experience is **the importance to work on very specific cases in-depth**. As an example, one experiment documented took three years of intensive work to

complete the process, during which a lot of experience and knowledge was accumulated. Their experiment on two kinds of models is now opening questions on whether or not it would be possible to combine a deferred pension model as the life annuity model and a synchronous intergenerational solidarity model are set up on the Heggelbach farm. Research could be led to see under which conditions it would be possible/interesting.

For their part, ER experienced their greatest difficulties internally in developing a community-based land ownership structure. The individuals involved in the development of such an initiative, however, find their resources structurally outside their national networks, with a methodological approach that has long been inspired by the A2L network exchanges.

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

## 6 Policy recommendations

The purpose of RURALIZATION’s work package on access to land (WP6) is not to formulate policy recommendations, which will be further developed in WP7, focusing on policy analysis. However, on the basis of analysis developed in this report, some directions are outlined for public policies to foster land innovations and access to land for agroecology in general. This section exposes recommendations directly related to the different issues discussed in this report (in section 3), some more general recommendations deduced from the cross-cutting analysis of these actions (section 4), and finally recommendations deduced from the reflexive steps back on the methodological approaches taken (section 5).

### 6.1 Thematic recommendations, linked to specific land issues

The following tables regroup opportunities and levers connected to the thematic issues covered by innovations analysed in this report. Information in the tables is drawn from the analysis of the forms of adversity met by the different actions (table 15 and 16) and from certain specific analyses developed in the case reports. It groups opportunities that seem important to seize or bring to the fore, already existing levers that should be generalised or strengthened, and finally levers that are missing in the political landscape and that should be developed in order to address certain issues.

Farm succession	Farm restructuring	New models to fundraise for land
<p><b>Current levers (to foster)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some pioneering organic farmers are reaching retirement age (sensitive audience regarding farm succession)</li> <li>- Turn farm succession into a territorial issue involving all stakeholders and favour cooperation among actors in touch with retiring farmers to reach them</li> <li>- Develop awareness-raising campaigns among aging farmers and new entrants</li> <li>- Change the vision of what is a viable farm among farmers, farmers organisations, and agricultural institutions</li> <li>- Change the image of new entrants among farmers, farmers organisations, and agricultural institutions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current levers (to foster)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment between urban development and demand for local organic food, creating a “favourable” context to foster such projects</li> <li>- Provide support and funding for emerging projects, including prior to land acquisition</li> <li>- In Germany: the legal framework, if well used, allows to use of connect land and buildings (while disconnecting the ownership of buildings and land), avoid speculation, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current levers (to foster)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide support and funding to local projects experimenting new models to finance land purchases</li> <li>- Support extensive knowledge gathering and exchanges on access to land initiatives from other EU countries</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential levers (to develop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Flanders: complementary solutions need to be found to invest in buildings or infrastructures (as DLg only invests in farmland)</li> <li>- In Catalonia: a community-based land ownership structure could be developed</li> <li>- Public data should contain information about the age of farmers and their use of land</li> <li>- Develop mechanisms (and adequate funding) for progressive entry into farming/ progressive farm transfer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Potential levers (to develop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness raising among large landowners to generate important land and farm restructuring opportunities</li> <li>- In Germany: change the legal framework to lift the barriers ethical cooperatives face when acquiring land (as they are not considered as “active farmer”), but keep safeguards against speculative, non-ethical actors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Potential levers (to develop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct national studies to understand the levers and obstacles for new entrants to access land</li> <li>- In Germany: alleviate too important administrative and financial burden on small-scale schemes involving using retirement savings for solidarity purposes</li> </ul>

Table 15 - opportunities and levers connected to the thematic issues (A)

Use of public land or commons	Land stewardship issues
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Current levers (to foster)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Great-Britain: both Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the policy focus on food, farming and rural areas + the DEFRA is interested in innovative ways to support new entrants to farming</li> <li>- Commons in Romania can be seen as an opportunity for new entrants to access land without relying on ownership</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Current levers (to foster)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop knowledge of the economic and non-economic conditions for farmers' involvement in biodiversity issues and create the conditions to meet their expectations</li> <li>- Finance territorial dialogue prior to actions: private and public funders should not focus only on financing actions that are directly "visible" (planting a hedge, digging a pond, etc.) but should also enable the creating of a common culture among local stakeholders</li> <li>- Regarding hay meadows: combine mechanisms to foster their conservation</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Potential levers (to develop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Romania, the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support more formal cooperation of the local farming communities to increase their bargaining power</li> <li>- regulate the bad use of common pastures</li> <li>- avoid untransparent arrangements between local authorities and big players</li> </ul> </li> <li>- In England, local authorities should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dedicate time to current tenants and make connections with the wider community</li> <li>- change their approach to public land to preserve it and use it for the benefit of local communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Potential levers (to develop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate the possibility of operating in areas that may not be considered a priority by public schemes (e.g. Natura 2000 areas) but which can be considered a priority regarding the concrete state of their biodiversity (e.g. cereal plain with low biodiversity)</li> <li>- Need assess globally current practices, the effects (or lack thereof) of certain legal tools (environmental leases, etc.) and certain technical approaches (diagnosis, inventories) regarding their efficiency to foster on-farm biodiversity</li> <li>- Regarding hay meadows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop specific measures as market logics do not fit with the aim of their conservation</li> <li>- Refine governance among landowners (with scattered plots, unknown owners, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 16 - opportunities and levers connected to the thematic issues (B)

## 6.2 General recommendations on emerging land issues

More general policy recommendations relate to:

- 1) the specificities of the innovation trajectories on land issues,
- 2) the specific role, already highlighted in the D6.1 report, that local authorities can play in facilitating their development and finally
- 3) the importance of addressing the needs of new entrants, and particularly newcomers
- 4) the adverse features of the broader context that initiatives face, which explain many of their difficulties.

### a. Recommendations related to innovation trajectories

As described in their trajectories, these innovations are not linear, often take time and require major adaptations. Most public funding is conditioned to precise criteria and roadmaps, which can be ill-adapted to the way these practices unfold. Especially when tackling emerging issues, funding should be more flexible. It should be pluriannual (three to five years) and allow for flexibility in the activities and outcomes. It should also include core funding to finance hardly measurable expertise-building, coordination, facilitation, administrative time, and so on.

Besides, funding should endorse a broad and bottom-up approach to innovation, notably avoiding “injunctions to innovate”. While land innovations may entail genuinely new practices, they most often arise from adoption and adaptation of approaches or tools existing in another sector or even from the reinvention of an old practice. This is illustrated by the example of commons in Romania, where the innovation lies in the idea of taking existing social arrangements and finding new ways to manage them.

Section 4 discusses how innovations reframe issues, how different actors bring these issues to the agenda, and how asymmetric power impacts the overall process. Public policies could enable this process to happen more effectively, so as to ease innovations and support their upscaling or adaptation to other contexts. This could include:

- Supporting local experimentations and innovations, through funding and facilitating innovation spaces (in connection with researchers). Different experiments such as the “living labs” model could be a source of inspiration. The main characteristics of these living labs is openness: in the sense of inviting different collaborators, addressing different themes, and including citizens and the public to favour innovation and co-creation (Zavratnik *et al.* 2019). A bottom-up approach, a capacity to combine approaches, tools and resources to meet the local needs, and a capacity to bridge the different visions of the stakeholders are other key features highlighted in this report.
- Specifically supporting multi-stakeholders dialogue as a necessary process, which often takes time and encounters setbacks. Support and fund access to land organisations which are facilitating such processes to enable and legitimise them. Recognise the specific role of go-between actors and the fact that they may need dedicated resources to be involved, and/or may find it difficult to get involved in more official and centralised meetings.
- Supporting multi-level networks anchored in these local experiments bridging local, regional, national and European levels (like the A2L network). Give them resources and time to share experiences and inspiration, to invent locally-fit solutions to similar issues. Provide them with more formalised and “legitimate” spaces to share their work in public debate, and enable upscaling.
- Providing spaces for policymakers to hear the diagnosis and experimentations conducted by these organisations and to understand how unbalanced power relations could be corrected. Encourage peer-to-peer dialogue (farmer to farmer, official to official) as an essential lever to share and upscale innovations. Recognise the need to organise dialogue in ways that facilitate participation of all stakeholders, including those whose legitimacy is mostly grassroots experience or local.

## b. Recommendations concerning local authorities

It seems important to point out that the issues addressed by these initiatives and many objectives that they set are, in many respects, aligned with those highlighted by many political commitments and agendas. In this sense, these initiatives can represent sources of inspiration for responses to issues like biodiversity, healthy food production, generational renewal and many other issues currently insufficiently addressed.

In most of the actions, local authorities play a key role, either at a particular moment or in the long term. Concerning the use of their public land, of course, but also to support A2L organisations: to unblock an experiment of farm restructuring in the case of KL for example, or to foster broader territorial dynamics (e.g.: the *Ferme de Sarliève* or Vall del Corb). Key recommendations include:

- Make the best of public land they own as a concrete resource to fulfil some of their missions—e.g. public health, resilience on local food, job creation, local businesses, etc.
- Develop planning policies and tools which preserve land for farming (as opposed to other non-agricultural uses).
- Develop projects to foster local food provision and local agricultural activities. Dedicate adequate resources to implement a coherent vision, instead of carrying out fragmented actions that fail to tackle the food system or access to land pathway in all their complexity.
- Provide support and funding to A2L organisations and other grassroots actors which experiment solutions and/or facilitate multi-stakeholder projects. This may involve acting as catalysts to provide them the necessary legitimacy to access other forms of capital.
- Connect local, national, and European levels for innovation and policy changes, via:
  - participation in local authorities' networks sharing experience and tools to move forward on transition issues (e.g. the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives—ICLEI—or some national networks)
  - collaborating with grassroots organisations and networks, such as the A2L Network
  - being active to advocate for changes in the policy framework around land issues, the generational renewal, and an agroecological rural regeneration at the national and European levels (e.g. as part of the European Committee of Regions).

## c- Recommendation on new entrants

New entrants are at the centre of these land organisations' concerns because, as already stated in the D6.1 report, they have greater difficulty in accessing land on the one hand, but are important drivers of the metamorphosis of land use on the other hand, as they are frequently involved in agroecological project. The policy recommendations concerning them include:

- Conduct country-based analyses of how access to land issues impact the entry into farming. Include in the analysis the views of aspiring new entrants, land organisations and other grassroots actors. Analyse the specific issues and obstacles faced when planning to start an agroecological farm.
- Support the training, on-farm experience, and access to capital of new entrants.

- Devise support and funding mechanisms to enable progressive entry into farming. Also promote and support progressive farm transfer.
- Change the image of new entrants among farmers' communities, farmers' organisations, and public institutions.
- Change the image of what is a viable farm, and adjust support to smaller and more diverse types of farming.
- Give priorities to new entrants to get access to certain types of land (e.g. public land, commons), but also when restructuring large farms.
- Support A2L organisations, which alleviate the costs of entry into farming for new entrants.

#### **d. Recommendations concerning the broader context**

The innovations analysed in this report point to some of the shortcomings or inconsistencies of current national and European policies. Some of these policies have been developed decades ago to address a different context, and today can put forward contradictory objectives or fall short of achieving their goals. For example, KL is setting up a private pension system because the mainstream system is not able to meet retiring farmers' livelihood needs without relying on the fact that they capitalise on the sale of their land when they retire. DLg explores financing models to support extra-familial farm succession, as most public mechanisms and support are still geared towards intra-family farm succession (which is declining steeply). TDL explores ways to improve on-farm biodiversity, in a context where an official state report established a clear link between the allocation of agricultural public subsidies and potential environmental damage (Sainteny *et al.* 2012)<sup>13</sup>.

If broader public policies—particularly food and agricultural policies, environment policies as well as rural development and land planning policies—are not changed, these innovations may create “social bubbles”, which only provide local solutions or solutions for a small group of users, but do not solve the issue systematically. Such a situation opens more general issues of efficiency and social justice. We highlight above (6.1 and 6.2) some of the changes in national policies which these innovations call for. The main and broader change to carry out, however, is to have adequate land laws, which preserve land in farming use, protect the rights of tenant farmers, ensure land is accessible to new entrants and for agroecological uses.

On the European level, there is a crucial need to study and analyse land issues and tendencies, and to ensure adequate national land regulations are compatible with the EU legal framework (Bouchedor *et al.* 2021). Above all, there is a crucial need to reform the CAP, to ensure that it benefits an agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. This entails redirecting basic payments to prioritise small and medium-size farms as well as new entrants and young farmers, while conditioning payments to the delivery of positive social and environmental outcomes. This also entails increasing funding allocated to pillar II of the CAP (Bouchedor *et al.* 2021).

In a situation where the increase in the cost of agricultural inputs and climatic instabilities will make specialised and heteronomous agricultural systems increasingly fragile (Aubert and

---

<sup>13</sup> The report noted that public support can contribute to three forms of habitat destruction that can be considered of major concern in France through “artificialisation, semi-artificialisation and fragmentation” of land. Regarding the CAP subsidies more specifically, the same report highlighted the fact that the changes consisting of removing most of what was considered as “direct negative incentives for biodiversity”.

Poux 2021), the development of social, agronomic, and environmental innovation taking into account the challenges of access to land for diversified production systems is a decisive issue. The proposals from the European commission (EC 2018) establishing rules regarding the support for Member States CAP strategic has indicated that “*Member States should provide for a strategic approach and identify a clear and coherent set of interventions for generational renewal under the specific objective dedicated to this issue*”. Part of the future work led in RURALIZATION will be to assess how these issues are taken into account in the national strategic plans, as well as to elaborate on more specific policy recommendations.

### 6.3 Recommendations inferred from methodological conclusions

Favouring land innovations to leverage their effects on rural regeneration and generational renewal, their systemic impacts, and their multistakeholder approach, would be a key axis for a change in scale. It entails:

- consolidating the skills and capacity of grassroots organisations regarding reflexivity and conducting action research and sharing lessons learnt;
- fostering collaborations between actors of land innovations and researchers working on social innovation and transition;
- developing financial mechanisms to sustain the collaboration between grassroots actors and researchers. At the European level, funding models like the Horizon 2020 funds, or now Horizon Europe funds, could be more directly steered towards practitioners' needs, capacities and ways of working. They could also include a dedicated and external accompaniment to ensure participative project processes and making the most of synergies between academic and field partners.

This report highlighted needs for analysis at different levels: context analysis, theoretical and argumentative analysis (to grasp issues with new perspectives, or mobilise scientific analyses to strengthen demonstrations), or actor analysis (to gain legitimacy or impact). Strengthening and systematising research funding for field organisation or joint researchers-grassroots consortiums would be an interesting development. Although collaboration with researchers is not always necessary, when well-conceived such collaborations can be extremely fruitful. This was best exemplified with the *Ferme de Sarliève*, where the presence from the outset of individuals willing to reflect on the links between field and scientific goals enabled the implementation of ambitious innovation analysis (combining sociograms and chronological analysis of the project trajectory).

Key features of these funding programmes would be, as we saw, to offer flexible methodological and funding frameworks, to foster dialogue and cooperation from the early stages of innovation development (ensuring that research questions also address the practical needs of field organisations), to develop simpler methodological and analytical tools (e.g. simpler sociograms), to develop approaches and tools to better assess the impacts of these innovations.

## 7 Conclusion

This report documents ten recent innovations developed by grassroots organisations to address issues hampering access to land for farmers and/or agroecological use of farmland. The conceptual apparatus and methodology used enabled detailed analysis of the conditions of emergence of these innovations, their ways of working and their early effects, allowing to draw conclusions on their trajectories and potential impacts.

The report shows how these experimentations are innovative first in the way they frame, name, and work on specific land issues, which are otherwise overlooked or constitute vacant policy spaces. This is what DLg does, for instance, when positioning community-based land acquisition as a lever for extra-familial farm transfer and exploring new financing models to that end. Clearly, bringing such issues to the fore implies to build awareness and support for these issues, and for solutions proposed to address them.

The report also highlights that these novel practices operate in an adverse situation, facing both negative land trends and difficult rural dynamics. Adversity comes both from the general context as well as, sometimes, from stakeholders. These innovations therefore have to anchor their action in local communities, build alliances, and reinforce their legitimacy to develop. With dominant and expanding cereal and pig farming, rising land prices, low land mobility and retiring farmers who perceive no other horizon than the transfer of their farm towards an intensive model, the area of Vall del Corb is little attractive to new entrants. But XCN and its local partners need to build on the few local actors who are willing to seize the imminent retirement of many farmers as an opportunity for transition of agricultural models. And even if the actions led are not ambitious enough at this stage, the involvement of local authorities is an important factor in legitimising actions in this direction.

Besides, these innovations change the way land is considered. As an example, the work of Eco Ruralis intends to promote commons as an interesting form of social organisation which could be encouraged and used to support the development of agroecology and access to land for new entrants, rather than left as “under-utilised” areas waiting to be handed over to large agribusiness players in some cases.

Finally, lessons learnt in this report show that, while these innovations often address directly the need for generational renewal, they also have broader effects or potential impacts, which contribute to rural regeneration. Thus, the *Ferme de Sarliève* aims at once to convert a large, conventional cereal farm, into a mixed organic farm hosting several new entrants and a farm incubator, while showcasing advanced on-farm biodiversity conservation through adequate farming practices and land stewardship. Beyond the transformation of the farm itself, it plans to use it as a showcase and lever to foster broader territorial change regarding planning to preserve local farmland, constitution of a broader nature conservation area, development of local food chains, etc. Similarly, the vision promoted by Shared Assets and its allies aims at positioning public land as a key asset and lever to fulfil a broad range of local policy objectives and public needs, from climate mitigation to job creation, public health or water protection.

Analysis of the actions documented in this report also sheds light on innovation processes. All actions are grassroots experiments, based on an analysis of local needs and issues, and developing ad hoc solutions to address those needs. Here, innovation does not happen as a transfer or replication from one territory to another. It rather consists of a reinvention of solutions existing elsewhere or coming from a different sector, combining several solutions or

approaches, adapting them to the local context, proceeding through trials and errors, and mobilising community capitals to shape a fit solution. Logics of inspiration and adaptation rather than logics of direct transfer or top-down replication should predominate. This is the approach that will be tested in the next RURALIZATION task on land innovations (T6.5), consisting of organising focus groups to draw lessons from the novel practices developed, test their relevance and adaptability, and brainstorm strategies for development or new ideas.

This report has shown that, while our organisations are already used to reflexivity, action research methods can prove a powerful ally by formalising strategic assessments of the context and actors. In turn, when documentation of innovations processes is encouraged, action research allows reviewing main steps, difficulties, and successes of these processes under the light of the contextual assessments carried out. The iterative process enriches both systemic expertise and systemic action as one can highlight gaps in the other (e.g. some concrete difficulties encountered in the field may arise from a failure to properly account for certain aspects of the context). In this way, links between research and land organisations can prove virtuous. Research may strengthen the legitimacy of actions and their impact, while field expertise and experiments developed by innovators may be a mine of cutting-edge data and knowledge for researchers. Adapting existing funding for research programmes would be a key step to scale up these innovations.

Alliances with researchers however only represent one facet of the alliance needs and strategies of grassroots organisations. Unfolding these innovations also requires engagement with and support by public institutions, policymakers, citizens as well as farmers or land users/owners ready to engage in the direction they propose. These supporters rally (or partly rally) around the strong principles on which these structures have been founded. Among these, we can cite: non-speculation, maintaining or improving environmental resources, autonomy and security of farmers, facilitating the entry and diversity of new farmers, promoting community-positive land use, etc. Innovation thus also proceeds through multi-stakeholder dynamics and the capacity to bring together diverging views and to bridge them. Such an innovation process takes time and requires adequate support, including public funding and legitimisation mechanisms. Local authorities have a key role to play as facilitator of local dynamics, as well as to legitimise emerging innovations. Public funding allocating “seed money”, prior to further support for concrete actions, also appears a sound investment. It can enable upstream diagnoses and facilitate the “shift in perspective” performed by innovations to challenge the traditional way of approaching subjects.

