

ensuring public wealth, such as a new motorway or flood protection, can be delivered in a cheaper and non-traumatic way by voluntary acquisition and parcel exchange instead of painful processes of expropriation. Governments continue to feel responsibility to avoid negative influence on the living environment and eventually the quality of life itself.

The FARLAND partners experienced some common institutional developments and challenges. Establishing integrated approaches with different sectors working together face the pressure of retreating governments, acknowledging that proper coordination and cooperation between the sectors has always been a huge challenge.

In the case of land development policy, this effect is reinforced by the fact that land development approaches are not very well known. Land development on national and regional level is insufficiently present and visible in the planning system (rural development, regional development, spatial planning). There is insufficient knowledge about the contribution of land development to a variety of policy goals. Land development planning practice is too limited to the group of involved experts. Creativity is needed to invent new methods of coordination with new partners that operate in a more market oriented way.

Besides the composition of the 'team', the pace will also be different. Planning and policy implementing agencies are not accustomed to reacting promptly to changes in society. In a less protected and more competitive environment, the needs of society change more rapidly. Land development policies deal with the present while policy (re)formulation cycles take too long. Frameworks for implementation often contain legal procedures that take too long and do not have enough tools for swift tailor-made solutions. There is a need for courage and capacity to engage in and to promote future vision and perform innovative experiments to face the new needs of society.



All these developments are happening in a European policy context that increasingly influences the arena in which land development is implemented. Many countries and regions depend (for rural and land development) on European co-financing. Although the policy and financing framework accommodates land development measures, what FARLAND partners are experiencing is that the EU in its rural development framework has a modest attitude in promoting structural improvements on land use and property.

In many cases this leads to national rural development plans that put too much emphasis on individual problems instead of collective (structural) problems related to land use and infrastructure. Processes to develop new approaches to land development need to be accompanied by building trust and sharing information and promoting transparency at all levels.



Future Land Development in Portugal: Reinforcing Cooperation Between Sectors

It is important that Land Development approaches become supported and implemented in Portugal in order to promote effective integration. Multi-sectoral projects should be implemented involving different goals that, in classical procedures, have been field of distinct interventions. We need to promote and develop territorial approaches instead of instrument demand-driven projects.

The DGADR learned from the FARLAND partners the Land Development concept, which provides a box with adapted tools to act in each specific territory, providing tailor-made solutions.

In Flanders, in The Netherlands, and in NRW, DGADR witnessed the use of several tools such as Land Consolidation and Land Banking, in projects that are multi-purpose and, thereby, are applying the concept of integration in practise. DGADR was also encouraged by implementing organisations, such as DLG and VLM, that act as vehicles towards integration as they deal with a wide range of fields - from nature and landscape conservation to recreational or cultural issues - besides agricultural purposes.

If one intends to develop multi-sectoral, integrated approaches, suitable partners are needed to combine efforts in order to obtain better and more sustainable results and take advantage from increasing synergies. Therefore, cooperation between several sectors, ministries, and organisations operating in rural areas need to be further encouraged and reinforced.

The idea is to develop programmes and projects that are “constructed” from the start with the cooperation - as in team work - of several partners which are suitable and needed to achieve the multi-sectoral aims.

For instance, rural development is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries and territorial planning and nature related issues belong to the Ministry of Environment, Territorial Spatial Planning and Regional Development. These two ministries have clear and close ties in influencing rural areas. Therefore, it is important to promote the integration of territorial policies within rural development policies.

In Portugal, conflicts in land use and the need to coordinate public and private interests are a reality. Additionally, property structure is still a major problem that has several implications. All these issues are tackled by the land development scope.

One of the “hottest topics” nowadays in Portugal is forest fires. Forest fires have become a top priority for the government as they affected the country severely in the last 4 years. This problem deals with private (more than 80% of Portuguese forest is private) and public interests (forest fires have serious consequences on landscape and nature and its fight consumes huge amounts of public money).

Forest fires have several causes related to property structure, bad or insufficient infrastructures, land abandonment, inadequate or inexistent forest spatial planning and forest management, and inefficient fire prevention measures. Additionally, the problems are reinforced by climate change. All these issues are related to several sectors and, therefore, should be dealt with an integrated approach, as it needs a cross sector intervention – a land development approach!

CHAPTER 4

Conclusions: Converging or Diverging Approaches?

The Farland team

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- 1.4.1 Common Directions
- 1.4.2 Common Challenges
 - 1.4.2.1 Recognising the Power of Land Development
 - 1.4.2.2 Promoting Land Development in Strategic Planning
 - 1.4.2.3 Improving Operational Capacity for Land Development
 - 1.4.2.4 Enhancing the Capacity to Innovate in the Field of Land Development
 - 1.4.2.5 FARLAND, Near Future: Act Now!

1.4.1 COMMON DIRECTIONS

The overall objective of the FARLAND project was to upgrade national and regional land development policies. To reach this objective a network was created in which professionals from seven countries and eleven organisations were brought together. They reviewed and exchanged the existing knowledge in the field, gained new insights and turned these insights into new approaches of land development. They also learned about the differences of land development in various regional and cultural settings.

The continual exchange of knowledge underpinned the enthusiastic cooperation between the consortium partners. The FARLAND working method has been a fruitful one. The attention paid to discussion, reflection, and learning from each other contributed greatly to the successful outcome. Another important factor was that the knowledge exchange was about real life land development issues. As the project partners are all rooted in their own national and cultural contexts, they were able to study a broad range of examples of new approaches to land development that represent a rich sample of European realities.

The joint learning and developing process will not lead to the same unified approach in all of the FARLAND regions but there is a clear common understanding among the partners that land development in the future will be an important approach facilitated by governments to restructure land use (both public and private) and property. All partners have expressed intentions and developed ideas to broaden objectives, to create more extended tool-kits, to create tailor-made solutions, and to enhance implementation capacity.