Despite the positive contributions of these innovations towards access to land for agroecological farmers, generational renewal and rural regeneration, this report also underlines the difficulties they encounter to make their voices heard, gain sufficient support, roll out their activities, or upscale from pilot actions to more advanced stages. Indeed, many of these innovations do not only intervene in a political vacuum, or emerge in an adverse context; they also directly question some of the underlying principles and key tenets of our policy framework and institutions. For instance, when Kulturland builds its own retirement savings model, it is confronted with a very weak public agricultural pension system. In Germany as in other European countries, this leads farmers to capitalise on the price of agricultural land and buildings when they retire. Kulturland has no choice but to take this reality into account by proposing models that “pay out” older generations, even if this is made through ethical systems. Similarly, experimentations to better articulate land stewardship and

agroecological farming point to the difference our current system makes between “exceptional” and “ordinary” biodiversity, or between “sensitive” areas where specific mechanisms are in place to support biodiversity protection (e.g. Pays de la Loire where successful TDL biodiversity experiments have developed) and areas which do not benefit from similar mechanisms, although they could be considered equally rich in natural and cultural values and equally threatened (hay meadows in l’Albera area).

These examples show that land innovations also point to the need for systemic reforms of our policy frameworks, particularly in terms of food and agricultural policies, environmental policies, or land planning and rural development policies. Without such a system change, these innovations will remain “pockets of good practices” providing local solutions for specific needs or groups of users, but without having the capacity for long term solutions or mainstreaming the transition. Policy reform is needed at all level. As illustrated by the work on common land and public land, local authorities have a key role to play to transform the vision of land use and benefits for the public good. This is a clear breakaway from policy systems that consider county farms or commons as financial assets, rather than as crucial means to support vibrant and resilient rural communities. Similarly, the innovations analysed in this report will have limited effects, and a limited capacity to be mainstreamed, as long as the CAP remains largely unchanged. This is confirmed by RURALIZATION’s D6.4 report on policy and legal arrangements, which concludes that current land policies are very marginally oriented towards favouring access to land for new entrants, who remain excluded from land markets. Key evolutions of European policies would include properly analysing land trends in the member states, and reforming the CAP to ensure that it works in favour of an agroecological transition, generational renewal and rural regeneration. This entails for instance redirecting basic payments to prioritise small and medium-size farms and new entrants, while conditioning payments on the delivery of social and environmental positive outcomes. It also entails to increase funding allocated to pillar 2, and support to new entrants and agroecological forms of farming.

The positive impact of innovations on a number of issues at the heart of European political agendas (e.g. favouring generational renewal, environmental protection, land-based community services) therefore calls for consolidating them, including by allocating more public support and developing more adequate forms of support. This must include the establishment of funding and action frameworks that are flexible enough to respond to the specific features that innovation entails, particularly on emerging issues. It must also involve support that is both focused on local actions and on linking these initiatives at a national or European level, which is already at the heart of their modus operandi but remains to be strengthened. It also strongly calls for establishing a more favourable regulatory framework not only to allow for their development, but also to enable a broad, long-term transition of our economies and societies. On this aspect, spaces that allow to hear, and more importantly to take into account, some of the analysis elaborated by innovative structures are to be built.

## 8 References

Aubert, P.-M., Poux, X. 2021. The Farm to Fork strategy: an ambitious and realistic innovation pathway for the European food system. IDDRI online publication. Retrieved on 25/10/2021 from

<https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/farm-fork-strategy-ambitious-and-realistic-innovation-pathway>

Barnaud, C., D'Aquino, P., Daré, W.S., Fourage C., Mathevet, R., Trébuil, G. 2010. Les asymétries de pouvoir dans les processus d'accompagnement *in* La modélisation d'accompagnement : une démarche participative en appui au développement durable, Quae, 125- 152.

Barnaud, C. 2013. La participation, une légitimité en question. *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 2013/1 (Vol. 21), p.24-34.

Barthe, Y. 2003. Le recours au politique ou la problématisation politique « par défaut ». *La politisation*, Paris, Belin, p.475-492.

Barthe, Y., Gilbert, C. 2005. Impuretés et compromis de l'expertise, une difficile reconnaissance. A propos des risques collectifs et des situations d'incertitude. p.43-62.

Bherer Laurence. 2011. Les relations ambiguës entre participation et politiques publiques. *Participations*, 2011/1 (N° 1), p.105-133.

Bobbio, L., Melé, P. 2015. Introduction. Les relations paradoxales entre conflit et participation. *Participations*, 2015/3 (N° 13), p.7-33.

Bouchedor, A., Sesum, A., Sandwell, K., Ortega-Espès, D. (eds) et al. 2021. Roots of Resilience: Land Policy for an Agroecological Transition in Europe. Policy report from Nyeleni. Retrieved on 22/10/2021 from

[https://nyeleni-eca.net/sites/default/files/2021-09/rootsofresilience\\_online-light2.pdf](https://nyeleni-eca.net/sites/default/files/2021-09/rootsofresilience_online-light2.pdf)

Braithwaite, K. 2009. Building on What You Have Got: A Guide to Optimising Assets. Carnegie UK Trust: Dunfermline, UK. Retrieved on 10/10/2021 from

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/building-on-what-you-have-got-a-guide-to-optimising-assets>

Brédif, H. 2004. Le vivant, les hommes et le territoire. Essai de biogéopolitique. Doctorat Géographie, sciences politiques, gestion de l'environnement, INAPG.

Brédif, H., Simon, L., & Valenzisi, M. 2017. Stakeholder motivation as a means toward a proactive shared approach to caring for biodiversity: Application on Plateau de Millevaches. *Land Use Policy*, 61, 12-23.

Busca, D. 2003. Agriculture et environnement. La mise en œuvre négociée des dispositifs agri-environnementaux. Effets d'organisation, enjeux de territoire et dynamique d'appropriation stratégique. *Ruralia*, 12/13.

Chambron, N. 1995. Les polices municipales en France : concurrence, complémentarité ou coopération avec la police nationale ? *Politiques et Management Public*, 13(4), p.161-185.

Copus, A. K., Shucksmith, M., Dax, T., Meredith, D. 2011. Cohesion Policy for rural areas after 2013. A rationale derived from the EDORA project (European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas) – ESPON 2013 Project 2013/1/2. *Studies in Agricultural Economics*, 2, p. 121- 132.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland), Welsh Government, Knowledge and Analytical Services and The Scottish Government, Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services. 2021. Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2019. Retrieved on 25/08/2021 from

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950618/AUK-2019-07jan21.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950618/AUK-2019-07jan21.pdf)

EC (European Commission). 2018. Proposal for a regulation of the European parliament and the council establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans). Retrieved on 22/10/2021 from <https://www.arc2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Commisison-CAP-Communication-2018.pdf>

ECVC, 2016. How do we define Land Grabbing? ECVC online article. Retrieved on 10/10/2021 from

<https://www.eurovia.org/how-do-we-define-land-grabbing/>

EIP-AGRI, 2016. Focus Group. New entrants into farming: lessons to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. EIP-AGRI publication. Retrieved on 09/09/2021 from

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-focus-group-new-entrants-final-report>

Emery, M., and Flora, C., 2006. Spiralling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework. *Community Development*, 37(1), p.19-35.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490152>

Eurostat. 2016. Farm indicators by agricultural area, type of farm, standard output, legal form and NUTS 2 regions. Retrieved on 14/09/2021 from

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ef\\_m\\_farmleg/default/table](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ef_m_farmleg/default/table)

Flora, C.B., Flora, J.L. and Gasteyer, S. 2016. Rural Communities: Legacy and Change. Fifth Edition. Colorado: Westview Press.

Friedberg, E., & Crozier, M. 1980. *Actors and systems: The politics of collective action*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Graham, K., Shrubsole, G., Wheatley, H. and Swade, K. 2019. Reviving county farms. CPRE, The Countryside Charity. Retrieved on 26/10/2021 from [https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/December-2019\\_Reviving-county-farms.pdf](https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/December-2019_Reviving-county-farms.pdf)

Houdart, M., Bonin, M., & Compagnone, C. 2011. Social and spatial organisation—assessing the agroecological changes on farms: case study in a banana-growing area of Guadeloupe. *International journal of agricultural resources, governance and ecology*, 9(1-2), 15-30.

IPBES. 2018. Summary for policymakers of the assessment report on land degradation and restoration of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. R. Scholes, L. Montanarella, A. Brainich, N. Barger, B. ten Brink, M. Cantele, B. Erasmus, J. Fisher, T. Gardner, T. G. Holland, F. Kohler, J. S. Kotiaho, G. Von Maltitz, G. Nangendo, R. Pandit, J. Parrotta, M. D. Potts, S. Prince, M. Sankaran and L. Willemen (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 44 p. Retrieved on 09/09/2021 from [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/spm\\_3bi\\_ldr\\_digital.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/spm_3bi_ldr_digital.pdf)

Korthals Altes, W. and de Wolff, H. 2021. Report on legal and policy arrangements in 28 member states. RURALIZATION D6.2 deliverable. Retrieved on 09/09/2021 from [https://ruralization.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RURALIZATION\\_D6.2\\_Final-v1.0-1.pdf](https://ruralization.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RURALIZATION_D6.2_Final-v1.0-1.pdf)

Korthals Altes, W. (ed.) *et al.* 2021. Report on selective qualitative analysis, which includes 8 selected legal and policy arrangements in selected countries, and analysis of results and a report on the discussion with experts. RURALIZATION D6.4 deliverable.

Lemieux, C., Barthe, Y. 1998. Les risques collectifs sous le regard des sciences du politique. *Nouveaux chantiers, vieilles questions. Politix*, vol. 11, n°44, Politiques du risque, p.7-28.

Loveluck, W., Martin-Prével, A., Rioufol, V., Farrell, M., Murtagh, A., Graham, K., Swade, K., Blasco, C. 2021. Typology of actions based on an analysis of current innovative actions and discussion with stakeholders. RURALIZATION D6.1 deliverable. Retrieved on 10/10/21 from [https://ruralization.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RURALIZATION\\_D6.1\\_Typology-of-actions\\_v2.0-5.pdf](https://ruralization.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RURALIZATION_D6.1_Typology-of-actions_v2.0-5.pdf)

Lankoski, J. 2016. *Alternative Payments Approaches for Biodiversity Conservation in Agriculture*. OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, Paris. Retrieved on 16/10/21 from <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5jm22p4ptg33-en.pdf?expires=1635363966&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=61A45E42398274EF5ED70781C4735F8F>

Mantescu, L. 2009. *When Globalization Meets Postsocialism-Community-based Institutions for Managing Forest Commons and the Internationalization of Timber Market in Romania*.

Mermet, L., Billé, R., Leroy, M., Narcy, J.-B., Poux, X. 2005. L'analyse stratégique de la gestion environnementale : un cadre théorique pour penser l'efficacité en matière d'environnement. *Natures sciences sociétés*, 13(2), p.127-137.

Monllor, N. 2014. Rurbans and Terra Franca, Catalonia, Spain: from fostering the new peasantry to enabling its access to land. Access to Land case study. Retrieved on 25/10/21 from [https://www.accesstoland.eu/IMG/pdf/cs\\_rurbans\\_and\\_terra\\_franca\\_final.pdf](https://www.accesstoland.eu/IMG/pdf/cs_rurbans_and_terra_franca_final.pdf)

Murtagh, A., Farrell, M., Mahon, M., McDonagh, J., Conway, T., Conway, S. and Korthals Altes, W. 2020a. Assessment Framework. RURALIZATION Deliverable 3.1.

Murtagh, A., Farrell, M., Mahon, M., McDonagh, J., Conway, T. and Conway, S. 2020b. Detailed Conceptual Guidelines. RURALIZATION Deliverable 3.2.

Murtagh, A., Farrell, M., Mahon, M., McDonagh, J., Keenaghan, N., Conway, T. and Conway, S. 2020c. Review Report and Fact Sheets based on previous European projects. Part A and Part B. RURALIZATION Deliverable 3.3.

Notarisbarometer. 2019. Landbouwgronden. S1, n°2. Retrieved on 22/01/2021 from <https://www.notaris.be/download/%252Fnews%252F5d3e9ecf17e81.pdf>

Notarisbarometer. 2021. Landbouwgronden. n°4. Retrieved on 22/10/2021 from <https://www.notaris.be/download/%252Fnews%252F6141b781782c8.pdf>

Platteau J., Lambrechts G., Roels K. and Van Bogaert T. (eds.). 2018. Uitdagingen voor de Vlaamse landen tuinbouw. Landbouwrapport (LARA)2018, Departement Landbouw en Visserij, Brussel. Retrieved on 22/01/2021 from [https://lv.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/gr\\_201807\\_lara2018\\_webtom\\_0-fastviewdisabled\\_pluimvee.pdf](https://lv.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/gr_201807_lara2018_webtom_0-fastviewdisabled_pluimvee.pdf)

Rey-Valette, H., Chia, E., Mathé, S., Michel, L., Nougaredes, B., Soulard, C.-T., Maurel, P., Jarrige, F., Barbe, E., Guiheneuf, P.-Y. 2014. Comment analyser la gouvernance territoriale ? Mise à l'épreuve d'une grille de lecture. *Géographie, économie, société*, 16(1), p.65-89.

Rioufol, V., Diaz de Quijano, M. (eds). 2018. Europe's New Farmers: Innovative ways to enter farming and access land. Access to Land. Retrieved on 09/09/2021 from <https://www.accesstoland.eu/Access-to-land-for-new-entrants>

Rowlands, J., 1995, Empowerment examined, *Development in Practice*, 5, 2, p.101-107.

Sainteny, G., Salles, J.-M., Duboucher, P., Ducos, G., Marcus, V., Paul, E., Auverlot, D., Pujol, J.-L. 2012. Les aides publiques dommageables à la biodiversité. La Documentation Française. Retrieved on 26/10/2021 from <https://www.cbd.int/doc/nbsap/public-incentives-harmful-fr.pdf>

Thévenot, L., Boltanski, L. 1991. De la justification - Les économies de la grandeur. Gallimard.

Thou, M., Vincent, P., Barthe, L. 2018. Comprendre, repérer et accompagner l'innovation sociale et territoriale : guide pour renouveler son approche du développement local. Chronique sociale.

Thou, M., Vincent, P. 2021. L'innovation sociale et territoriale : accompagner le changement d'échelle d'un projet pilote. Presentation of a Web Conference. Cap Rural and CIEDEL.

Willis, G. 2021. County farms: what are they, and why are they so special? CPRE, The Countryside Charity. Retrieved on 26/10/2021 from <https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/county-farms-explainer/>

World Bank. 2018. Agricultural land (sq. km) - Romania, United Kingdom. Retrieved on 20/08/2021 from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.AGRI.K2?locations=RO-GB>

Zavratnik, V., Superina, A., Stojmenova Duh, E. 2019. Living Labs for rural areas: Contextualization of Living Lab frameworks, concepts and practices. *Sustainability*, 11(14), 3797.

Zondag, M.J., Koppert, S., de Lauwere, C. Sloot, P., Pauer, A. 2016. Needs of young farmers Report I of the Pilot project: Exchange programmes for young farmers. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

## 9 Annexes



ANNEX I: The Access to Land Pathway



ANNEX II: Sociograms & strategic analyses






ANNEX III: Handouts

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

## ANNEX I: The Access to Land Pathway

### The Access to Land Pathway

Actions on land (combined with support to farmer(s) at numerous stages)		Farmer's Pathway	Support to Farmers & actions on their broader environment
<b>General level</b> 	<b>1- Organising the accessibility of farmland (in general):</b> - Preserving farmland from land take, abandonment, etc. - Organising access to information about land availability: mapping, cadastres, etc - Improving the possibility of land transfers: - Anticipating farm transmissions and connecting retiring farmers and successors - Structuring land demands - Mobilising private landowners	<b>Upstream</b> 	<b>0. Upstream support to new entrants (pre-land access)</b> - Providing initial training on agroecology - Supporting business planning (e.g farm incubators) - Supporting farm set up/ adaptation: access to capital, housing... - Helping with social and professional insertion locally - Helping with access to services and infrastructures in rural areas
	<b>2- Steering land control towards specific sustainable and multifunctional uses:</b> - Conditioning land access to specific uses – e.g. organic farming on water catchment areas, food production for local schools, etc. - Prioritising certain users – e.g. public tenders or land banks prioritising the youth, women, the unemployed, community businesses, etc.; - Developing food and agricultural territorial projects to recultivate fallow land, renew generations, manage environmental risks (e.g. bush fires), preserve a cultural heritage		<b>4. Downstream support to farmers</b> - Supporting commercialisation - Build demand for agroecological products - Fostering the implementation of processing tools and infrastructures adapted to small-scale farms - Encouraging the diversification of farm activities (economic and non-economic – e.g. educational activities) - Providing lifelong learning opportunities and expert advice
<b>Farm level</b> 	<b>3- Securing access to land for individual farmers, particularly new entrants:</b> - Providing financial capital for land and buildings: offering public land (e.g. county farms), community land acquisitions, etc. - Offering favourable legal conditions (long-time lease, lease for community action...), sometimes connected with specific practices (e.g. environmental clauses) - Organising land portage to bridge the gap between the time of sale and setting-up	<b>Downstream</b>	

## ANNEX II: Sociograms & strategic analyses

### 1. Assessing biodiversity on TDL farms: sociogram of the Maubusson farm

*See figure 14*

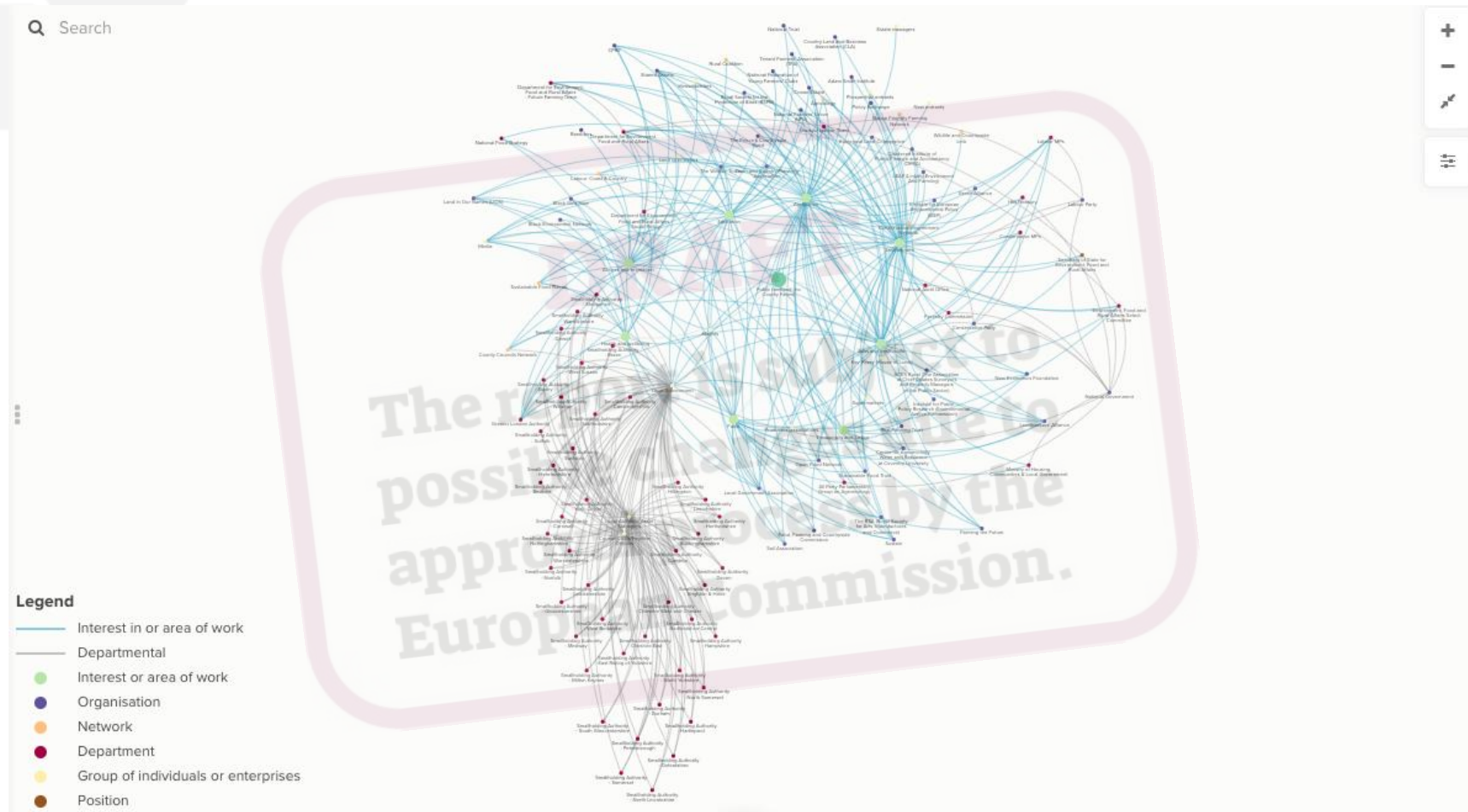
### 2. Sociogram “Need to improve hay meadow state of conservation” (XCN)