In this common direction, land development is considered most effective when done in an integrated way in which:

- different interests of sectors and organisations are balanced during project preparation;
- interventions react on current and future needs of society, broader than agriculture;
- activity packages are diverse and well-coordinated during project implementation;
- funding flows are combined.

And when done in a decentralised way in which:

- regional and local administrations take responsibilities;
- interest organisations and local stakeholders are actively involved during the initiation, preparation and implementation phases;
- a good balance is found (depending on the issue at stake) between the responsibility of the government to safeguard public interests and local private interests (combination of top-down and bottom-up).

And flexible frameworks for implementation are available that:

- contain various instruments and tools that mutually support each other;
- enable to produce quick results (win-win situations).

The FARLAND project showed that there are many issues at stake in the participating countries for which land development is an appropriate instrument to deal with. Examples are the transformation of agriculture, depopulation and loss of landscape diversity; adaptation to the consequences of climate change; protection against natural hazards; and safeguarding the overall quality of life.

These issues are by no means restricted to the countries of the consortium partners, but occur also in other European countries. The importance of the FARLAND project and its results, therefore, is not just applicable to the specific circumstances in the seven countries of the consortium partners, but has a more general appeal that calls to the attention of politicians, decision-makers and professionals at the European and national levels.

The FARLAND network might be continued and extended to provide a platform for further exchange of knowledge and experience, because learning from each other, learning new approaches, and reviewing what approaches work in different situations has proven to be a fruitful method.

Differences in land development are due to differences in social, economic and cultural conditions; differences in legislative traditions; and differences in the regional performance of the issues at stake. It is therefore indisputable that future approaches to land development must deal with these factors. In other words, future approaches are context dependent.

In the FARLAND project, each of the partners prepared a regional discussion paper in which they presented what they had learnt from other partners and why this might enrich their own land development practice. These regional discussion papers were discussed with various members of the public, and in some cases also with private stakeholders. As a result, these stakeholders got involved in FARLAND and showed interest in its results, opening the way to innovate land development instruments and practices at the regional level.

The lessons learned varied among the partners. Hungary, for example, focused on the preparation of the legal and institutional framework for land development, whereas in Portugal there was a need for promoting integration, developing new tools and improving the compatible use of land for both public and private benefits. In The Netherlands results were achieved by incorporation, of socio-economic objectives in land development plans as practised in North Rhine - Westphalia. In Galicia coordination of land consolidation with regional development and other new instruments, such as land banking, was one of the main issues.

But there were also a number of common themes. One of these was the emphasis that was given to the importance of an integrated approach, combining different sectors, goals and interests. Integration is considered to be important because the issues at stake are multi-faceted and the instruments and approaches of land development must deal with these issues in order to be effective.

Another common issue was the need to strengthen awareness for the opportunities provided with land development. This has multiple facets, such as the communication with and involvement of public and private stakeholders and the implementation of land development at strategic as well as operational levels. It also offers help in dealing with the consequences of governmental reorganisations and new forms of financing land development measures.

As a result of decentralisation, throughout Europe, regional governments take up tasks and responsibilities that they did not have before, including tasks and responsibilities in the field of land development. This means that new and, in some cases, renewed attention must be paid to the dissemination of knowledge on how land development 'works' and what are the benefits for the different stakeholders.

All FARLAND partners shared the idea that there is a need for a strategic vision on land development that deals with both the more general themes and the regional specifics in their own country. Such a strategic vision would help address the issues at stake and the use of land development. It would also be an appropriate framework to discuss and implement different forms of land development, the stakeholders that need to be involved, the operational aspects of an integrated approach, and new forms of financing land development projects.



1.4.2 COMMON CHALLENGES

Each of the regional discussion papers contains several ideas to take steps in this commonly supported direction. Differences in institutional context, history and culture lead to a variety of regional flavours. These regional differences are caused by regional priorities in the issues at stake but also by variety in cultural and political background. To establish and develop these approaches, some common challenges are defined.

1.4.2.1 Recognising the Power of Land Development

FARLAND partners strongly feel that the role that land development can play is not well-known among policy makers and non agriculture sector-related experts. Land development can be used for the implementation of various regional, rural and territorial development plans, complementing and supporting already existing instruments. Land development is one of the few approaches that deal with multi-sectoral objectives in a single process. If the different area-specific plans would be defined and applied in better cooperation and coordination, this would lead to an optimal effect on land development. Consequently, land development requires new partnerships with public and private partners and collaborative ways of working.

1.4.2.2 Promoting Land Development in Strategic Planning

Next to recognising land development as a powerful policy implementation tool, is the need to better embed instruments in the different rural, regional and spatial development strategies. For this, the communication and 'marketing' of land development are needed.

Countries and regions will need to take explicit action if they want to mainstream land development in their policies. For example, strategies can be developed on how to use land development for various policies affecting land use and property. Such strategies are preferably set up in open planning processes with different ministries, interest organisations and other stakeholders involved. This will lead to increasing involvement of different policy makers and more awareness about what land development can do for achieving their own objectives.



Making land development more visible is the challenge at the European level. Some land development measures are part of the EU Rural Development Programme but they are sometimes hidden between the rich 'palette' of rural development measures.

Putting more emphasis on the structural improvement of land use and property in regulations and guidelines would help direct national and regional governments to take more and firmer actions. Allowing programme financing instead of providing EU co-financing on the basis of single sectoral projects would also encourage national and regional governments to work in a broadly integrated way. In achieving the best land development results, integrated plan development and funding have proved to be the most effective way.