*See figure 13*

**DRAFT**

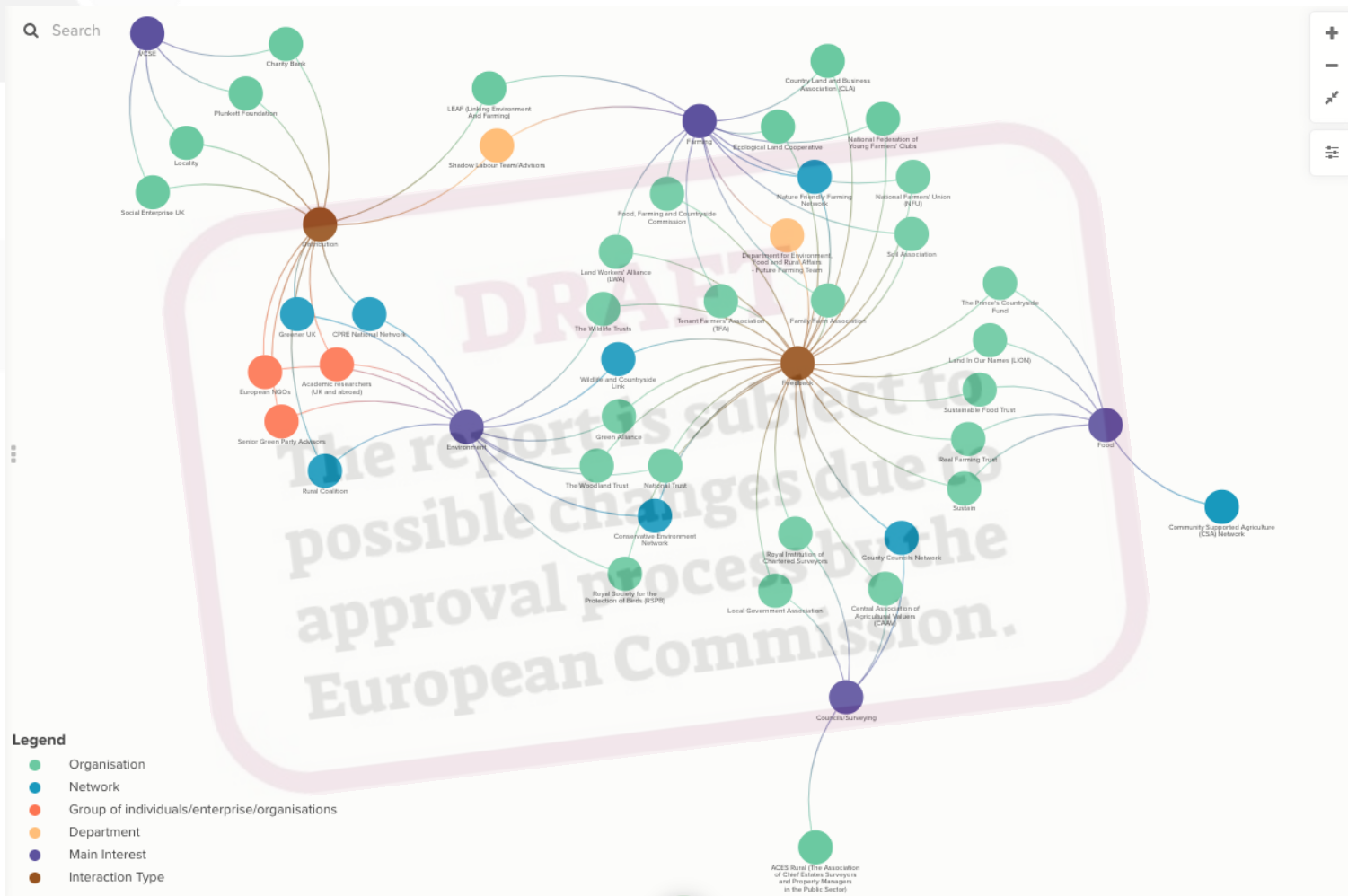
The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

3a. Sociogram “Who has an interest in, or power over, council farmland in England?” (SA)



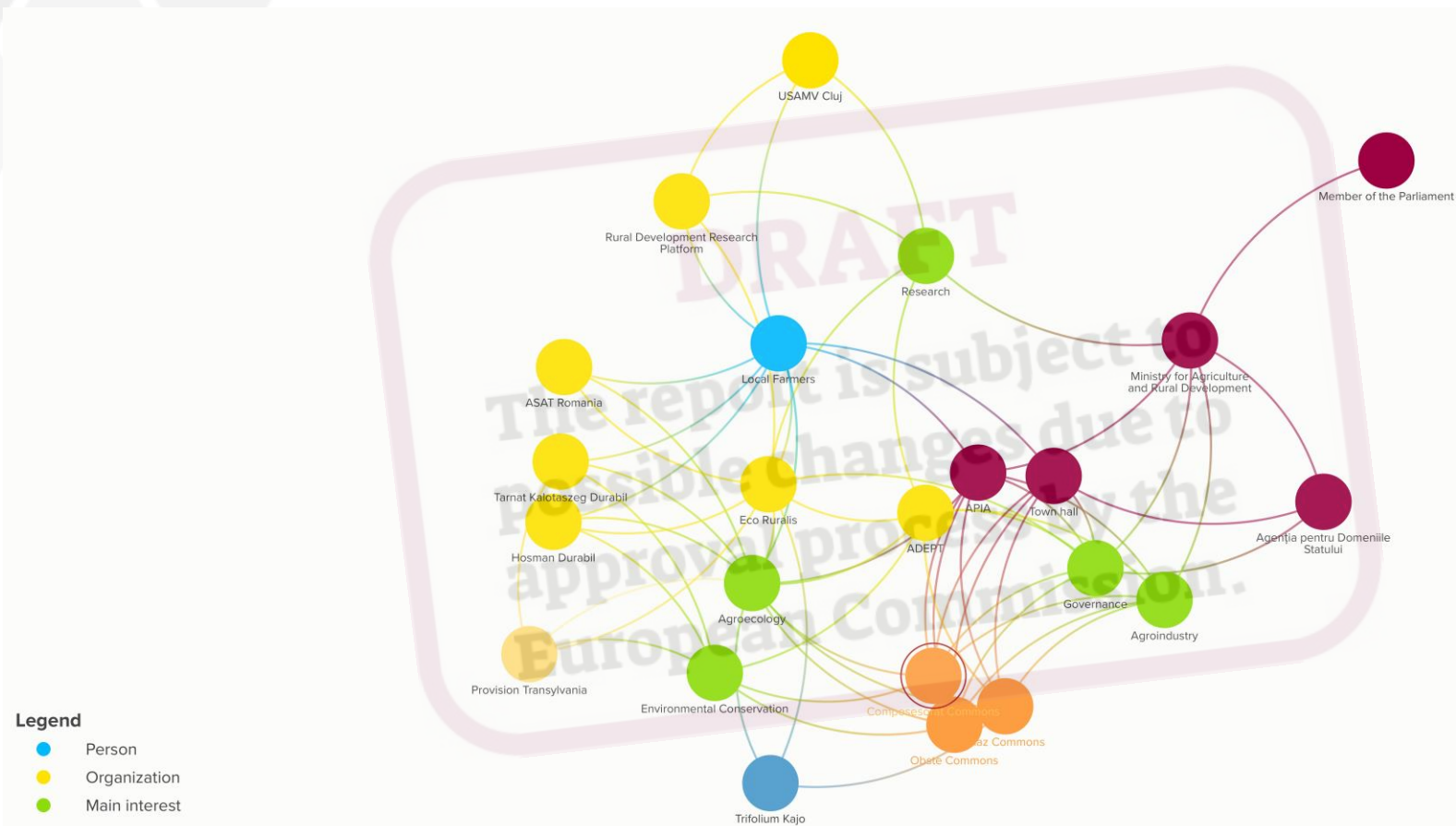
The full, dynamic diagram can be seen more clearly at this link: <https://embed.kumu.io/4d9fdd2c88766f0e18de1826c0b5dbcd>

3.b. Simplified version (SA)



Online at this link: <https://embed.kumu.io/c5679658709afc3304d5448d19f73eda>

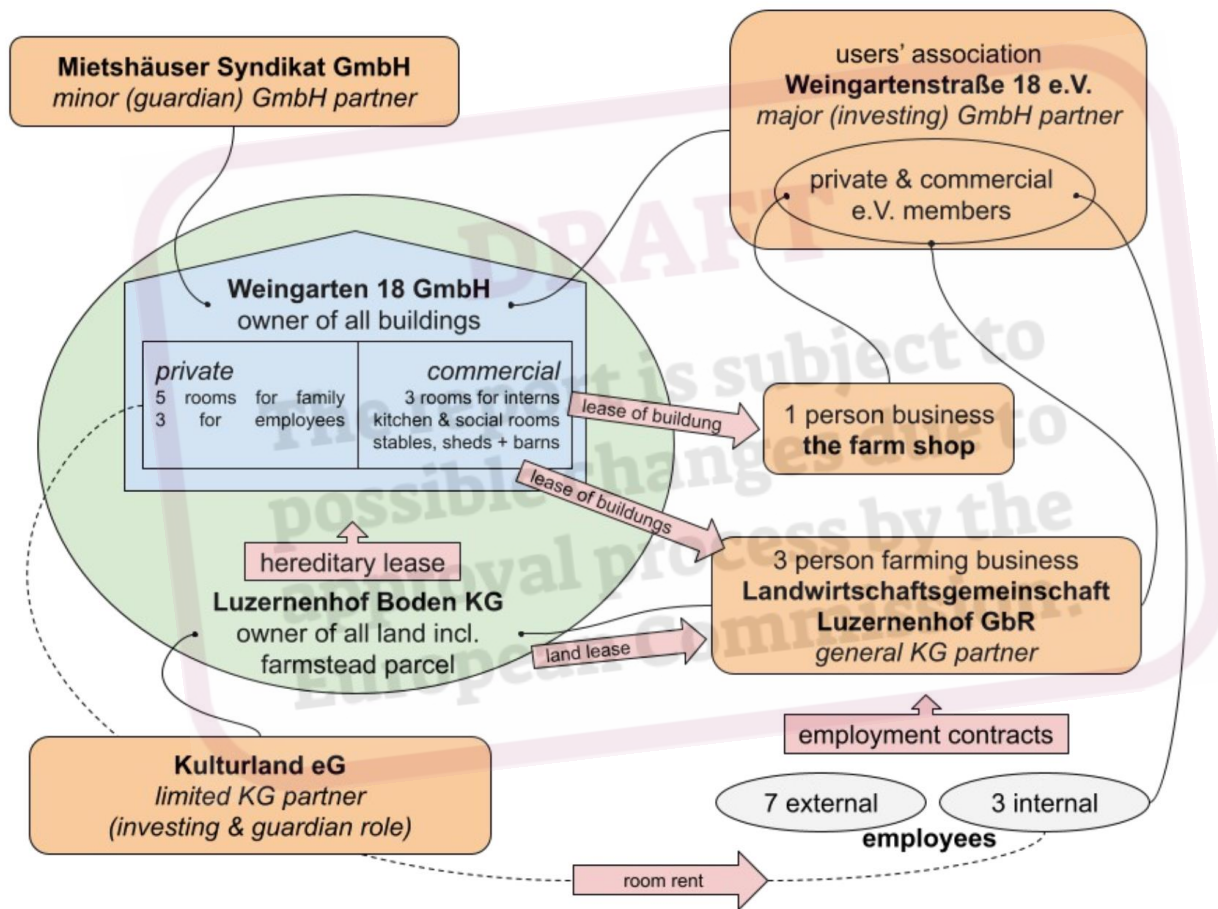
#### 4. Mapping of actors connected to commons (ER)



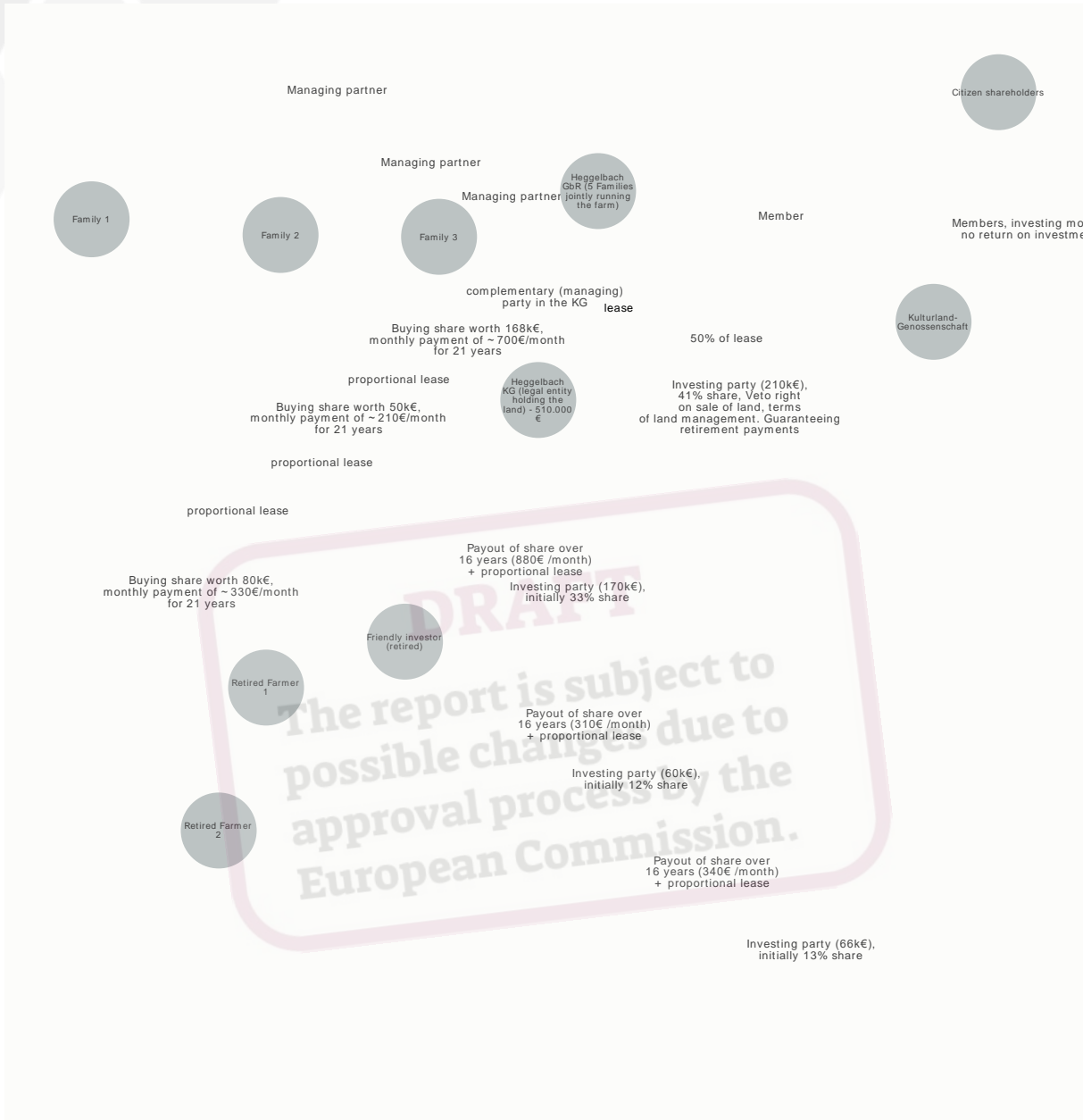
Link to the full resolution: <https://embed.kumu.io/6590049fe7ea3b28089b2c77a7ebb4d8>

5. Sociogram of Sarliève (TDL): see figure 9

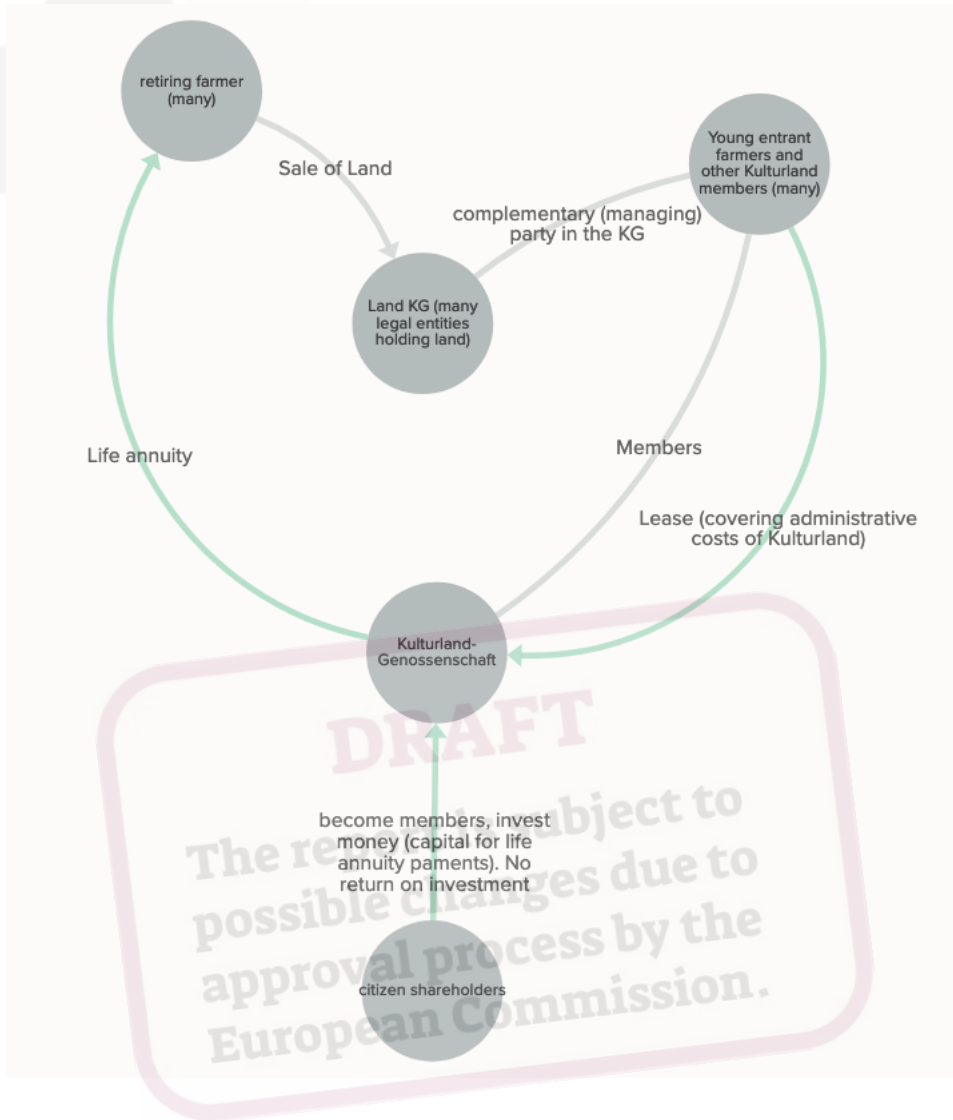
6. Sociogram of Luzernenhof (KL)



### 7a. Retirement Savings (KL): the Heggelbach Model

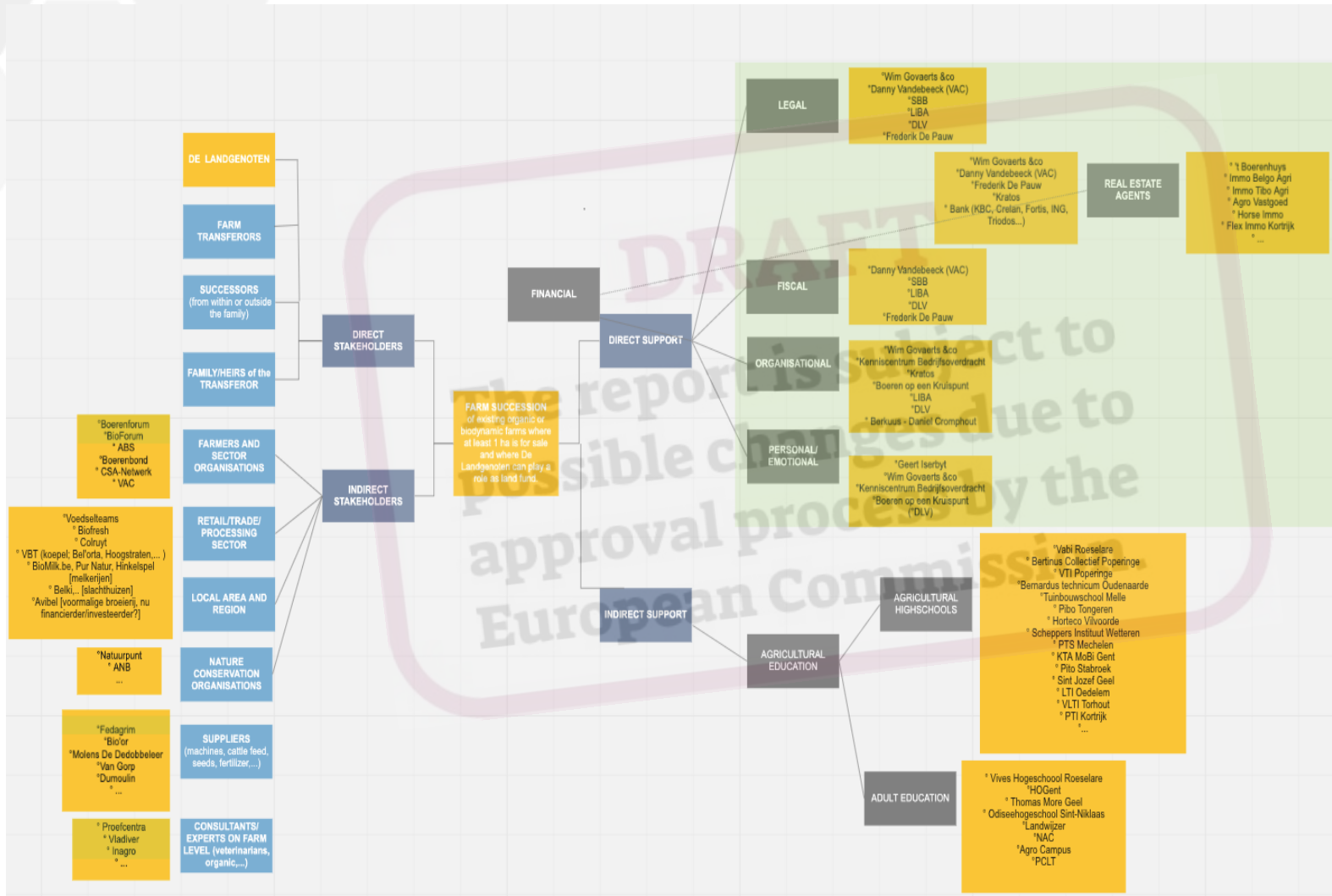


**7b. Retirement savings (KL): Life annuity model**



**7c. Retirement savings (KL): Generalised Model (see figure 10)**

8a. Sociogram “Disseminating DLg’s work on farm succession”

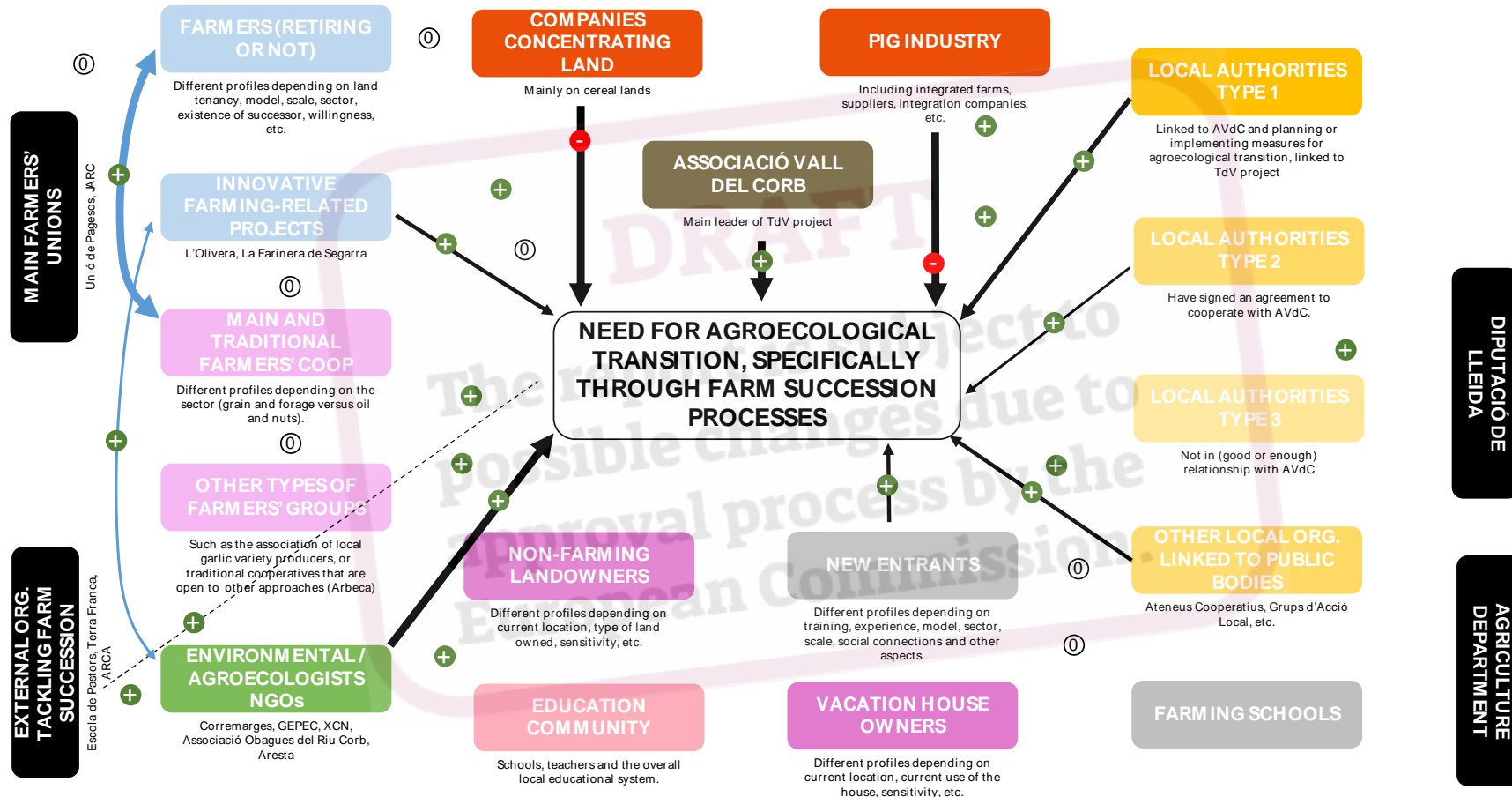


## 8b. Strategic table: “social and emotional dynamics at stake in succession processes in different succession cases” (DLg)

ACTORS	OBJECTIVES		RESOURCES	CONSTRAINTS	ISOLATED STRATEGY	CONDITIONS FOR A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM
	Explicit	Implicit				
<b>Direct stakeholders</b>						
De Landgenoten	- making land available for organic farmers and preserving it for future generations	- willing to put in effort to support succession if DLg can be involved directly (as the future land owner of an existing farm)	- a structure and know-how to crowdfund shares/donations for land - financing levers/strategies for larger plots	- crowdfunding is a long process, even if more time is granted the money still needs to be raised - the amount of staff power and feasible case load is limited - DLg doesn't buy houses/buildings so ownership is split with successor; constraint if successor isn't able to finance this part	- putting DLg 'in the market' in relation to this topic of farm succession; yet balancing the extra case load this can possibly bring - aiming to pay a 'fair amount' for the available land	- there might be a field of tension between the price DLg is willing to offer, the amount the successor is able/willing to chip in for the real estate, and the price the owner(s) (or their heirs) want(s) to receive.  Hence DLg's work to look into the financing strategies to increase cash flow, stretch purchases in time or save on costs.
Farm successors	- looking for a farm to start their own business within their field of interest, geographical scope, and their financial means		- know-how to start a business - being able to make use of present material and the immaterial legacy (e.g. experience) of the transferor	- lack of financial means to take over an existing farm - being the face of a crowdfunding campaign while starting a new business		- access to capital (e.g. a loan, savings...) to pay for farm buildings and housing.

<p>Farm transferors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- transferring their life's work to like-minded farmers</li> <li>- capitalise on their investments (to get a pension)</li> <li>- treating heirs equally (e.g. in case of more children where not all of them take over the farm; or when there is at least one child and the successor comes from outside the family)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it may be difficult to sell land that has been in the family (for generations); even if the successor comes from within the family, when land is sold to DLg it is no longer family property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- know-how to run a farm and knowledge of the particularities of their business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it can be hard to let go of their life's work and to fully engage in the process of succession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- balancing letting go of their life's work whilst securing the future of it, as well as balancing family dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a pension plan to have an alternative income once the transfer is completed, as well as a plan regarding where and how to spend this new life stage.</li> </ul>
<p>Family/heirs of the transferor (and their partners)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- getting their fair share of the sale</li> <li>- maintaining the family's legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if not as connected to the farm and the importance to continue it, possibly the financial return prevails</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- balancing letting go of their ancestors' life's work whilst securing their future inheritance, as well as balancing family dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to an alternative source of income in order to not have to make the most of the transfer price and/or connection to the future continuation of the farm</li> </ul>

### 9. Farm succession in Vall del Corb (XCN)



### ANNEX III: HANDOUTS

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

HANDOUT

# RESILIENT STRATEGIES FOR HAY MEADOWS CONSERVATION

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Prat de Dall © Joan Font

Xarxa per a la  
Conservació de la Natura



## CONTEXT

The Catalan Network for Nature Conservation (XCN) is an organisation that brings together XX environmental entities and local authorities. It fosters nature conservation initiatives amongst civil society, by leading actions related to knowledge transfer, funding, advising, and policy. One of XCN's members, the ecologist association IAEDEN is active in the conservation of hay meadows, which present high ecological and cultural values. These habitats have been historically maintained by livestock farmers but they are in serious danger of disappearing due to abandonment or intensification. IAEDEN engages with landowners to ensure the preservation or restoration of hay meadows and develops research and educational activities.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Effective action towards hay meadows conservation is especially hard: plots are small, isolated and scattered, landowners are elders or absent, political willingness is very low, among other obstacles. All this exacerbates the low economic yield of hay reaping and contributes to the abandonment or intensification of meadow plots. Nowadays, hay meadows preservation in the Albera area is too dependent on IAEDEN and on external funding sources. This action research thus aimed at finding ways to implement more definitive, resilient, self-sustained mechanisms to ensure that reaping is carried out and hay meadow values are preserved without over-involvement of IAEDEN.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



### INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Study & promote multi-functional uses of farmland in an unfavourable context (low agronomic value, small plots, abandonment).
- ✓ Explore a long-term, self-sustaining approaches that promote synergies between agriculture and nature conservation.
- ✓ Involve a variety of actors in seeking levers for autonomous & efficient management of meadows (academia, policymakers, landowners...)



### IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Generate knowledge and exchanges amongst stakeholders on sustainable conservation models
- ✓ Design policy proposals to review CAP agroenvironmental measures & other public aid to support hay meadow conservation. Deliver proposals in the framework of CAP reform.
- ✓ Raise awareness on hay meadows conservation through a communication campaign (social media, newsletter) and open debate.

## OBJECTIVE

Improve knowledge and conditions to define and implement a resilient and self-sustained strategy for hay meadows conservation

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Identify mechanisms that could contribute to a resilient and self-sustained conservation of hay meadows and analyse their potential effectiveness

- Review literature, existing initiatives, and contact experts with different profiles to list possible solutions
- Conduct brainstorming sessions to assess the potential of mechanisms identified

### Task 2: Foster knowledge exchange amongst the stakeholders involved in hay meadows

- Identify stakeholders potentially involved in the management of hay meadows in l'Albera area
- Organise meetings and an open conference to share and debate on issues

### Task 3: Improve the political willingness and commitment to conservation of hay meadows

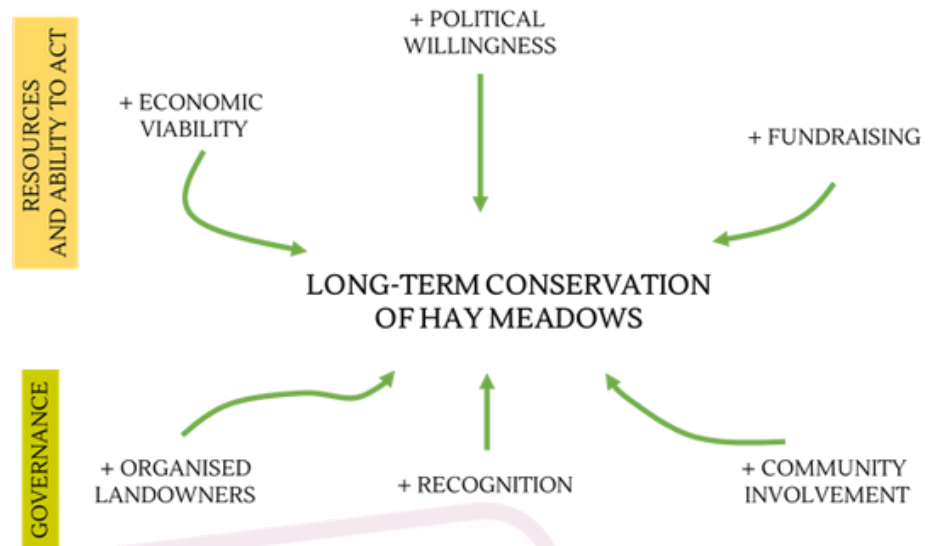
- Elaborate a set of policy proposals to review agro-environmental measures
- Engage with policymakers on these proposals



# RESULTS

The different mechanisms identified to increase resiliency and sustainability of hay meadow management were classified in 6 categories, as illustrated in Figure 1. Some of these categories related to mechanisms that could increase practitioners' resources or ability to act (e.g. by reinforcing economic viability of the reaping activity). Meanwhile, other categories related to mechanisms that would improve the chances of success at the governance level (e.g. by increasing institutional recognition for the value of this habitat).

The exercise aimed to think “out of the box” regarding possible mechanisms that could be implemented. Thus, the final list is varied and not all mechanisms documented are relevant. Yet, some of them relate to core challenges, such as increasing the viability of the reaping by exploring other products or uses, conducting other economic activities, fundraising, fostering the coordination amongst landowners, etc.



A special focus on mechanisms to increase political commitment was chosen to take advantage of the window of opportunity opened with the current reforming of the CAP. In this regard, the agro-environmental measure on hay meadows was assessed and debated with different stakeholders, and possible improvements were identified and delivered to policymakers. Amongst others, the proposals were: to better define the habitat to which the measure is targeted (current definition lacks specificity and resources are channeled towards grassland pastures in general), increase the territorial scope (current scope is mountain counties, thus mid-land and low-land hay meadows are excluded), increase the minimum eligible surface (so that it is consistent with the rather small and scattered nature of hay meadow plots), improve some management commitments, include landowners associations and land stewardship organisations as beneficiaries and encourage collective approaches.

Other proposals referred to more underlying issues of the CAP. For instance, current legislation does not allow or facilitate the logic of actually paying for conserving a natural asset (only management costs and the loss of earnings are being paid). This should be changed so that farmers are the acknowledged and remunerated according to the public goods they provide. Results-based payments should also be explored an approach possibly better suited to hay meadows conservation.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- IAEDEN's long term conservation practices and local anchorage (local contracts with 22 landowners) was the first step to identify precisely needs and challenges related to hay meadow conservation
- Enlarging the circle of actors concerned with conservation goals (e.g. involving volunteers, policymakers, retailers...) is a key aspect of more resilient strategies but this requires building knowledge-based arguments and articulating them in a convincing communication plan.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

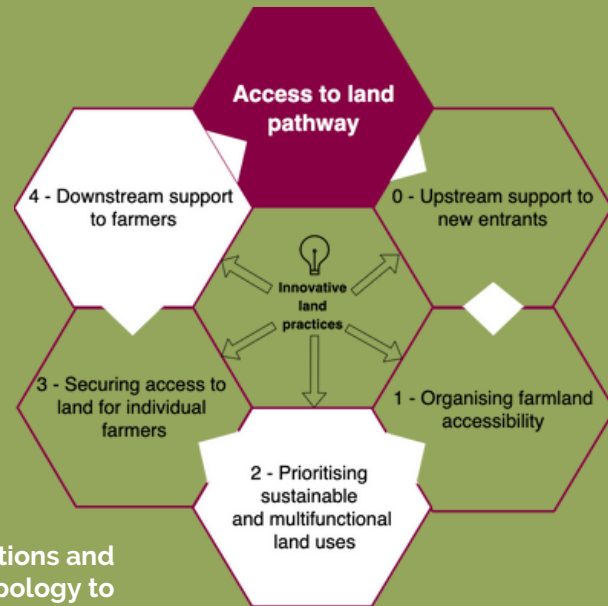
- XCN works jointly with members. At the time the action was led, IAEDEN was in the middle of a major reorganisation, so that people holding the main knowledge (“human capital”) were short of time.
- Working on land stewardship goes against main trends in agriculture. Stakeholders must be aware and ready for an uphill battle with ill-adapted public aid.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

The action tackles the organisation of the accessibility of farmland. It mobilises private landowners and explores strategies to ensure that land remains available for farming and as a natural and cultural asset.