1.4.2.3 Improving Operational Capacity for Land Development

To work in a tailor-made way, the availability of a range of instruments is important. Such a range of instruments is necessary to be able to choose the most effective way of dealing with area specific problems and opportunities. It would help if national and regional frameworks would allow the use of land development for different objectives (e.g. agricultural development, nature development, improvement of forest management, recreational development, fitting in big infrastructure).

It is also important to have a choice between simple voluntary land consolidation and parcel exchange and forms of sovereign, legally regulated, complex land development. Land banking in its different forms (exchange land banking, financial land banking, land banking on the basis of lease) can be used as a separate instrument but also in combination with other instruments. The establishment of less formal tools, such as stimulating farmers to form bigger units via cooperative farming, is a further enrichment of the approach.

FARLAND partners have experienced that creating capacity for proper coordination and facilitation between sectors is needed for integrated land development programming and implementation. This can take different forms, such as a unit in a coordinating ministry or a separate agency for land development. Last but not least, in order to implement integrated activity packages, systems for combining funding flows of different sectors and administrative levels are needed.

1.4.2.4 Enhancing the capacity to innovate in the field of land development

FARLAND has clearly shown that land development organisations need to invest in capacity for strategic planning, visioning and innovation. The environment in which we live and international developments currently are more dynamic than in previous decades. To respond timely and properly to these dynamics, quick thinking and innovation are essential.

The regular task of land development agencies and experts to adjust administrative and legal frameworks for land development is not a desperate search for 'new tasks' but a self-evident responsibility of experts. It is a constructive attempt to 'shape the change'. By working in international and national networks for review, innovation and continuous learning, local governments, regions and countries can stimulate each other. These networks should preferably contain mixes of organisations dealing with policy development, implementation and research & innovation.

One of the challenges is to form a more solid research and educational base as a foundation for these innovations.



1.4.2.5 FARLAND, Near Future: Act Now!

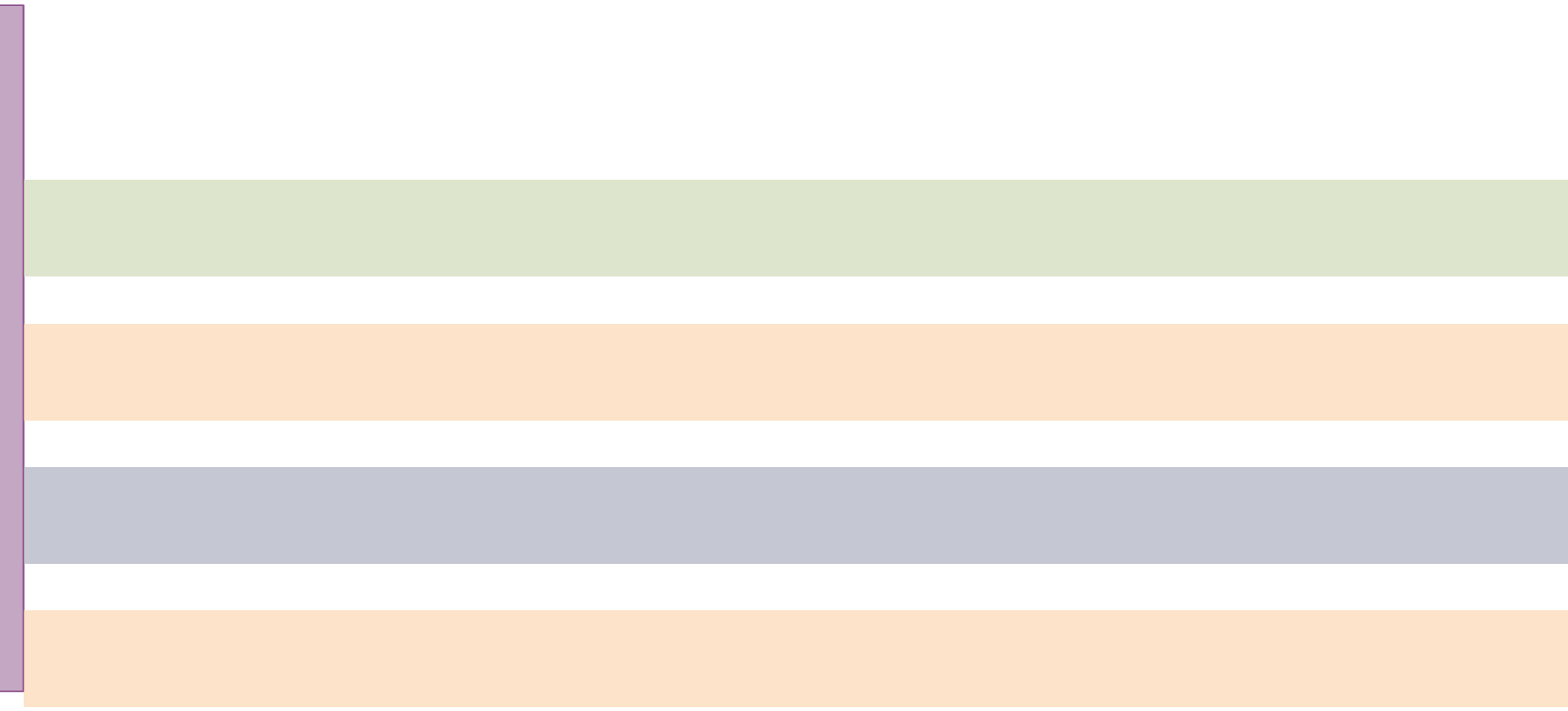
The FARLAND project has demonstrated that it is possible to make considerable progress in the creation of a vital network of land development professionals in different European countries within a short period of time.

In this network the project members learned from each other, adopted each other's concepts and working methods, and actively shared and discussed their learning experiences. Although there are – and will always be regional and cultural differences, knowledge and experience in each of the countries is enriching and could serve as a source of inspiration for future approaches to land development in other countries. This book offers evidence that land development is on the point of taking new roads. We hope that it will inspire many others to travel these roads and contribute to the future development of Europe.

To be able to create a continued exchange of knowledge and experience and a firm institutional framework, it is important to act now. The next EU programming period will be crucial in its addressing the Gothenburg Agenda and the Lisbon Strategy. Therefore, land development can have a crucial role. Having an effective and current set of instruments will contribute to improved living and working conditions in rural and peri-urban areas which will eventually lead to increased cohesion between European regions.

All countries, regions and local governments should start more pilot projects in specific areas related to the Gothenburg Agenda and Lisbon Strategy. Showing the concrete outputs of land development is the best way to convince policy makers across Europe about its usefulness.

Let's head for a 'European Union Community Initiative' for land development!



PART II



Living Case Studies

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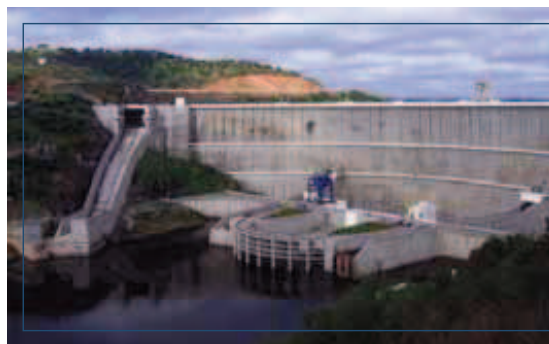
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2.1 Land Consolidation Project of the Luz Parish (Portugal)

“THE PROJECT TEAM’S VIEW”

Introduction

Due to the construction of the Alqueva dam and the flooding of its reservoir, the Luz parish - a village in Mourão municipality, was almost completely submerged. Almost 62% of the previous area of 5000 ha was flooded, including the former village. Therefore a new village had to be built and a new agricultural system implemented. Agricultural conditions had to be improved in order to keep the population in the parish.



The problems

The initial idea of the dam was born 40 years ago. The decision to construct the dam was a big and difficult step and people were undecided during all those years whether to stay or leave. Finally, it was decided by the authorities to help the people who wanted to live there. The inhabitants expected significant compensations for the loss of their houses, lands, and the social and psychological disturbances they were forced to face. Thus, the decision was very much a political one. The dam was a big national investment.

Margarida Teixeira, project leader of IDRHa:

“My job as a project leader was to manage the environmental impact in the context of a new village and to rebuild all the agricultural activities. We simply tried to rebuild the former way of life there but in a better way. We had to compensate the smaller farmers who lost parcels and give them new land in the area.”

“Two big farms were expropriated to construct the new village and reallocate these small parcels. Vineyards and new olive orchards were planted as compensation for the loss of income.”



“Responsible for the Alqueva Project is a public enterprise called the Enterprise for the Development of Infrastructure of Alqueva (EDIA), which asked IDRHa (presently DGADR) for land consolidation assistance.”

Explanation of the innovation

Two farmers decided to keep their old olive orchards while the others had new orchards planted. All these new orchards and vineyards were planted so that they could be treated and worked as a single entity, even though they belonged to different owners.

This was a new approach for the farmers. The idea to plant vineyards so that they can produce more and better quality wine was new in this area. Olive orchards became more dense and with new varieties. Irrigation was introduced both in vineyards and olive orchards. More intensive and profitable crops compensate the farmers in a way for the loss of surface and the reduction of possibilities for extensive systems, i.e. the switch from cereals and cattle breeding to a new agricultural activity.

Focus of the innovation

The idea of people working together in a communal farm was the core of the innovation. People could voluntarily join the "farm" concept. IDRHa explained to them that it would reduce costs if they worked together: "We helped them acquire the necessary skills as they were not used to managing such vineyards. We gave support to farmers and we helped them by offering technical lessons."

Innovation put into practice

IDRHa has 83 ha of vineyard for 83 farmers as compensation for the loss of the smallest parcels (approximately 1 ha/person). This area was supposed to be worked as one.

In the re-allotment plan the spatial relationship between neighbours was maintained. Making this detailed plan was a bit like 'copy-pasting'. Houses and parcels from the former village were "copied" and "pasted" into the new one. This helped maintain the original social structure. However, it was also possible to change the old structure if anyone wanted to."



Relevant Data

Project name:

Projecto de Emparcelamento Rural da Freguesia da Luz

Portugal, region of Alentejo; LC project area: 1.913 ha; types of land use: agricultural, forestry, and other uses (urban, for collective equipments and for infrastructures).

Innovation:

a land consolidation project as a compensation for big infrastructural intervention

Status of the project:

in execution.

Type of area:

agricultural.

Objectives of development: to improve the income obtained from the agricultural activity and fight against depopulation process.

Implementation bodies:

planning – IDRHa, along with farmers and land owners, EDIA;
execution – IDRHa and DGADR, with the collaboration of regional services of the Agricultural Ministry and EDIA.

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Flexible

Decentralised

Integrated

Agricultural area

Environmental sensitive area

Metropolitan area



José Oliveira (Luz technician): "Because of the close contacts with everyone it was important that I lived in the village, both as a project team technician and as an inhabitant. Since farmers were very much involved, I always had to be there for them. By actually living there and being their neighbour and technician at the same time the population trusted me. I lived there for 10 years. Now I only go there twice a week because the project is almost finished."