The action also steers land control towards specific sustainable and multifunctional uses, since the ultimate objective is to maintain and foster the natural value of hay meadows. This is a strong lever for developing agroecological approaches and for fostering rural regeneration beyond farming. Finally, this action encourages the diversification of activities and it provides practical support in the management of the meadows, thus tackling aspects of downstream support to farmers or landowners through increased farm viability.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## XARXA PER A LA WHO WE ARE CONSERVACIÓ DE LA NATURA

XCN is an second-level organisation that fosters nature conservation initiatives amongst civil society, by leading actions related to knowledge transfer, funding, advising and policy. XCN's members are usually local land stewardship organisations, such as IAEDEN, that work together with landowners in order to preserve the natural values and ecological processes of their estates.

Learn more at: [www.xcn.cat](http://www.xcn.cat)

## ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)

Prat de Dall © Gabriel Mercadal



## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [cblasco@xcn.cat](mailto:cblasco@xcn.cat)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# MONITORING BIODIVERSITY ON FARMS

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Visit at Lumigny Farm © JR - TDL

Terre de Liens



## CONTEXT

Terre de Liens (TDL) is a non-profit organisation working to preserve agricultural lands and support a new generation of farmers. It owns over 250 farms, over 6000 ha, across France. TDL favours the settlement of new entrants practicing organic agriculture on these farms, renting the land through a special type of long-term farm tenancy contracts called "Environmental Rural Leases" (ERLs). These include clauses to promote environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Most often, TDL includes organic practices and the maintenance of existing agroecological infrastructures (hedges, ponds..) in the ERLs. Other clauses may be included in concertation with farmers and in compliance with the law (out of 16 possible clauses pre-defined by law).

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

TDL does not yet have an integrated approach to protect and promote on-farm biodiversity. Key challenges are to:

- design ERL clauses that are adapted for each farm, support farmers in implementing them, and assess the initial state of biodiversity and progress over time.
- support farmers to include naturalist approaches at the heart of their agricultural practices, through assessment, pilot actions, local dynamics, training, etc.
- assess the overall situation to report to our members who expect the sound ecological management of TDL-owned land and rally people around the TDL project.

This action research aimed at analysing the co-existing representations and expectations, and designing a global "à la carte" approach to progress on these objectives.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Find ways to sustain farm biodiversity monitoring in the long term
- ✓ Take into account co-existing representations and expectations to determine the most suitable approach
- ✓ Propose an approach based on the situation and motivation of local actors (farmers, associations...)



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Raising awareness among farmers and the broader public about environmental issues
- ✓ Promoting a multi-functional agriculture that preserves landscapes and eco-systems
- ✓ Working to combine economic and environmental performance by improving functional biodiversity on TDL farms

## OBJECTIVE

Designing a multilayered approach to assess, monitor and improve biodiversity on TDL farms

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Survey biodiversity representations and objectives

- Build a questionnaire and interview internal actors on farm biodiversity (13 TDL staff and volunteers with a special interest in biodiversity issues, plus by interviews with all 19 TDL regional associations)
- Analyse responses to understand goals and representations of actors, points of consensus and disagreement, and learn about concrete biodiversity monitoring efforts already existing in TDL

### Task 2: Document concrete biodiversity projects

- Realise case studies on outstanding farms, including 1. Descriptions of site and history, 2. Environmental approach 3. Results 4. Limits and perspectives (2 studies validated together with stakeholders)
- Analysing actor interplay in successful projects to understand how human and social capital plays a role in the success of biodiversity monitoring projects

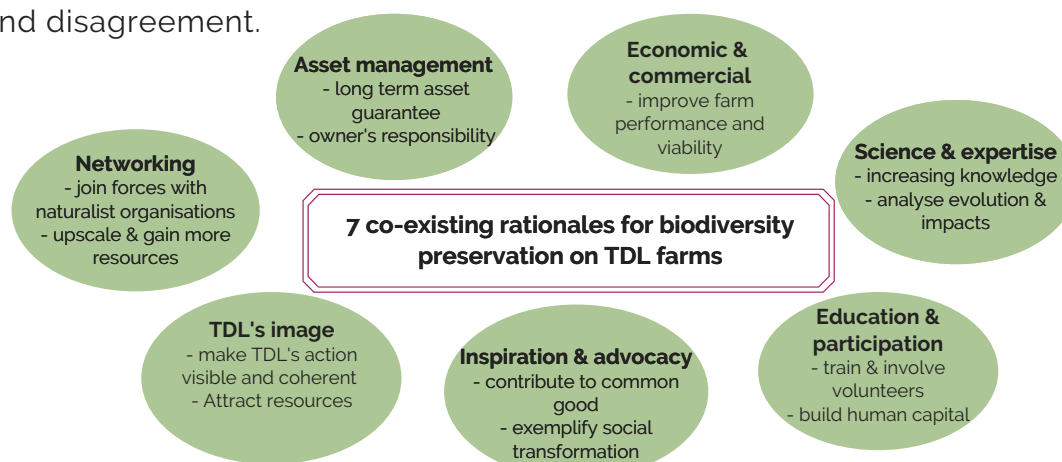
### Task 3: Create a multilayered and adaptable approach to on-farm biodiversity

- Use inputs from previous tasks to devise an approach to guide TDL's future work on monitoring biodiversity
- Finalise the approach through an iterative process involving volunteers, staff, and farmers in providing feedback on draft versions



# RESULTS

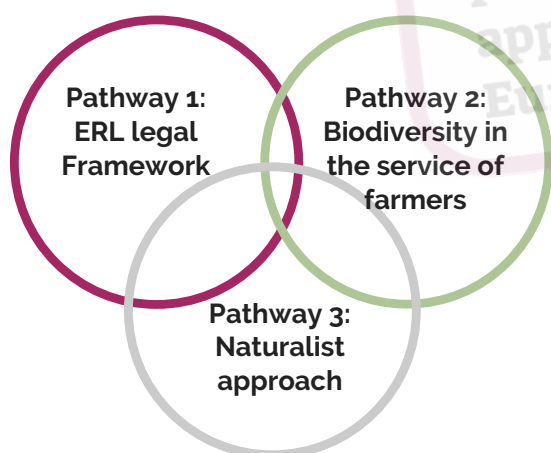
The survey of representations highlighted 7 types of rationales or motivations for biodiversity monitoring, highlighted in the graph below. The survey further helped map areas of actor consensus and disagreement.



The case studies on successful projects helped identify key levers of action, e.g. obtaining dedicated funding to organise dialogue and achieving a convergence of views between partners.

**The final result of this action is an approach tailored to the needs of TDL to monitor biodiversity on farms.** This approach needed to be simple and low cost, while maintaining legitimacy and validity. Three pathways are proposed to meet different biodiversity objectives:

- **Making the best of the ERL contractual framework:** agreeing on lease clauses, organising annual meetings with farmers to update land assessments.
- **Developing "functional biodiversity" projects:** supporting farmers in managing biodiversity in the service of both their farms' and territorial needs
- **Realising biodiversity inventories:** monitor biodiversity through naturalist surveys



**The three pathways of the approach are not mutually exclusive.** However, pathways 2 and 3 require more significant involvement of local TDL associations and farmers. Pathway 1, on the other hand, can be handled more easily by TDL's national land-owning organisations, in partnership with local associations. Together, they could establish a more comprehensive initial farm diagnosis and annual data update.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- A wide-encompassing biodiversity approach within TDL can only be legitimate if it is **adaptable to territorial contexts** (location, possible partnerships, resources...).
- **Patient and sustained local dialogue** is key to bringing together perspectives of farmers, conservation and agricultural organisations, landowners, officials, and so on. This requires money and time, both resources which can be difficult to obtain.
- **Acquiring public subsidies for biodiversity monitoring** can legitimise the work locally.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

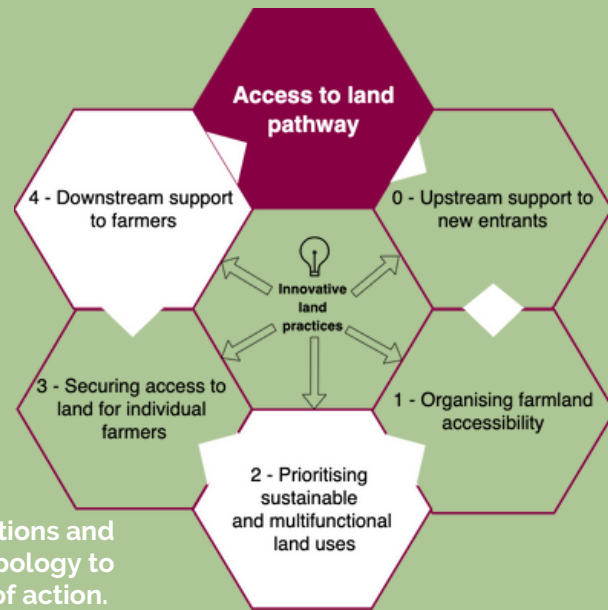
- **"Go-between actors"**—who are inserted in more than one local network (agricultural, conservationist, political...)—can play a key role to **access certain resources, facilitate territorial dialogue, and lift obstacles.**
- **Involving farmers** and assessing their needs and desires is central to running successful biodiversity projects.
- **Mobilising the expertise and resources available among TDL volunteer and external partners** can effectively sustain long-term biodiversity actions.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

This action relates firstly to the issue of prioritising sustainable and multifunctional land uses. By creating approaches and tools to assess biodiversity, it adapts lease clauses and on-farm actions to support farmers committing to and acting for improved environmental preservation.

Secondly, it can support farmers in the long term (downstream support) by implementing diagnoses and recommendations for biodiversity management that will improve farm viability. Thirdly, the approach devised by TDL for monitoring biodiversity can help secure potential funding or in-kind help (volunteer workcamps for instance) to support the implementation of recommended biodiversity actions (planting hedges, maintaining ponds, etc.).



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### TERRE DE LIENS

Terre de Liens is a civic organisation which promotes land preservation and facilitates access to farmland for organic and peasant farmers in France. One of TDL's modes of action consists of collecting citizen investment to purchase farms and make them accessible to farmers through long-term leases.

Learn more at: [www.terredeliens.org](http://www.terredeliens.org)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



Toussacq farm © Valérie Rosenwald

## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [v.rioufol@terredeliens.org](mailto:v.rioufol@terredeliens.org).

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# REIMAGINING COUNCIL FARMLAND

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Pictures credit: Shared Assets



Shared Assets



## CONTEXT

Shared Assets works to create a socially just future through practical projects that build new relationships between people and the land. We see council farmland as a valuable but at risk public asset. Previous research we were involved in found that over 84,000 hectares of 'county farm' land held by local councils in the UK has been sold off over the past 40 years, and the approximately 80,000 hectares of this land that remains is threatened by the effects of privatisation and public budget cuts. If preserved, this asset and other council farmland could help meet the groundswell of interest in small-scale agroecological growing farming in England, as well as helping to address a range of other socio-economic and environmental issues.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

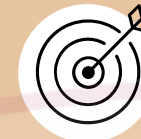
Debates about the future trajectory of agriculture in England are ongoing in the context of Brexit, COVID recovery, and the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Council budgets are under great pressure, and many are looking to sell off parts of their estates to pay for other critical services. There is a risk the current trend of council farmland sales could accelerate, meaning a resource which has provided a cheap entry point into farming for new entrants since the 19th century could be mostly lost. This could also lead to further land ownership concentration and the increased predominance of larger farms with fewer farmers, despite the environmental and social benefits of having more, diverse, smaller farms. This action research sought to change the narrative that council farmland is a thing of the past and instead highlight its potential to meet a variety of 21st-century challenges.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Exploring routes to valuing land differently - as a common good, not a commodity
- ✓ Proposing ways council land could be better used to prevent asset sell offs
- ✓ Generating a conversation about a national approach to an issue generally dealt with locally and in a disparate manner by councils



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Placing council farmland at the centre of solving interconnected issues in rural areas
- ✓ Aiming to increase access to land for small-scale farming for new entrants
- ✓ Working to enhance local communities' connection to farming, such as through the production and consumption of more local food

## OBJECTIVE

To support the development of a holistic vision for the future of council farmland in England

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Build relationships with influential stakeholders, and connect people around council farmland

- Map key stakeholders to better understand who holds power in the council farmland ecosystem in England. Work out who to form alliances with or influence to have the greatest impact

### Task 2: Find out what needs to be in place for council farmland access to change in England

- Understand the opportunities and barriers for an alternative vision for council farmland in England through workshops and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, supplemented by desk research and conversations with an advisory group

### Task 3: Co-create a clear vision for the future of council farmland with stakeholders

- Collectively create and refine this vision with stakeholders to produce resources which can be used by councils, campaigners and practitioners to promote the value and future potential of council farmland, and prevent their further sell-off



# RESULTS

We worked closely with our partners CPRE - The countryside charity and the New Economics Foundation throughout this action research. We began by identifying as many stakeholders (groups of individuals and organisations) who might be interested in, or have some degree of power over, council farmland in England. During this discussion, we used an online whiteboard tool to help us visualise the actors, and tried to consider which organisations we would have high value alignment with versus those who had most power or influence, using the grid opposite to categorise each organisation.

This exercise helped lay the groundwork for who we would most productively engage with in the workshops and discussions that followed.

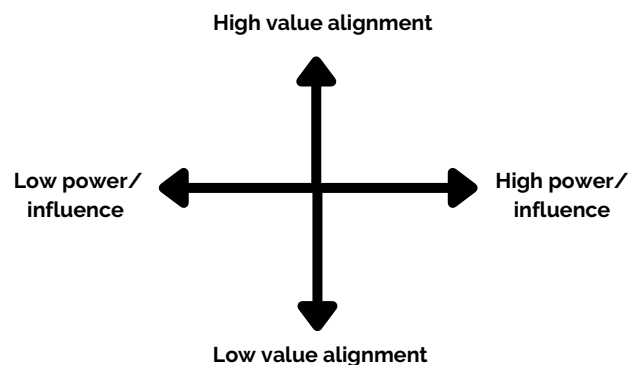
Our main action results were:

- **Raising awareness of the existence and potential of council farmland**, and ensuring that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and other stakeholders have them on their agenda when considering the future of farming policy
- **Building strong relationships with the team within Defra which is developing policy for new entrant farmers**, which is important for generational renewal in rural areas
- **Enhancing collective understanding and collaborative work** between Shared Assets, NEF and CPRE and key influential stakeholders

The key components of the vision were: a brief introduction and context overview, key data around council farms and their special role, the vision statements, and policy proposals to support making this vision a reality. The vision statements outline a better future for council farms for the benefit of three types of stakeholders:

1. **Local authorities**, by achieving stability in their estates through investment and the building of a strong national narrative on best-value approach to these assets.
2. **Farmers, growers and the land-based sector**, who will benefit from opportunities to enter farming on council land, where new, diverse, innovative growers with sustainable projects should be prioritised.
3. **Local people**, by ensuring communities are engaged in the management of the farms and can enjoy their benefits (e.g fresh food, access to green space, increased biodiversity).

In future we hope continue to **increase parliamentary awareness and policy support** for the value and potential role of council farmland, to **see a renewed national purpose for council farmland** supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders, and to **form ongoing relationships with specific councils** to work through common challenges, highlight good practice and realise the holistic value of their farmland



## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### DRAWING ON COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

- Understand the existing history of work on the issue in question, and have in-depth discussions with the people involved in it for many years - **there is often no need to start from scratch**, but building a shared narrative to bring together work from past and present can be helpful.
- **Rely on the strengths of each partner organisation** (e.g. there is no point in one partner, without experience in parliamentary lobbying, taking on this role when another partner has a specific team to help with this).
- **Allow ideas to develop and change over time with as broad a range of stakeholders as possible**, to allow outputs to emerge at the time when they can have maximum resonance and impact.

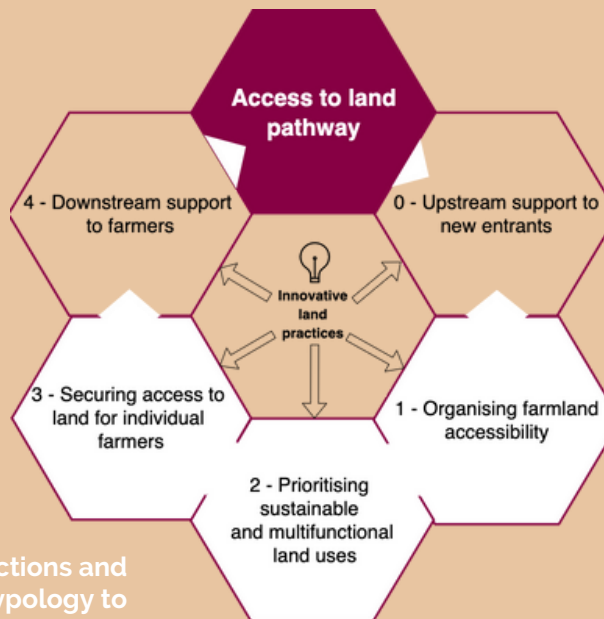
### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

- Presenting **solutions to common problems** faced by councils can go a lot further than framing your demands as something else already busy staff need to do.
- Working **across council departments** and other organisations with wide-ranging priorities can be challenging, but is worth it to achieve the most effective outcomes.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO COUNCIL FARMLAND SELL-OFF

This action aimed, ultimately, to prevent farmland from being sold-off for purposes other than agriculture, or to existing large landowners, and to preserve much of council farmland's original purpose of supporting new entrants into farming (blocks 1 and 3 of the access to land pathway). This is now combined with the additional ambition for this asset to provide a broader range of services for local communities (block 2). In future, if council farmland became better embedded in relocalised food systems as part of the holistic vision under development through this action, the wider council farmland ecosystem could also contribute to blocks 0 and 4 of the pathway, for example through agricultural training and education, farm diversification, and marketing support.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### SHARED ASSETS

Shared Assets are a think and do tank supporting people managing land for the common good. We support the development of new models of managing land, that creates livelihoods, enhances the environment, and involves local people in making decisions about the places they care about. We are environmental governance and stewardship experts.

Learn more at: [www.sharedassets.org.uk](http://www.sharedassets.org.uk)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations. Shared Assets is a supporter member of the network.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [kim@sharedassets.org.uk](mailto:kim@sharedassets.org.uk)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# STEWARDING COMMONS FOR NEW GENERATIONS

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

Romanian farmers © EcoRuralis

Eco Ruralis



## CONTEXT

With 98% of farms using less than 10 hectares of land, Romania is truly a peasant farming country. One of the most valuable and important assets that small-scale farmers have in Romania are the commons. Common pastures allow peasants to raise animals such as sheep, cattle, and goats without having to purchase extra land. This grazing land may be owned by public bodies, private organisations or individuals, but is characterised by multiple grazing rights. Although no exact figures on the distribution of common pastures are available, a rough approximation suggests that over half of the 3.4 million ha of permanent pastures in Romania can be considered common land.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Romanian commons are under threat. The very low rate of intra-family farm succession (under 25%) and the general rural depopulation is legitimising local authorities—often the legal administrators of common pastures—to concession out large parts of these lands to agribusiness investors or to privatise it for non-farming purposes. These areas are particularly attractive to agribusinesses looking for large, uncultivated, and connected areas. As a peasant organisation, Eco Ruralis carried out this action research to shed light on the key role that commons play to sustain small-scale and diversified styles of farming in Romania. A key stake of this work lay in bringing together stakeholders to agree on management models that would allow safeguarding remaining commons and enable new generations of agroecological farmers to benefit from them.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Re-think the management parameters of a medieval land system to adapt it to modern constraints (innovation rooted in tradition)
- ✓ Foster approaches that take common land out of speculative markets and make democratic access a priority
- ✓ Give national political echo to a subject usually dealt with at local level



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Build comprehensive understanding about the commons system and how it can support agroecology
- ✓ Generate awareness among young farmers that commons can be an option to increase farming viability (instead of accumulating private land)
- ✓ Foster dialogue and bring together different perspectives (in particular those of farmers and local authorities) on the importance of common pastures

## OBJECTIVE

Increase safeguarding of common pastures and work towards ensuring democratic access to these lands for future farmer generations

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Legal and social analysis

- Review literature and carry out desk research on commons
- Survey Eco Ruralis members to better understand the use of commons among them

### Task 2: Engagement with stakeholder

- Organise encounters with established farmers as well as new entrants to understand their perceptions, needs, and aspirations towards access to common pastures
- Engage with local authorities in bilateral meetings and in workshops to harness officials' perspectives and analysis regarding their own competence and bottlenecks in managing commons

### Task 3: Disseminating results

- Formalise some findings of the previous tasks as preliminary policy recommendations
- Make public officials aware of the vision of farmers



# RESULTS

**Commons in Romania have very specific management systems that anchor them locally and distinguish them from other types of land systems.** Desk research on the Romanian commons looked at the three main managing systems—the *islaz*, *composesorat* and *obste*—and highlighted their specific characteristics (see table, based on Mantescu 2009).