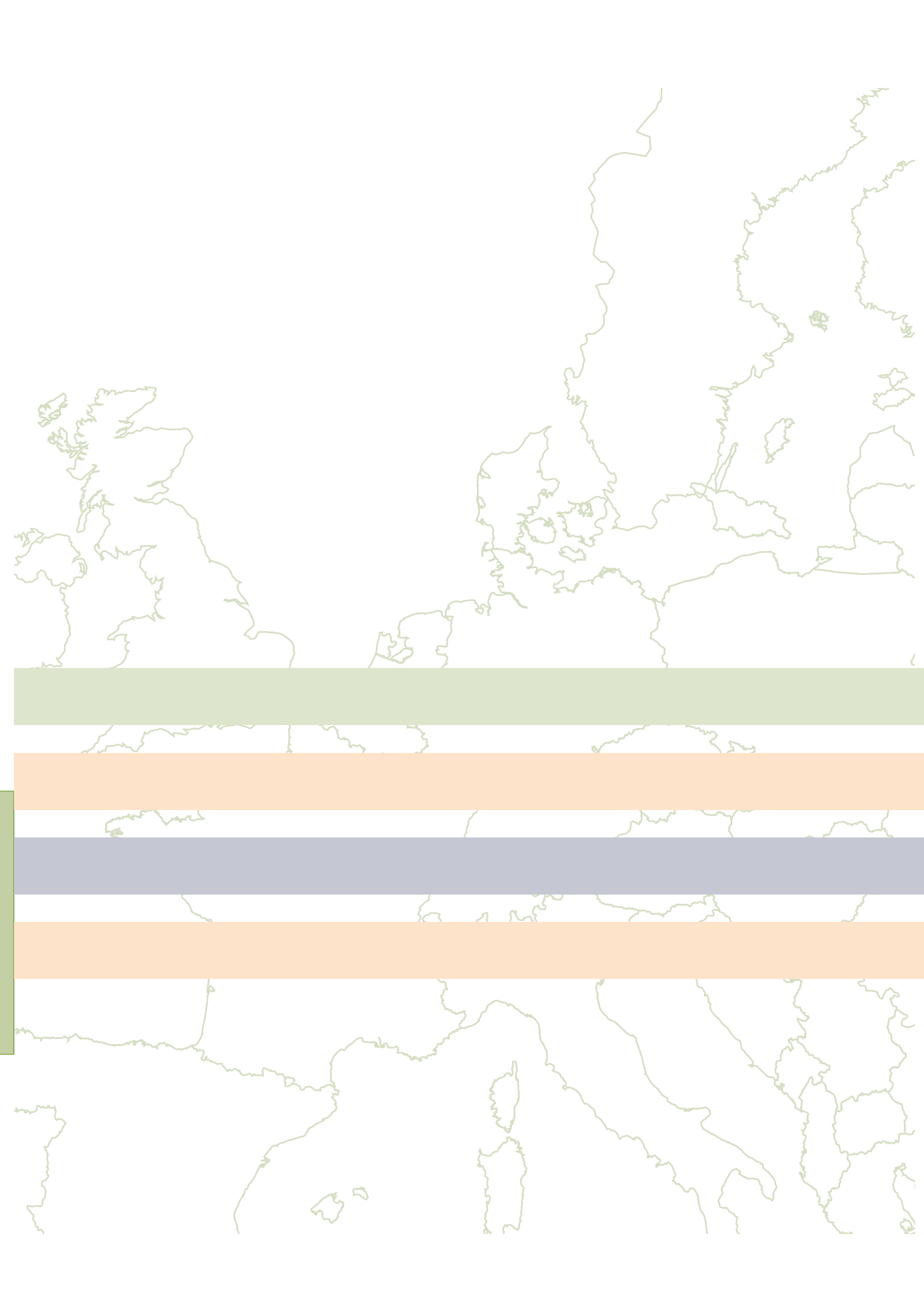
Working with local parties

Margarida Teixeira: "The role of EDIA in this project was interesting. Referring to the concept of the project, EDIA's President told us: "We asked you for fish, and you gave us lobster!". He was so pleased with the project that he lobbied for it at the Ministry of Agriculture for financing.

The ideas and developments of the project came from different organisations. The regional services of the Ministry participated through offering technical advice and support. The farmers' association that was created as a result of the project is now collaborating with DGADR, the former IDRHa.

"As EDIA asked us to organise only the non-urban area, we could concentrate on re-allotment in order to be able to implement a better use of the land available. Our aim was to safeguard the environmental values and generate more profit. "





2.2 Land Development in Higher Education – Curriculum Development and Applied Practices in Hungary

“THE EDUCATION OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IN LAND DEVELOPMENT IN HUNGARY”

Introduction

Fieldwork has a long tradition in the Hungarian higher education. However, economic changes in the 90s had negative impacts on this tradition. The growing number of students increased the workload of teachers, therefore the financial and human resources for field-based education were reduced. Just a few institutions, such as Landscape Planning at Corvinus University in Budapest and Soil Sciences at St Stephen's University in Gödöllő choose to continue combining theoretical and practical education with case study-based field work.

Land development as a university major does not exist in Hungarian higher education. However, land development courses are being taught in subjects like geodesy, geography, cartography, and landscape planning.

The problems



The Hungarian team saw the participation in the FARLAND project as an opportunity to introduce FARLAND related issues into higher education. MTA TAKI is responsible for curriculum development at different levels of higher education, including the PhD level.

Together with the other participating university partners, they incorporated new methods, instruments, and examples from the case studies and projects covered during the technical exchange visits and study tours.

Zsuzsanna Nagy, an assistant lecturer at the Corvinus University, incorporated the ideas into the present curriculum of horticulture and landscape architecture. Curriculum development during the first test year was used to deal with issues of integrated river basin management at different scales. During a recent land development project at Bereg floodplain, attention was already paid to the role of land development in an effective implementation of integrated land and water management.

The Water Framework Directive emphasises the need for effective, flexible and integrated measures. However, there are no necessary tools needed for the creation of such a river basin management plan.

In search of innovations

Our objective was to introduce the results and lessons learned on integrated land development during the FARLAND project to different levels of education, mainly into the curriculum of horticulture engineers and landscape architects.

We follow a flexible, step-by-step approach to incorporate issues of land development into different disciplines by (i) launching field work using land development tools and measures and (ii) initiating team work for solving issues at small scales (farm, municipality, small landscape).

The latter activity has two different phases: a desktop study and a 2-week practical summer course. Based on lessons learned, a new MSc major will be launched in collaboration with other universities.

Results

Land development has been introduced at three levels of education (BSc, MSc, and PhD) at Corvinus University as a first step in water management related issues. In the pilot year we worked with students with the following courses:

Level	Scheme	Subject
BSc	Horticulture, I. year	Water management
MSc	Horticulture, Environmental manager specialization, IV-V. year	Water management EU Environmental policies
MSc	Landscape architecture, III. year	Spatial water management Territorial water management
PhD	Landscape architecture, II. year	Landscape planning

Team work was launched for third-year landscape planning students to teach them how to develop an integrated landscape plan using land development measures. The best students have the opportunity to work with municipalities and other authorities to implement their plan and thus gain field experience.

A one-week field trip in the Czech Republic has been organised to study planning and implementation practices, with emphasis on the use of land development measures.

Relevant data:

Innovation:

implementing integrated land development in higher education

Status:

in process (2006 - 2007 study year and further on)

Type of area of action:

education

Number of students:

in the year 2006/2007: 127, PhD students: 4

Objectives:

Introducing integrated land development into higher education in a form of theory, developed, processed case studies (including FARLAND case studies) and field trips to learn from practices about flexible, decentralised and complex tools of land consolidation, land development in different scales (spatial) planning.

The majors selected for first testing: horticulture engineer, landscape architects (in the frame of water management), ecological resource management subjects, and in the training of PhD students at Corvinus University, Faculty of Horticulture.

Costs:

2 thousand Euros

Involved partners:

The Corvinus University, Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Planning – students, teachers, PhD students; the MTA TAKI to support educational process; the local partners (municipalities, authorities and local experts in Bodrogköz and Nagykörű region).

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

2.3 Land Banking Bantegal, Galicia (Spain)

“GETTING USE RIGHTS INSTEAD OF PROPERTY RIGHTS”

Introduction

Thousands of parcels are being abandoned in the rural areas of Galicia partly due to the fact that land property is not an easily transferable asset. As a response, a new land bank system, based on use rights instead of property rights, was developed by the Ministry of Rural Affairs. How did this happen and what made this a success?



The problems

The depopulation process of rural areas was accompanied by very low land mobility rate. Galician farms are not only small and highly fragmented but the enormous amount of abandoned land causes additional problems. Maps look like a scrubland jigsaw. A solution is needed for this situation not only from the perspective of efficient land management but also for forest fire prevention.

Renting land to other farmers in most European regions is a possible solution for abandonment. However, this is not the case in Galicia. Owners are reluctant to rent their land for fear of losing their property



rights. Additionally, farmers or future farmers have difficulties in finding land with adequate characteristics because of the difficulties in obtaining information on the availability of parcels. Fragmentation, abandonment and absenteeism are the reasons behind this problem.

In search of innovations

According to Xosé Carballido Presas, DG Agrarian Structures and Infrastructures:

“The idea of creating a new land bank already existed in former Governments, but it is very difficult to accomplish from a social point of view because of the sensitive issue of property rights. However, the present Government is willing to take the risk even if it is an unpopular measure.

In the beginning we looked for similar legislation from other regions, but we could not find any that really fit our situation. Therefore, we started brainstorming about what we wanted to achieve and proposed new legislation. We believed that the main problem resided in the supply side so we wanted to stimulate it. Then I proposed a mechanism that would be based on a new tax on all farm land, for instance €300 per hectare. The owner could avoid this tax, or 99% of it, if he put his land in the new land-bank. It was not necessary to sell the land but only to let it to the land bank.

My colleagues did not like the idea much, because the tax would be very difficult to manage and collect, but they agreed with the general idea. We decided not to tax the land, but to create a new fee for land that was abandoned. This is easier to manage and more selective. In this case, the owner can avoid the fee either by ensuring that the land will be used in a proper way from agro-environmental point of view or by putting the parcel in the new land bank. The land bank will rent the lands.

Relevant data

Project name:

Bantegal

Country:

Galicia

Status of the project:

plan

Innovation:

land banking based on land use rights instead of property rights

Type of area:

agricultural areas

Objective(s) of development:

to encourage land mobility with the aim of extending farm size besides achieving a better land management ensuring the proper maintenance of environment, mainly regarding the prevention of forest fires.

Costs of the project and finance structure (in Euros):

for the first year, it is expected to have a budget of 2 million Euros.

Implementation parties

a new body is proposed: Public Corporation for the Management of Galician Land Banking (BANTEGAL) (under the Ministry with agrarian responsibilities, but with autonomy)

Website:

<http://www.bantegal.com>

Name of organisation:

Ministry of Rural Affairs

Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

The Government made a first rough draft of the law and we designed the general idea during five meetings. The next steps were to present the elaborated draft to the farmer's associations and other organisations, ask for their reactions, and make modifications accordingly.

One of the key aspects of the law was that no expropriation system will take part in the land bank process. We paid special attention not to include the word 'expropriation' in the text because, as learned in previous attempts to create land banks, this makes people very suspicious. The land bank will be based on two concepts: first, the owner will keep the rights over the land after the renting period and will recover his parcel in good conditions. Second, there will be stimulation by the amount of rent.