Commons type	Property rights	Use rights	Administration	Main distribution
<b>Composesorat</b>	Private property of the local community	Can be restricted to members (although not always); membership usually inherited	Elected members	(Hugarian speaking) Transylvania and Northern Romania
<b>Obste</b>	Private property of the local community	Restricted to members; membership sometimes inherited, sometimes through residence	Elected members	Regions of Wallachia and Moldavia
<b>Islaz</b>	Public property of the local community	Any inhabitant of the municipality	Mayor and elected pastoral committee	Throughout Romania

The discussions run with established farmers and new entrants offered perspectives on the value of commons for local development and helped Eco Ruralis harness best practices in managing commons both from a practical and organisational viewpoint. It also allowed identifying main threats and weaknesses regarding these lands, including 1) the fact that the **moderate degree of formalisation** of commons systems can induce **a lack of transparency and vulnerability to commodification**, 2) the fact that greater levels of **democracy and local community involvement** should be implemented by local authorities in charge of managing commons, 3) the fact that commons are **vulnerable to leasing or privatisation** due contextual factors (depopulation, investors' demand) but also to abusive management by certain local authorities and the lack of negotiation powers of the local farming communities.

## The main policy recommendations resulting from Eco Ruralis' work are :

- To **formalise local producers groups that steward commons** (e.g. local cooperatives), so as to provide farmers with higher bargaining power.
- To **measure biodiversity of common lands** used by community vs. those used by large agribusinesses.
- To **increase community participation in the development of grazing plans** and in the management of unused public land.
- To promote **a more comprehensive inventory of Romanian commons**, taking into consideration existing informal tenure and customary rights.
- To ensure **transparency in the attribution of public subsidies** attached to commons (especially agro-environmental and high nature value farming) and that benefits go to stewards from local communities.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- Eco Ruralis gained legitimacy on the topic of commons **by building first-hand expertise on the issue through research**. This enables it to put forward an original, peasant-rooted analysis of this topic.
- An important element of social research and public engagement was to gather **a plurality of stakeholders** with sometimes **conflicting perspectives** to grasp all aspects of commons management issues.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

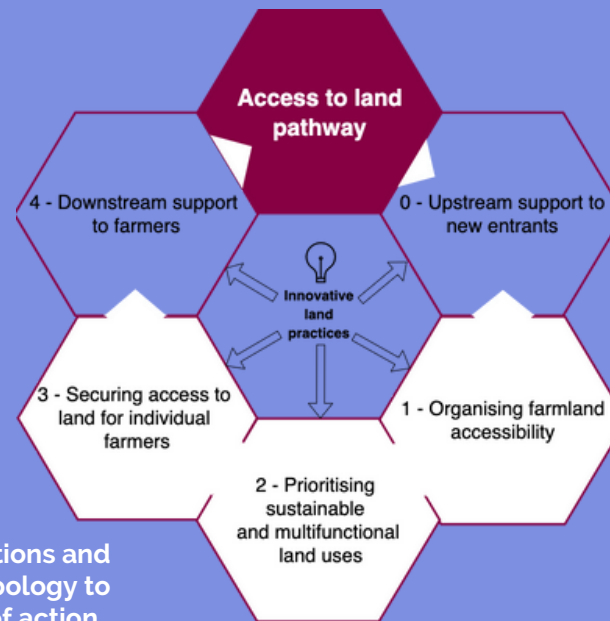
- The **lack of trust between Romanian farmer communities and local authorities** prompted the organisation of separate workshops for each type of stakeholder. While this enabled freer expression of both sides in a first stage, organising a dialogue between communities and institutions will be necessary in the future.
- It can be difficult to **carry out engagement activities on a topic while at the same time building first-hand knowledge on it**. This requires balancing the timing of work and calibrating with care the inputs one is able to give to workshop participants.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

This action aims to improve democratic oversight on the system of commons and more participative management of these lands. This contributes to organising land accessibility and securing access to land for agroecological farmers and new generations.

In addition, Eco Ruralis' work aims to steer the use of these lands towards sustainable and community-connected uses, putting forward the need to safeguard the many social, economic and environmental roles of common pastures. With more importance and legal security given to common pastures in the future, the action would result in improving the viability of small-scale farming operations over the long term (downstream support to farmers).



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### ECO RURALIS

Eco Ruralis is a Romanian association of peasants and agroecological food producers. Established in 2009, it now counts with over 14,000 members nationwide. Structured as a farming union and a member of the European Coordination Via Campesina, Eco Ruralis carries out work on key topics such as land, seeds, markets, peasants rights, agroecology, migration, CAP.

Learn more at: [www.ecoruralis.ro](http://www.ecoruralis.ro)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)

Romanian farmers © EcoRuralis



## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [attila@ecoruralis.ro](mailto:attila@ecoruralis.ro)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# CREATING A TERRITORIAL 'CITIZEN' FARM

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Visit at Orbois Farm © TDL Normandie - Maurice Ballue



Terre de Liens



## CONTEXT

The Terre de Liens (TDL) Auvergne association works to preserve and provide access to agricultural lands to a new generation of farmers. Operating around the Clermont-Ferrand metropolis, a highly pressured peri-urban environment, TDL Auvergne has difficulty finding land suiting the demands of aspiring farmers for small, irrigable, and accessible plots. Since most farms in the area are large-scale monocultures, the association imagined as an alternative solution to acquire a large holding, restructure, and rehabilitate it to allow the establishment of several small farmers. In 2017, an unhoped-for opportunity materialised as a family of five heirs approached TDL Auvergne to transfer a large land plot (about 80 ha located on the "Sarliève" periurban plain). Part of the land would be donated and the other part sold to TDL.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Such large land opportunity provides TDL Auvergne and its local partners (Îlots Paysans, Bio 63) with the possibility **to develop an innovative agricultural model, able to meet multiple territorial needs and demands** such as preserving the landscape and environment, providing local food, and boosting the economy, all while preventing further urbanisation and sensitising citizens to agriculture issues. Yet this requires **balancing many and sometimes contradictory political stakes** (economic, environmental) as well as **federating a large number of actors** around an unprecedented project, for which there was no prior model nor identified candidate farmers at the start.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Develop new governance models to involve citizens & partners in a territorial farm project
- ✓ Devise farm restructuring & re-naturing solutions to go from a large monoculture (one holder) to a diversified farm (several farmers)
- ✓ Use research to document the process step by step, reflect on and foster appropriation of the model



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Contribute to local food security, resilience, and sustainable development of a periurban territory
- ✓ Successfully collaborate with academics, allow research and field action to mutually enrich each other
- ✓ Involve many citizen actors and increase their capacity to engage on political topics such as land preservation & legitimate land uses

## OBJECTIVE

Creating a territorial citizen farm and documenting the experience for increased impact

## ACTION PLAN

### Operational tasks:

- Forge a strong operational collective to carry out the project
- Meet strategic actors and secure financial and institutional support
- Structure the project governance and a citizen dynamic
- Begin local actions (land purchase, re-naturation of the site, etc.)

### Research action tasks:

#### Task 1: Building the methodological framework

- Design and validate with stakeholders and researchers the "Chronique" method

#### Task 2: Acquiring data

- Compile and organise the data, realise the Chronique through participatory working groups

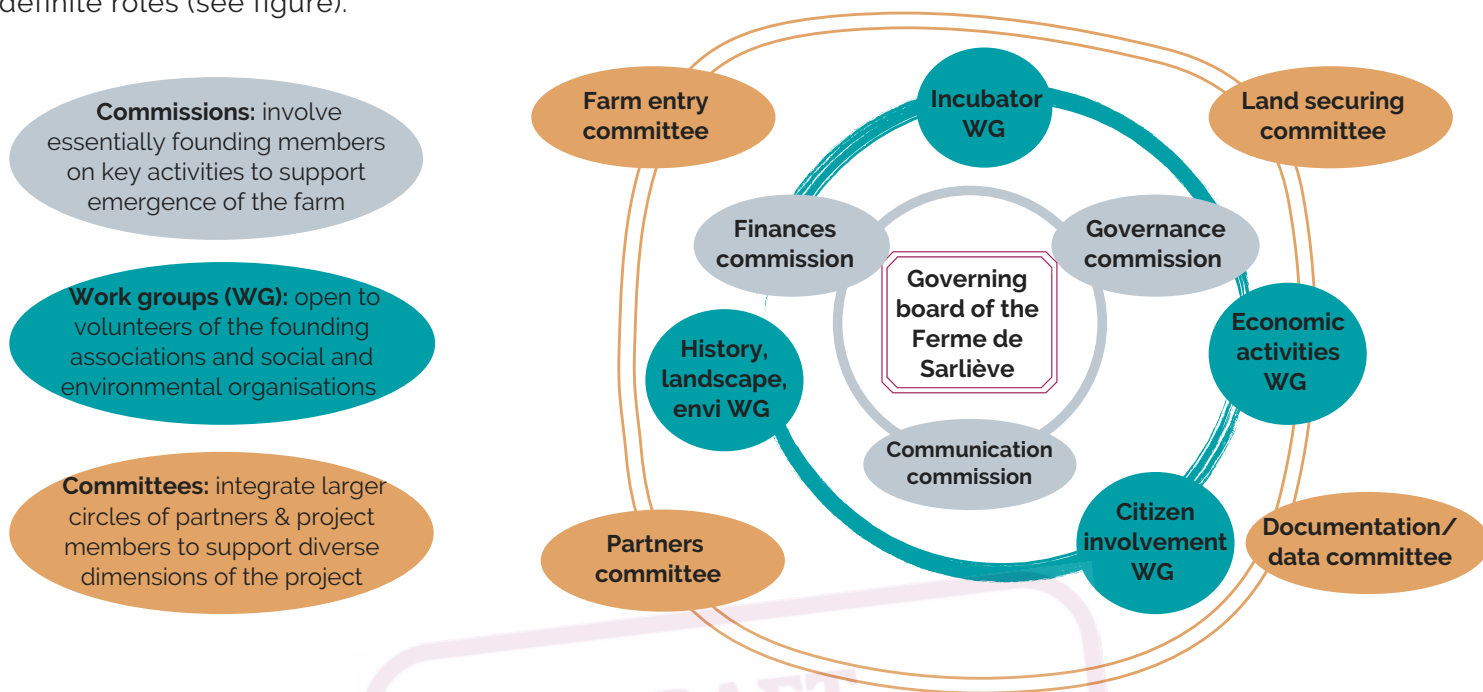
#### Task 3: Analysing and producing resources

- Formalise the Chronique (synthetic timeline), governance diagram, and its evolution



# RESULTS

**The project involves a large ecosystem of partnerships and actors.** The founding organisations (TDL Auvergne, Bio 63, Îlots Paysans) created the collective structure "Ferme de Sarliève". Innovative governance allows to facilitate the participation of diverse audiences (citizens, researchers, environmental organisations, etc.) in the project through a structure of "thematic commissions", "working groups", and "committees" with definite roles (see figure).



By Fall 2021, the Ferme de Sarliève project had succeeded in securing finances to hire two staff members. This is the result of intense collaboration, where **TDL, Îlots Paysans, and Bio 63 worked to build a shared discourse and achieve recognition from local authorities and funders.** They also forged relationships with traditional agricultural and land actors. Some had a key role, e.g. the land heir who convinced the family to sell to TDL, or the current Sarliève farmer who associated with the project to convert the land to organic agriculture and maintain plots waiting to be taken up by candidate farmers.

Another key aspect of the project was the partnership with researchers and the **unprecedented effort to document the innovation process.** A tool called "Chronique" was built to report on the experience. Based on systematically collected and categorised data, it establishes a timeline that highlights 1) contextual elements influencing the project, 2) events in the project life (meetings, actions, etc.) and their results (decisions, partnerships, access to resources, etc.), 3) the actors involved in these events. The Chronique had several impacts. As it was implemented in a participative way, it **initiated a dialogue between different members of the group**, allowing each one to take "distance" from their own point of view. It also **created a common narrative**, and visually synthesised a complex story, thus **facilitating both decision-making and project dissemination.**

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- **Strong initial will to work as a collective** allowed presenting a united front to partners and financiers, as well as to draw on the complementary forces of founding organisations.
- Project legitimacy was **strengthened over the long term** through concrete actions ("learning by doing"), partnership building, and structuring of a citizen dynamic.
- **'Go-between' actors able to connect different networks and social circles** were key in the project's success.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

- The action was implemented by experimented actors with **important project engineering capacity.** One needs to anticipate **the difficulty to muster support and funding** for unprecedented projects. In this case, resources and institutional support had to be secured even prior to identifying farm successors or formally securing the land.
- In addition to helping communicate externally, documenting the work supports **inner project dialogue, strengthens collaboration**, and provides **keys to solving difficulties** (by making divergences and controversies explicit).

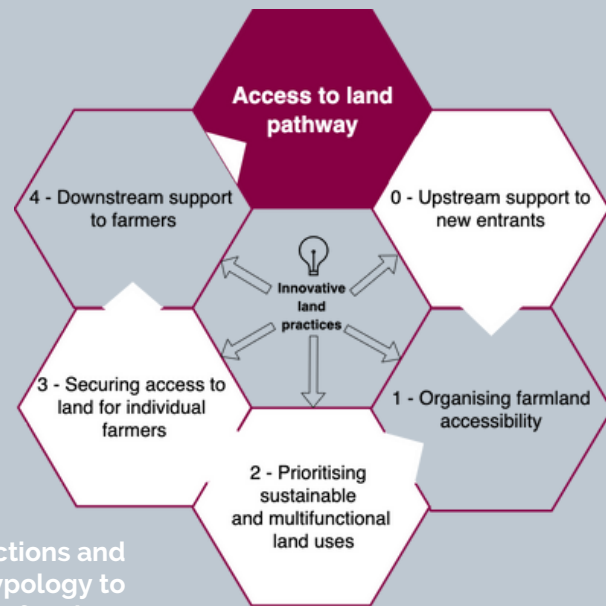


## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

This action results in secured land for new entrants but also much wider goals. The Ferme de Sarliève ambitions to become a territorial hub of diversified and environmentally-friendly agriculture and artisanal activities contributing to food security, economic development, lively communities, and increased territorial resilience (climate, landscape...).

Furthermore, the farm will host an incubator, thus providing training options to new entrants (upstream support to farmers). The farm functions more and more as a platform to carry out a larger effort to preserve agricultural land threatened by urbanisation in the Sarliève plain. This helps to preserve land and its future accessibility for a new generation of farmers.

What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.



## WHO WE ARE

### TERRE DE LIENS

Terre de Liens is a civic organisation which promotes land preservation and facilitates access to farmland for organic and peasant farmers in France. One of TDL's modes of action consists of collecting citizen investment to purchase farms and make them accessible to farmers through long-term leases.

Learn more at: [www.terredeliens.org](http://www.terredeliens.org)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [v.rioufol@terredeliens.org](mailto:v.rioufol@terredeliens.org).

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# INNOVATIVE OWNERSHIP OF FARM BUILDINGS

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES



Ries Hof © Kulturland eG

**Kulturland-Genossenschaft**



## CONTEXT

Access to land organisations that acquire (or accept donations of) farms face the challenge of how to be "good owners" towards their tenants. While good stewardship of land can be relatively easy—using a long-term contract with good requirements concerning land use—good stewardship of buildings requires much more continuous involvement. Even in a very liberal tenancy contract, the owner remains responsible for very detailed questions with regard to maintenance and changes to the building. Many access to land organisations have made the experience that building maintenance requires lots of time, which in some cases can only be financed by higher lease payments, while farmers oftentimes remain unsatisfied with the outcome, wishing to have more freedom to maintain and redesign their farm buildings.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The question of building ownership is especially relevant in the face of generational renewal supported by efforts to collectively finance land (turn it into a commons). New entrants ask for liberty to invest in and develop buildings freely. Kulturland eG has implemented an innovative building ownership model, which secures the farm buildings in a "steward-ownership" agreement. Tenant farmers are free to invest in the buildings in the context of their farming business. In a generational renewal/succession process, the retiring farmers can sell the buildings to the next generation for a fair price, compensating for their own investments in the buildings and providing them with retirement capital. At the same time, the price is capped, to ensure the next generation of successors can enter the farm with low capital requirements.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Dissociating the ownership of land and buildings through a hereditary lease contract
- ✓ Safeguarding the "unity" of farm holdings in the long term (both land and buildings to remain contractually tied regarding their farming purpose)
- ✓ Guaranteeing that buildings are handed over to each succeeding generation at a fair price (determined by an independent appraiser)



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Enable new farm entrants to have full freedom to maintain, change and shape the farm buildings freely
- ✓ Free the land organisation from the responsibility to take care of buildings (saving management time and costs, which can permit lower leases in some cases)
- ✓ Facilitate generational renewal through eased transfers, where new farm entrants need relatively low up-front capital (though bank financing) while the retiring generation is compensated for its own investments in farm buildings.

## OBJECTIVE

**Enabling active farmers to take full control of the farm buildings, while securing land and buildings as commons**

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Analyse context and actor strategies

- Describe existing and ongoing innovative building experiences by farm
- Build a sociogram to improve understanding of relations and interdependencies of actors

### Task 2: Discussing strengths and weaknesses of possible models

- Organise telemeetings and workshops (with stakeholders of advanced and on-going cases) to discuss different building ownership options

### Task 3: Establish concepts, visualisation, calculations

- Work out concepts and Memorandums of Understanding for interested farms
- Document agreed contractual and financial structures

### Task 4: Final evaluation and report

- Interpret action results in the light of initial requirements
- Document process, realised solutions and outcome



# RESULTS

The analysis of the **ideal outcome for farm buildings, which are part of a farm succession facilitated by an access to land organisation** resulted in 5 important aspects to be considered (see figure)



In the frame of this action research, Kulturland eG documented extensively the experience of the Luzernenhof farm purchased in 2014. This is the cooperative's most advanced example, which best illustrates the possibilities to realise all five aspects described above. To do so, Kulturland decided to establish a separate legal entity for land ownership in the form of a company limited by shares (Kommanditgesellschaft) and a second legal entity for the farm buildings, which is controlled by the farmers. This scheme encountered initial opposition the local authority, which denied purchase permission considering the effort a "tricky attempt for land speculation". The fear was that farm buildings could be separated from the land and turned into residential housing at a profit.