The urban people who still had rural roots and rural properties would be satisfied with this solution. In spite of the fact that they need guarantees that they will maintain their property rights, they do not like to see rural areas becoming abandoned and destroyed by forest fires.

Last summer we had fires that burnt almost 100.000 ha in 10 days. This disastrous situation helped the government convince the people of the necessity of such measures."



Results

"The Law for the Creation of the Land Bank and the Maintenance of the Utilised Agrarian Area was passed by the Parliament in May 2007 and it established the new Galician Land Bank, the Bantegal, as an independent but public entity. The Land Bank will try to encourage the transfer of land from the owners to farmers by means of renting. Nevertheless, buying and selling will also be allowed.

Once the owner concedes the use right, Bantegal is responsible for finding a farmer to rent the parcel. The owners have the guarantee that they will receive rent (in cases where the parcels are renting) even if the tenant doesn't pay, and that the parcel will be recovered in good conditions after the renting period.

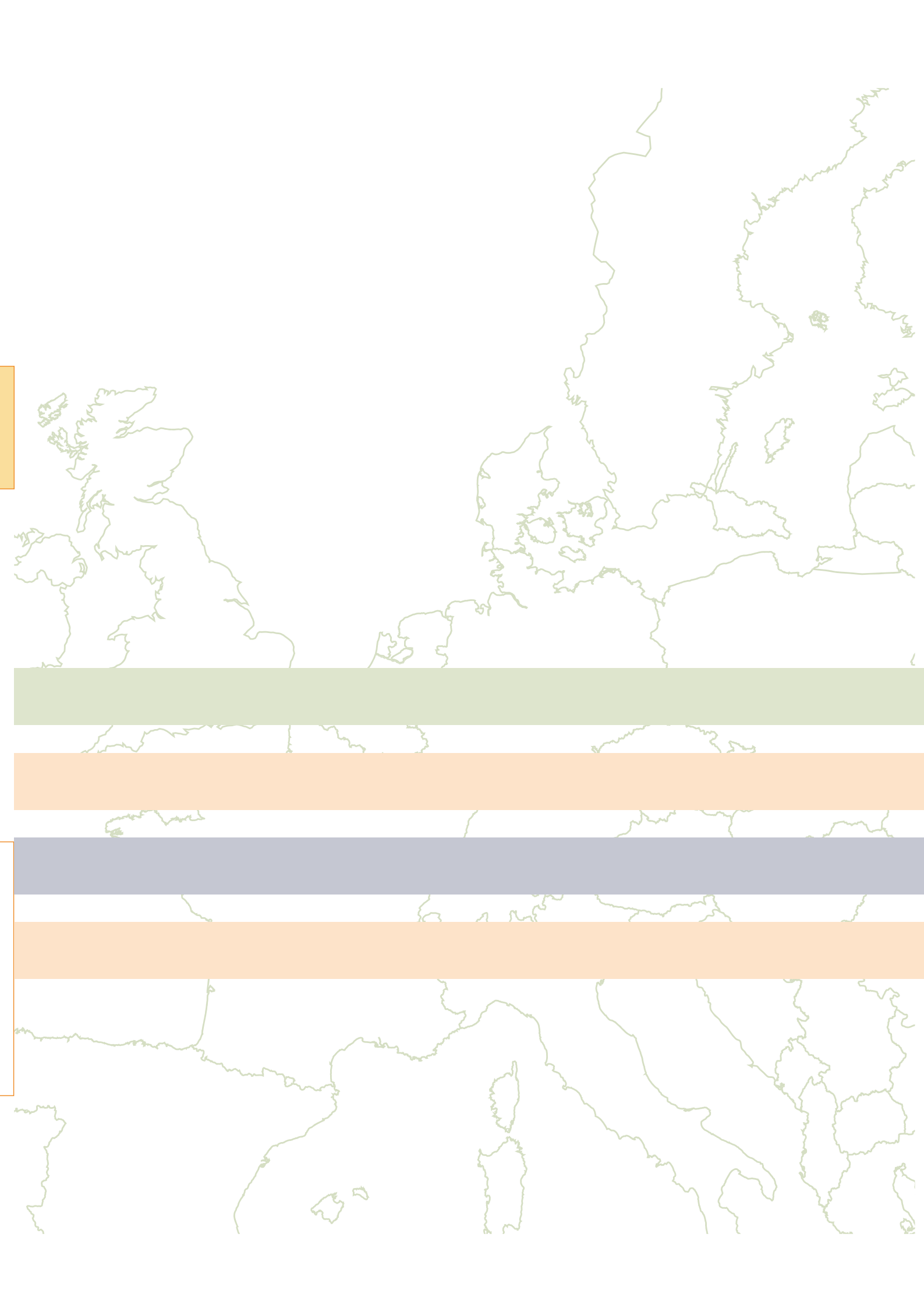
All these things pursue two goals: giving an alternative to buying and selling as part of the land transfer mechanism and mitigating owner mistrust in renting. Another aim is to facilitate information flow and create a new GIS-Web system.

People have strong feelings for property and they do not like their parcel being abandoned and neglected in spite of the fact that they cannot take care of the land themselves. However, if they have a guarantee that their property rights are maintained, they want their parcels to be managed in a proper way. Additionally, if the land is productive, its value may also grow or at least maintain its value and if the parcel is maintained in a proper way, the boundary marks are clearly visible and the owners can see where the parcel is and how big it is.

These ideas could be implemented in other regions, but sociology and people's feelings towards their property have to be taken into consideration. As this is a totally new approach, there are no guarantees that it is going to work. Therefore, pilot areas have been chosen and this year four districts will participate in the project.