**The issue of separating land and buildings was resolved by legally reconnecting the two properties in the land register. Three provisions were taken:**

- 1) **A pre-emptive purchasing right** for both parties in the case the other property is sold
- 2) **Guaranteeing the active farmers a right to housing** in the residential buildings
- 3) **Guaranteeing the active farmers a right to use the commercial buildings**, including the right of way to reach these facilities from the street and from the residential building

The study of this case supported progress in ongoing stakeholder discussions on farm purchases dissociating land and buildings, providing a concrete basis to collectively analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the model. Documenting the process of "learning-by-doing" by Kulturland eG also helps legitimise the cooperative as an innovative and increasingly expert actor on non-speculative land ownership models.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- **Taking into consideration the specific needs of the farmers** is key to build the trust to work out a contractual solution
- **Patient and sustained dialogue** with authorities is required for them to understand the model
- **Involving other established actors**, like the Mietshäuser Syndikat in the Luzernenhof farm case brought valuable expert knowledge on collective-ownership models for properties

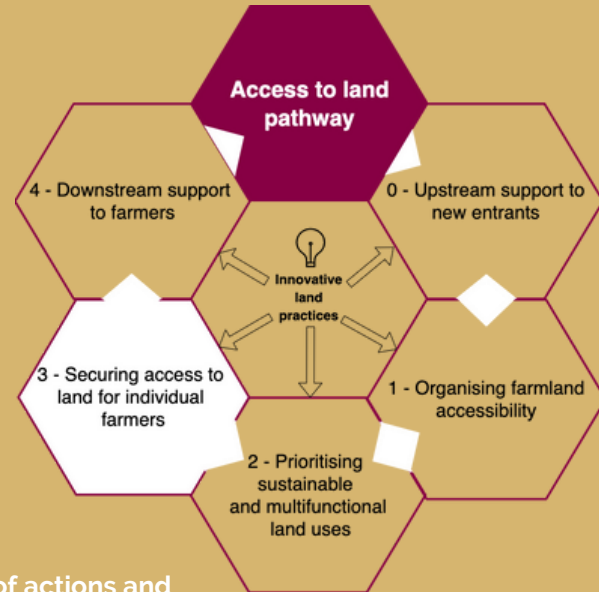
### OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

- **Legal parameters with regard to purchasing farms are very restrictive in Germany.** Usually the "bad actors" (external investors) come up with creative "solutions" in order to buy farms as an object of speculation. Hence legal authorities are very skeptical concerning innovative ownership schemes.
- **Balancing the needs of the access to land organisation against the needs of the entrant farmers** requires careful consideration, as the burden of the farm purchase price will have to be shared between the successors and the cooperative.



# AN ADAPTED FRAMEWORK FOR GENERATIONAL HAND-OVER OF FARM REAL ESTATE

This action relates to securing farmland for individual farmers. Kulturland leverages its capacity to finance the farmland through collective investment. Furthermore, it establishes creative legal structures for the farm buildings that allow farmers to purchase them without upfront capital. For this, Kulturland grants farm entrants a personal guarantee amounting to 20-30% the buildings price which enables unlocking bank loans for tenants to acquire the buildings. Furthermore, it tackles the issue of downstream support to farmer and upstream support to future new entrants by ensuring through the established contracts that following generations can also purchase the farm buildings for a fair price and current farmers can receive compensating for investments they made in the buildings upon retiring.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### KULTURLAND COOPERATIVE

Kulturland is an intermediary between the farms and society, acting as a "legal tool", enabling community-funded purchases of land. The cooperative enables customers and supporters in the vicinity of the farm to invest money by buying shares in the cooperative. This money is to buy the land, making it available to farm permanently for a moderate fee.

Learn more at: [www.kulturland.de](http://www.kulturland.de)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)

Young and old generation on Ries Hof © Kulturland eG



## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [titus.bahner@kulturland.de](mailto:titus.bahner@kulturland.de)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# CREATING A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Romanian farmers © EcoRuralis

Eco Ruralis



## CONTEXT

In Romania, transfer of land property is difficult for several reasons: land fragmentation is very high (average plot size of 0.45 hectares); there is a lack of land registration in the official cadastral system (only about 59% of land registered in 2021), and land is also subject to increasing concentration and even land grabbing. According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, between 2002-2010, 150.000 small farms disappeared while large farming increased by 3%. A total of 12,000 farms over 100 hectares, representing 0.3% of Romanian holdings, control 34% of the country's utilized agricultural area. In addition to these important land thresholds, the farming population is rapidly aging—66.4% of peasants over 55 years old and only 7.3% under 35—and low retirement pensions (€280 on average in 2020) incite older farmers to sell their land to the highest bidder instead of passing it on to a family member. This further reinforces the concentration tendency and lack of generational renewal.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Such complex interconnected issues of land concentration and farm succession require urgent responses to provide access to land to a new generation of Romanian farmers. Eco Rurales' action aimed to pioneer an initiative to collectively purchase and manage land for agroecological new entrants. While many foreign examples of community land trust can be studied for inspiration, this does not exist in Romania and represents a groundbreaking enterprise. Eco Rurales' work consisted in studying the project's feasibility from a legal, political, and organisational perspective while fostering stakeholder support for this effort.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Putting forward access to land for agroecology as a visionary approach
- ✓ Foster solidarity-based tools for land acquisition in a post-communist country (where there is reluctance with regards to collective property)
- ✓ Develop partnerships between farmers' organisations and land conservation organisations, which currently do not exist in Romania.



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Generate knowledge about possible legal status for a community land initiative in Romania
- ✓ Strengthen cooperation between core partners and enlarge the circle of stakeholders to potentially involve in the initiative
- ✓ Foster dialogue within Eco Rurales' own coordination committee on strategies to prioritise for tackling access to land issues

## OBJECTIVE

Pioneer the establishment of a Romanian initiative to provide access to land for agroecology

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Legal and social analysis

- Internal discussion in Eco Rurales about the importance/political implications of setting up an access to land initiative in Romania
- Desk research, legal expert consultation, and comparative analysis
- Surveys to benchmark the needs of new entrants and retiring farmers

### Task 2: Engagement with stakeholders

- Map out and engage with different stakeholders
- Run a webinar on new models for access to land

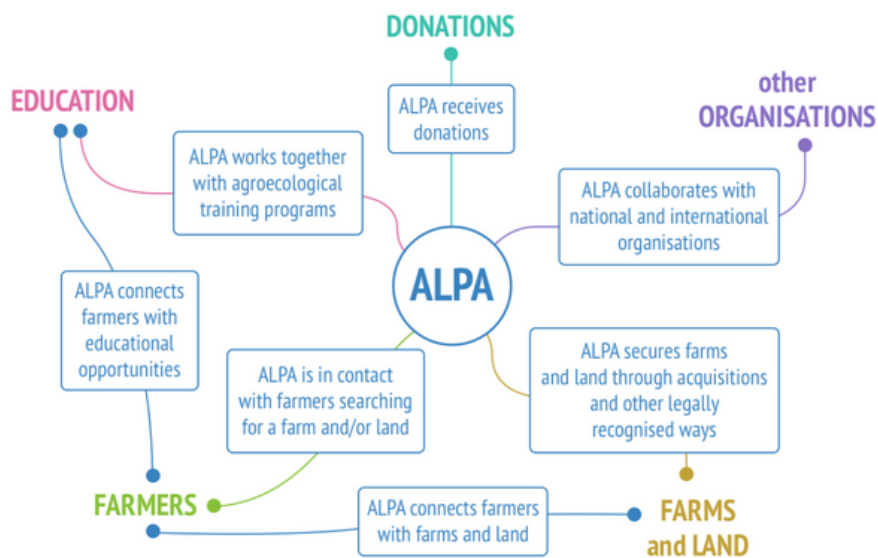
### Task 3: Building a shared vision

- Discussion between stakeholders in order to build a common vision, upscaling partnerships and collaborative action through a Memorandum of Understanding for the creation of a commonly assumed juridical entity



# RESULTS

The Eco Ruralis action built on previous work to establish "Acces la Pământ pentru Agroecologie" (ALPA). This association, created in 2019, aimed to secure equitable access to land through ethical means and empower resilient agroecological farms (see figure on the envisioned goals of ALPA). Nevertheless, it faced many hurdles. A first step towards exploring possibly more successful schemes was to work with ALPA founders to co-analyse reasons for past failures.



Interviews highlighted **hurdles related to the NGO status of ALPA**, useful to implement a charity approach (receiving donations in cash or in the form of farmland), but not to involve people as shareholders buying into the company to support farms. Furthermore, **a political and legal "red thread" needed to be deepend** to ensure purchased farmland was freed from the speculative market and maintained in agroecological food production. Finally, at the moment of establishment, **a wider network debate on the issue of fundraising for securing farmland would have been needed** to discuss ethical implications and needs of target groups (i.e. new entrants, land owners, retiring farmers).

To conclude, a different legal status was needed. Eco Ruralis explored two options during its action: **1) a shareholders company unlisted on the stock exchange market, 2) an agricultural production cooperative**. As proved by the ALPA experience, however, a suitable legal form is not enough. Many historical, mental, and economic barriers related to Romania's communist past of forced collectivisation must be lifted. Therefore, a last step of the action was to engage with wider circles on the needs and aspirations regarding such initiative.

Stakeholder engagement was carried out by Eco Ruralis through ;

- **A survey to benchmark the needs and aspirations of new entrants and retiring farmers.** The 513 answers notably revealed an appetite of new entrants regarding new forms of collectives to access land.
- **Discussions with an enlarged core group of partners**, including Eco Ruralis' coordination committee, Provision Transylvania (a center for agroecology and nonviolence), Hosman Durabil (an NGO working with small farmers), Trifolium Kajo (an agroecological goat farming business).
- **Outreach to more remote organisations**, including the conservationist Foundation Carpathia, (engaged in fundraising for conserving forests).

Despite this, the action fell short of delivering on expectations for an agreed-upon shared vision for an access to land initiative. This will require more time and engagement from the core group.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- Eco Ruralis' **national notoriety and strong membership base** provide access to target groups (retiring farmers, new entrants), and better possibilities to understand their demands and tailor the initiative to local needs.
- Despite the aura of Eco Ruralis, there is **a clear need to federate more actors from diverse backgrounds** to generate a broad enthusiasm and support for such a ground-breaking project.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

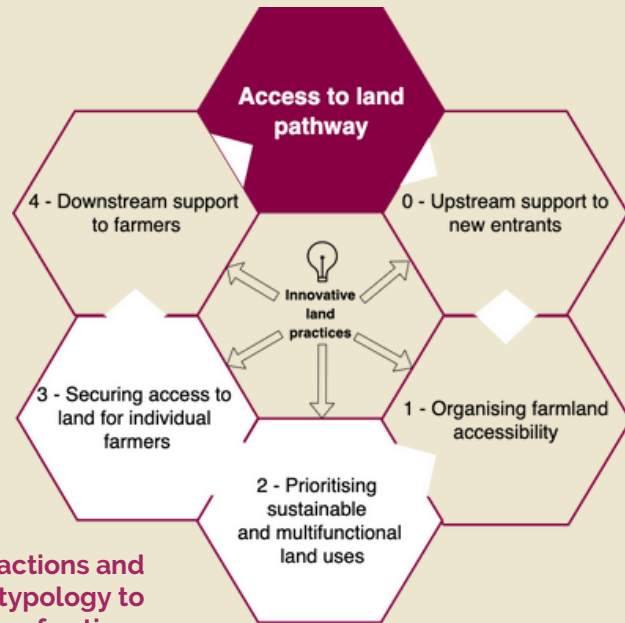
- **The context is particularly adverse** for creating a community land organisation in Romania not only because of the communist past but also due to weaker civil society networks and more difficulties to mobilise local funding for collective land purchases.
- **Internal factors were an important bottleneck.** Eco Ruralis' coordination committee was divided between members defending an ALPA-like direct and local initiative and partisans of a broader political strategy to push for better national legal safeguards for land. In the future, pre-agreement on resources to be devoted to both strategies could facilitate further action.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

The work of Eco Ruralis addresses a need for local solutions to secure land for individual farmers (block 3 of the access to land pathway).

This is done with the clear political objective to facilitate a specific land use, i.e. a peasant, agroecological type of farming which supplies many environmental, social, community, and economic services (block 2). In the future such an initiative will have positive effects on maintaining viable small-scale peasant farms and preserving land in the long term for a new farming generation, thus contributing to better land accessibility in Romania.



**What is the "Access to land pathway"?** Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### ECORURALIS

Eco Ruralis is a Romanian association of peasants and agroecological food producers. Established in 2009, it now counts with over 14,000 members nationwide. Structured as a farming union and a member of the European Coordination Via Campesina, Eco Ruralis carries out work on key topics such as land, seeds, markets, peasants rights, agroecology, migration, CAP.

Learn more at: [www.ecoruralis.ro](http://www.ecoruralis.ro)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



Young farmers © EcoRuralis

## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [attila@ecoruralis.ro](mailto:attila@ecoruralis.ro)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# SECURING LAND WITH RETIREMENT SAVINGS

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

CSA Ackerilla © Kulturland eG

**Kulturland-Genossenschaft**



## CONTEXT

At today's prices, land purchases can hardly be amortized from the income generated by food production. Average land prices in Germany have risen 250% since 2009 to more than €26,000 per hectare. The Kulturland Cooperative (Kulturland eG) is a community of farmers and citizens who work to free agricultural land from speculation. It enables the purchase of land for ecologically operating farms that also consciously integrate themselves into their region and open up socially. For this purpose, Kulturland eG has developed a new form of collective ownership of agricultural land aimed at stewarding it across generations, a kind of modern "commons". More than 1,000 people have bought shares in Kulturland eG, enabling 350 hectares of land to be secured for 23 farms.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Kulturland's first 15 land purchases averaged €230,000 per farm. These sums could be raised through "crowd-investing campaigns", where customers, supporters, and friends "in the vicinity of the farm" buy shares in the cooperative. In recent years, Kulturland has moved beyond its original scope of buying land to support existing farms and started getting an increasing number of inquiries from retiring farmers wanting to hand-over their entire farm. These farm purchases regularly cost over € 1,000,000. This vast amount of money cannot easily be raised through classical crowdfunding campaigns selling cooperative shares. This is why Kulturland has been working on a new funding model involving retirement capital.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Find ways to enable citizens to invest retirement capital in securing land for sustainable agriculture
- ✓ Enable an inflation adjustment for invested capital
- ✓ Enable land to be used as a corollary (security) for large investments, while at the same time securing the land as a commons



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Buy more land and entire farms for extra-familial succession
- ✓ Enable young people to enter farming and take over farms without little or no capital
- ✓ Enable all farmers, young and old, to benefit from sufficient pensions when reaching retirement age

## OBJECTIVE

Increase farm transfer to extra-familial successors by using retirement capital to finance land purchases

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: analyse the status quo of retirement savings on Kulturland partner farms

- In-depth analysis of first cases of land purchase financed through retirement savings in the Kulturland eG
- Analyse the needs and constraints of young farmers with regard to planning for their own retirement stipends

### Task 2: speaking to established actors and legal experts

- Define the requirements for the use of retirement money to secure land in light of the analysis of the status quo of retirement savings on Kulturland partner farms and of the first concrete cases of purchase studied in task 1
- Speak to other innovative retirement savings institutions and lawyers to understand the legal and accounting parameters to take into account when dealing with retirement savings and the creation of investment vehicles

### Task 3: work out a generalised model for using retirement capital for land purchases

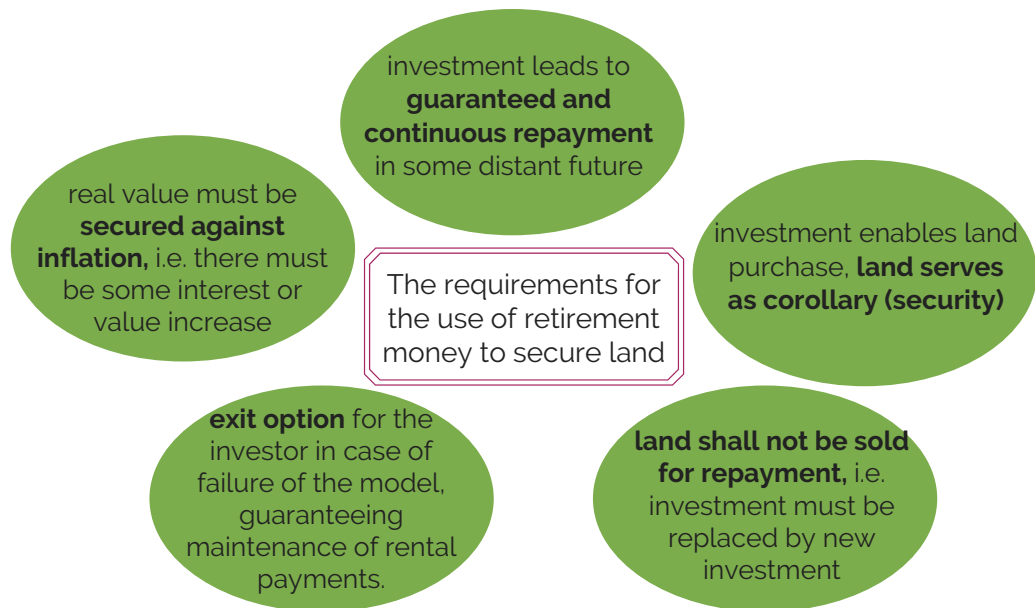
- Interpret results of the conversations with established market actors and legal experts in light of the requirements outlined below
- Document the contractual and financial structures needed for a large-scale implementation of the "retirement capital for land purchases" model



# RESULTS

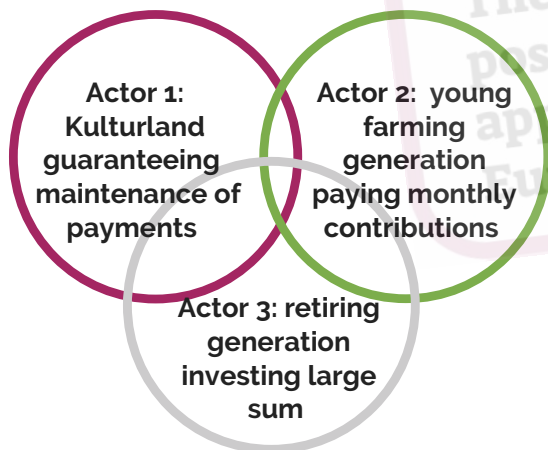
Analysing **requirements for the use of retirement money to secure land** resulted in 5 important aspects to be considered (see figure).

Kulturland eG has implemented a first pilot project using retirement money for land purchase on a farm. A purchase of €500,000 was 60% funded by retired friends of the farm. They invested €100,000 each directly into a legal entity, which holds 15 hectares of land.



Three farming families pay out the retired investors with a payment of €400 each per month over a period of about 22 years. **In this way, the succeeding families gradually acquire financial ownership of the land. The land remains legally in collective ownership, while the financial ownership shifts gradually from the old to the new generation.**

The promise is that the next generation will do the same, so the currently succeeding families get their pensions from their successors; and so on. The scheme is backed up by Kulturland eG who gives a limited guarantee for pension payments.



The aim of the "retirement savings for land purchase" scheme is to establish a **"generational model"** between the retiring generation and the young generation saving up for their retirement. The aim is to match the financial contributions of the young generation with the financial needs of the retiring generation. Money does not flow directly from the young to the old generation, but rather goes through Kulturland, who acts as an intermediary and guarantees the maintenance of payments.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- **Setting up small-scale pilot projects** is key to building trust before large-scale implementation of the "retirement savings for land purchases" model.
- **Patient and sustained dialogue** with many young farmers and potential investors is key to understanding the needs of the actors involved and bringing together their perspectives.
- **Setting up preliminary memorandums of understanding (MoUs)** helps to work out the finer details, which will later need to be stipulated in the final contracts.

### OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

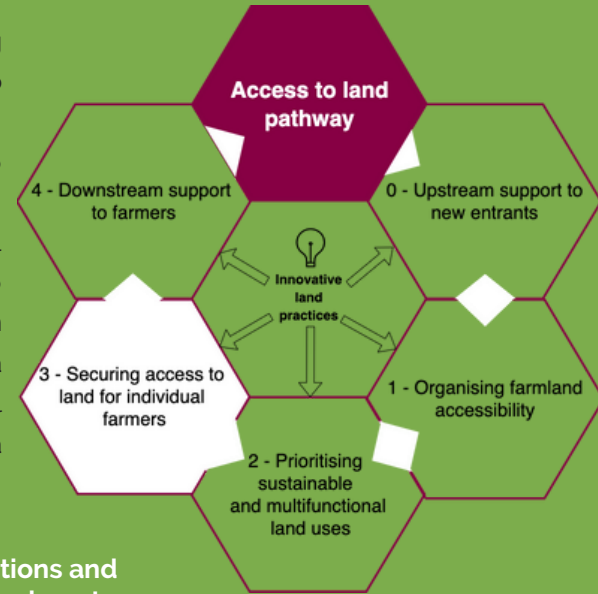
- **Legal parameters with regard to leveraging retirement savings for investment** are very restrictive in Germany.
- **The accounting expertise and financial mathematics** of retirement savings require extensive external expertise.
- **Matching young and old generations for "generational agreements"** is a challenge, due to different time-spans and financial contributions of the young generation saving up and the retiring generation's financial needs and life spans. This implies a larger pool of actors is needed to make the scheme work in the long term.



# AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR CAPITAL TO FINANCE LAND

This action aims to explore the possibility of utilising retirement savings of citizens and farmers in order to secure land and entire farms. This enables a young generation of farmers the access to land without needing to have significant up-front capital.

Furthermore, given government pensions (the public generational contract) for retired farmers is too low to live on, this model needs to ensure that young farmers who invest their revenues in the farm and in farmland can later use this investment as retirement capital. Therefore, a significant challenge for Kulturland remains the creation of a legal vehicle to enable this while at the same time securing the land as a commons.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### KULTURLAND COOPERATIVE

Kulturland is an intermediary between the farms and society, acting as a "legal tool", enabling community-funded purchases of land. The cooperative enables customers and supporters in the vicinity of the farm to invest money by buying shares in the cooperative. This money is used to buy the land, making it available to farms permanently for a moderate fee.

Learn more at: [www.kulturland.de](http://www.kulturland.de)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



CSA Ackerilla © Kulturland eG

## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [thomas.rippel@kulturland.de](mailto:thomas.rippel@kulturland.de)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.



HANDOUT

# MAKING COLLECTIVE LAND PURCHASE WORK FOR FARM SUCCESSION

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

© TuRostro

De Landgenoten



## CONTEXT

De Landgenoten (DLg), Dutch for 'fellow countrymen', is a foundation and cooperative that aims to provide access to agricultural land for professional agro-ecological farmers in Flanders through collective land purchasing. Access to land is indeed one of the main thresholds for farmers to start, secure, expand or transfer a farm. In Flanders prices have risen by 28.7% between 2015 and 2019 with a price per hectare averaging €63,000. Acquiring land becomes harder for young farmers because increasing amounts of capital are needed and many owners are reluctant to grant new leases.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Flanders' farming population is aging—only 10% of farmers are under 40 years old, while 16% are older than 65. Pioneers who started farming organically in the 70s and 80s are reaching retirement age, with a risk that their life's work to steward and nurture the land cannot be transferred to a new generation. In this context, DLg can help bridge the succession gap through its core business of buying land and leasing it career-long to organic farmers. However, so far DLg has only been able to crowdfund capital to purchase about 3 hectares of land per year. This action research thus aimed at exploring ways to increase the cooperative's fundraising capacity to support more farm transfers, while also broadening its general performance and visibility as a farm succession actor.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



### INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Make collective land purchase a key option to successful farm transfer from one generation to the next (preventing that each generation needs to finance the land over again)
- ✓ Compile fragmented knowledge on different aspects of farm succession, particularly psycho-emotional factors
- ✓ Combine financial and socio-cultural knowledge to facilitate successions through collective land purchase processes



### IMPACTFUL

- ✓ DLg helps preserve the life's work of retiring organic farmers, including fertile and biodiverse soils, natural landscapes, as well as social, human and cultural capital
- ✓ Collective land purchase is a lever for generational renewal in agriculture
- ✓ Working to share knowledge with other organic farming actors and federate joint action on farm succession

## OBJECTIVE

Develop a strategy to facilitate farm succession processes for organic farms through collective land purchase

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: develop financing strategies for bigger or more expensive plots

- Explore and refine possible financing strategies to make land purchases through crowdfunding more adapted to financing larger farms.

### Task 2: explore social and emotional aspects in relation to succession processes

- Conduct interviews and a literature review to explore which sensitivities are at stake and how to take them into account when working on succession cases.

### Task 3: assess and feed into an internal protocol on succession cases

- Deepen and adjust a recently developed internal procedure on how to deal with farm succession cases with the outcome of tasks 1 and 2.

### Task 4: disseminate the role DLg can play within succession processes

- Share and make known among farmers the possible role and prerequisites of DLg in relation to supporting farm succession

### Task 5: help facilitate and raise awareness on farm succession

- Explore in which ways DLg could support awareness-raising, for instance by creating encounters between transferors and successors, organising workshops on certain aspects, etc.



# RESULTS

## DLg's action addressed several needs to better cope with farm succession cases.

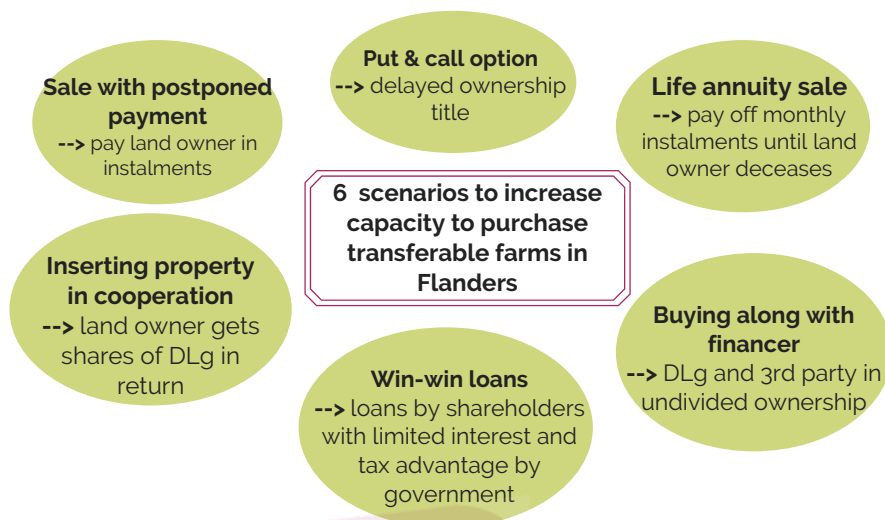
- **Establishing possible financing scenarios** to increase cash flow, stretch payment over time or save on costs. Six strategies were devised (see figure), which can be of use in succession cases as well more broadly when DLg's capacity is stretched (due to several simultaneous crowdfundings for instance) or when land is particularly expensive.

- **Understanding the emotional aspects** that play a role with regard to the senior generation and their entourage. DLg's research highlighted for instance that transferors may fear delicate family discussions associated with succession, or resist renouncing farm duties and ownership which provide esteem and recognition.

- Both the knowledge on financing scenarios and emotional aspects of farm succession were used to assess and adjust a **DLg internal protocol on how to process farm succession cases**. This protocol includes two separate questionnaires: one for transferors still looking for a successor, one for transferors that already identified a possible successor. It now incorporates a question on the transferors' openness to alternative financing scenarios. Furthermore interviewees, are more aware of a number of sensitivities and difficulties to consider when assessing incoming farm succession cases.

- After researching and developing the possible role DLg can play, creating the tools to do so, and defining the prerequisites in order to engage in farm succession processes, a **communication plan** was developed to disseminate the added value of DLg among possible retiring farmers and experts working on this topic.

- Further ideas to **build coalition work on these issues** were developed, including finding partnerships and funding to unroll a training directed to organic transferors. In the future, this could take the shape of a series of gatherings with different experts shining light on relevant aspects of succession processes (land, finance, etc.)



## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### MAPPING THE FIELD OF ACTORS AND TOPICS

- Prior to this action DLg **mapped the topics and challenges** to be addressed when transferring a farm (e.g. fiscal, legal, organisational aspects) **as well as the Flemish stakeholders** currently working on these aspects.
- This mapping showed **DLg's work to address land thresholds met a gap in the current counseling ecosystem** and could be an important lever in succession processes. There was no need to develop 360° guidance on succession, but rather to focus on refining our tools, internal procedures, and communication.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

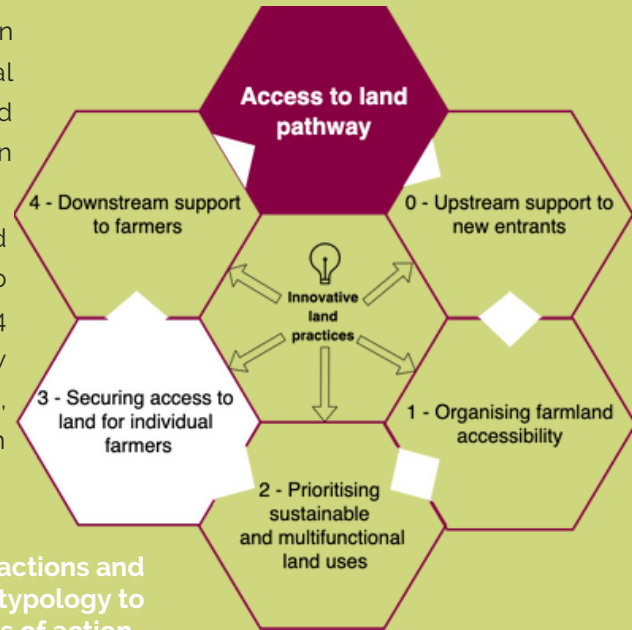
- **Data and contacts of farmers in a specific group or age category are not available.** For communication purposes, we thus plan to reach out to stakeholders in close contact with retiring farmers (e.g. suppliers, consultants).
- **DLg currently does not buy housing nor farm buildings** and needs to partner with successors who can invest in infrastructure. Yet this also means a farm becomes fragmented in ownership, which is not ideal in the long term.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

In order to create and secure access to land, this action researched the financial levers to buy land for individual farmers. It also generated greater awareness of social and emotional aspects related to succession. This can increase successful farm transfers between generations.

Beyond securing access to land for farmers, the action also resulted in a better-defined role and internal DLg procedures with regard to succession cases, linking to downstream support to farmers (block 4 of the access to land pathway) and offering upstream support to new entrants looking into taking over existing farms (block 0). However, these dimensions only currently concern a few farmers. They can increase in the future as DLg's consolidates its capacity.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### DE LANDGENOTEN

De Landgenoten is a civic organisation which promotes land preservation and facilitates access to farmland for organic farmers in Flanders. One of DLg's modes of action consists of collecting citizen's investment to purchase farms and make them accessible to farmers through long-term leases.

Learn more at: [www.delandgenoten.be](http://www.delandgenoten.be)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



© Yel Ratajczak

## CONTACT

For more information on this innovative practice please contact: [contact@delandgenoten.be](mailto:contact@delandgenoten.be)

Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.

HANDOUT

# FARM SUCCESSION FOR A SUTAINABLE RURAL TRANSITION

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

**DRAFT**

The report is subject to possible changes due to approval process by the European Commission.

Retiring farmer and successor © Albert Pons

Xarxa per a la  
Conservació de la  
Natura



## CONTEXT

The Catalan Network for Nature Conservation (XCN) fosters nature conservation initiatives amongst civil society. These occur on a variety of contexts including farmland. Fostering farm transmissions with an agroecological perspective is a complementary strategy to contribute to nature conservation and rural regeneration. XCN supports the few local organisations that work on that line. This action is focused on "la Vall del Corb" (VdC), a rural area facing demographic decline, abandonment or intensification of farming activities, a lack of new entrants, and little farm diversification. Local actors are getting organised to revert these tendencies and revitalise VdC through a long-term project named "Territori de Vincles".

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The "Territori de Vincles" project aims to preserve VdC's local landscape and natural values, enhance agroecology, foster a circular economy, and strengthen rural services. In its starting phase, it is crucial for the project to improve existing knowledge so as to calibrate future strategies and areas of work. The action research carried out by XCN and the local Aresta Cooperative (partner in "Territori de Vincles") aimed to explore agricultural characteristics and land structures in VdC, as well as other aspects affecting farm succession. While enabling farm transfers to a new generation of ecologically-minded farmers is indeed considered a possible pathway to foster a local sustainable transition, this requires assessing the needs and expectations of local retiring farmers and new entrants.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



## INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Make the work on farm succession a central aspect of regeneration and sustainable transition
- ✓ Highlight information that is not easily accessible or visible, e.g. information on the profile of retiring farmers.
- ✓ Support local authorities in implementing innovative practices by providing them with crucial preliminary information.



## IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Generating key information on emotional aspects of farm succession and increasing awareness towards generational renewal challenges.
- ✓ Improving the relationship between "Territori de Vincles" partners and key stakeholders and increasing their recognition and legitimacy.
- ✓ Bringing stakeholders' voices to the forefront by identifying retiring farmers and new entrants' perceptions and proposals

## OBJECTIVE

Improve knowledge on the diverse aspects which can support or hamper farm succession and a rural transition in Vall del Corb

## ACTION PLAN

### Task 1: Improve the knowledge on the farming sector within the area

- Gather relevant pre-existing public data on the local farming sector. Identify key data missing and ask for it to relevant stakeholders. Analyse the overall data sets and draw main conclusions.

### Task 2: Improve knowledge on the amount, state and expectations of possible new entrants

- Identify possible new entrants into farming in VdC and conduct a survey to assess their needs and expectations regarding the process of entering into farming.

### Task 3: Improve the knowledge on the amount, state and expectations of retiring farmers

- Identify retiring farmers within the area, define data to be obtained and conduct interviews to assess their needs and expectations regarding the process of retiring and transferring their farm.

### Task 4: Strengthen the collaboration and/or common understanding amongst stakeholders

- Organise sessions to debate with the stakeholders involved in the "Territori de Vincles" project, and identify policy proposals that may satisfy local actors' needs regarding the fostering of an agroecological transition.

# RESULTS

Different **formal and informal channels** were used to establish contact with retiring farmers and **overcome some negative responses** (rejection, disinterest, conformism etc.). Interviews were conducted with a varied sample of **8 retiring-farmers. The table on the right shows main conclusions** regarding the difficulties to farm succession mentioned by respondents. Beyond these, retiring farmers elaborated on policy concerns, mainly related to a poor design and highly bureaucratic procedures.

As for **proposals**, some broad ideas were mentioned, such as the remuneration for non-productive tasks, an employment exchange programme, hunting activities, the re-orientation of the pig farms by encouraging and facilitating extensive grazing models, etc.

To survey new entrants, an online form was created and disseminated and ultimately answered by **35 individuals**. Although the information gathered was rather eclectic, we could outline that:

- many of the respondents have little experience or training
- many are willing to implement agroecological practices
- respondents showed interest in multiple possible farming sectors.

Respondents also indicated some fears related to taking over a farm, e.g. that they couldn't economically afford it or that the transferor could exert too much power in the decision-making processes.

The knowledge generated served to **fuel discussions** among the "Territori de Vincles" partners and ultimately will be useful to **engage effectively with a larger circle** of stakeholders. This contributes to **federating local actors**, facilitates the process of **drawing conclusions** from the action research, and **orientates** future project activities.

## PERCEPTIONS OF FARMING

- Transferors experience **disenchantment towards the farming profession** and do not want to burden their descendants with taking over the farm.
- **Some farmers mention health issues related to their activities** as a potential deterrent for successors.

## PERCEPTIONS OF NEW ENTRANTS

- Farmers have the perception that there is a **lack of interested new entrants**.
- They also doubt more generally the **capacity, motivation, and viability** of new entrants' projects.
- Most interviewees wanted **successors with specific skills or characteristics**, such as having an adapted social background (being from the area, knowing the area).

## MATERIAL DIFFICULTIES

- Some farmers might have **specific economic expectations after retirement**, notably to retain some CAP direct payments.
- Older farmers pointed to the **lack of economic viability of their farms, or other material difficulties for succession** (too elevated capital value, issues preventing building renovation, etc.).

## FAMILY BACKGROUND AND PLANNING

- **None of the respondents had a clear successors** and there was a **lack of planning** in this regard.
- **One of the farmers was unwilling to transfer the farm outside of the family**.

## EXPECTED ROLE AFTER FARM TRANSFER

- Interviewed farmers **expect to keep a role in the farm**, either staying involved, or transferring knowledge to the successor (except for the two animal raisers interviewed who consider they have sacrificed enough time and wish to cease involvement completely upon retiring)

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- **Building first-hand knowledge on little-known issues** such as emotional and social aspects of farm successions contributes to making field expertise recognised and legitimate.
- **Embedding XCN's research in work done by a coalition of local actors** and creating links with other stakeholders (e.g. local authorities) is key to facilitating larger recognition and support.

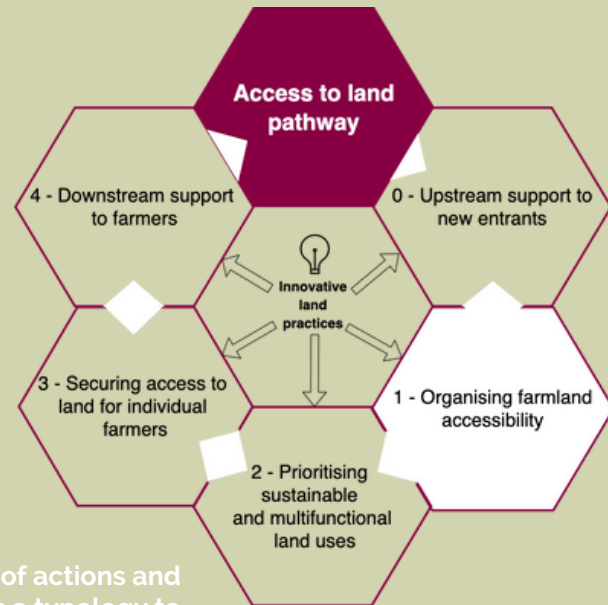
### OBSTACLES & LEVERS

- **Retiring farmers can be difficult to reach.** This action showed that **it is best to use a variety of channels** to identify and establish contact with them (e.g. local cooperatives, farmers groups, etc.)
- **Using broad public dissemination channels** (e.g. social media campaigns) helped increase visibility on generational renewal issues, which is not a very mainstream or mediatic topic.



## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

The action tackles the question of the **accessibility of farmland**. There has been an improvement in terms of knowledge on land availability, as well as on the sociocultural factors that interfere with accessing such land. In addition, this information is now better organised and will be more accessible in the future. Some farm transfers have been anticipated as a result of the action and local stakeholders might have more power to channel these towards rural regeneration. Furthermore, upstream **support to new entrants** (pre-land access) has also been addressed. Possible new entrants within the area have been identified and their needs and expectations have been assessed. This will be useful in the future when connecting retiring farmers and possible successors, and to prevent land abandonment and intensification beyond this action.



What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.

## WHO WE ARE

### XARXA PER A LA CONSERVACIÓ DE LA NATURA

XCN is a second-level organisation that fosters nature conservation initiatives amongst civil society, by leading actions related to knowledge transfer, funding, advising and policy. XCN's members are usually local land stewardship organisations that work together with landowners in order to preserve the natural values and ecological processes of their estates. **Learn more at: [www.xcn.cat](http://www.xcn.cat)**

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations. **Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)**



## CONTACT

**For more information on this innovative practice please contact:** [cblasco@xcn.cat](mailto:cblasco@xcn.cat)  
**Learn more at :** [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

The RURALIZATION project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the Grant Agreement N°817642. The publication content is the sole responsibility of authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EU Commission.