The instrument deals with agricultural land but the government does not reject the possibility of adapting it for other types of land, such as scrubland or forest land, or of expanding it with other objectives such as nature conservation."





2.4 Bocholter Aa, North Rhine – Westphalia (Germany)

“LOOKING OUTSIDE THE MUNICIPAL BOX”

Introduction

The Bocholter Aa area consists of five municipalities connected by a small river called the Bocholter Aa, it is situated close to the Dutch border, and has great touristic appeal.

The problems

Challenges for the area were mainly demographic changes, such as aging and elderly housing. But generating local employment and mobility issues also posed problems to the region. The available legal measures need a regional plan to be effective and consistent. However, the problems in the field have become too complex and dynamic and cannot be fully comprehended from the regional level, thus the help of the locals is needed for successful rural development projects.

In search of innovations

The mayor of the municipality of Velen acknowledged the added value of creating one joint spatial plan for the five municipalities. LEADER was a concept that acknowledged this, but had only a limited spatial and temporal magnitude. To promote this way of working, the NRW “Integrated Rural Development Strategy” model adopted the same philosophy. Drawing from LEADER as a source of inspiration, “Integrated Rural Development Strategy” (IRDS) was officially established in 2004.

The Bocholter Aa region seized the opportunity as IRDS explicitly addresses regional responsibility for making consistent plans drawing together different strands of financing and instruments. Village renewal, land consolidation and agricultural support planning are combined, enabling concentrated and more effective planning.

IRDS aims to improve the participatory nature of problem-definition and allows the simultaneous employment of multiple agricultural, social and economic instruments. The planning process is open to anyone interested, whether official body or individual and is completed within 12 months.



Results

When "Integrated Rural Development Strategy" became official it inspired the locals along the Bocholter Aa to make such a joint, inter-municipal plan. They engaged in a participatory process, mapping the strengths and weaknesses of the Bocholter Aa area and setting targets accordingly.

The preparation phase was subsidised with 50,000 Euros. The planning phase was subsidised with 10,000 per participating municipality, making cross-municipal plans more interesting. Citizens were invited to use the website to add their comments and recommendations to the process.

A total of 13 projects have been initiated in the Bocholter Aa area. One of the projects is a 50 kilometre bicycle trail - an investment of over half a million Euros, 70% of which is subsidised and the remaining 30% paid by the participating municipalities. There is, however, a competition between the projects for subsidies.

Currently, there are 33 IRDS projects running in 149 of the total 396 municipalities throughout NRW and it is still gaining momentum.



The actual projects flowing from the regional plan are not financed via IRDS, but have to be financed separately. Therefore, at this project-level, the administrative and financial fragmentation continues to exist. However, projects implemented within the framework of an IRDS regional plan get more subsidy than projects without an IRDS background. Many IRDS projects will eventually have to turn to LEADER money to be implemented.

Relevant data

Formal framework

Integrated Rural Development Strategy (IRDS)

Municipalities

Isselburg, Bocholt, Rhede, Borken, Velen

Supervision

District Government Münster, Unit 69 (Rural Development, Land consolidation)
County Borken

Participation

Kick Off meeting Sept 2005:

110 participants

Mid Term meeting March 2006:

80 participants

Closure meeting June 2006:

110 participants

Contact

District Government Münster

- Unit 69 (Rural Development, Land Consolidation)

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www.region-bocholter-aa.de

Flexible

Decentralised

Integrated

Agricultural area

Environmental sensitive area

Metropolitan area

2.5 Care Estate Klarenbeek (The Netherlands)

“CARE AND GREEN MEET IN NEW ESTATES”



Introduction

Until recently, the Care sector had its impact mostly in the urban areas. It is however a proven fact that a green environment promotes health and well-being.

The Netherlands is a densely populated country and land is scarce and expensive. DLG studies the feasibility of a new type of estate that combines green environment and care. The client in need of special care will find space, peace and quiet, meaningful therapeutic work and probably more on the estate. On the other hand, the client lends a hand to manage the agricultural land, nature and recreational fields on the estate, either by doing the work or by paying a fee to support the exploitation of the estate. Different care concepts are possible such as children with behavioural problems living with foster families on the estate, therapeutic work for rehabilitating ex-drug addicts, equine therapy, etc.

Under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, DLG has started three pilot studies of so-called Care Estates. Klarenbeek is planned to become one of these Care Estates and is located on the urban fringes of the city of Amsterdam.

The challenge

On the borders of the river Amstel, just before it enters the urban area, an open agricultural landscape is the home of a few farmers who struggle to survive the agricultural reforms. The public sector aims to preserve the landscape as it was originally painted by Rembrandt and later by Mondriaan. The landscape is well-suited for recreational purposes but the land is very expensive.

The challenge is to design and build cooperation between an investor, a Care Centre, farmers, a nature conservation organisation, and a recreation service. The objective is to buy the land and farm houses and develop and exploit the estate.

DLG owns some of the land on the location. Cordaan, a Care Centre has been found, and Principaal /De Key, an investor, is interested in the concept of the Care Estates. One of the farmhouses, called Klarenbeek, has been recently purchased and will be the launching model for attracting customers.

All parties cooperate in the study on how to develop this new estate in a way that it serves the clients of Cordaan and the people of Amsterdam, and is financially sound, and accepted by the planning department of the city and the province.

In search of innovations

The goal of DLG is to learn from the process of making new Care Estates. Are these types of estates feasible? Is it possible to use private money to reach, among other, public goals? What role of the Government is needed to facilitate this process?

In this particular pilot project, DLG owns part of the land needed for the estate and could play a role in purchasing the rest of the needed land. Due to their vast experience in the rural area and their contacts with the parties and institutes involved, DLG plays a coordinating role in the planning process. As in the "Meerstad" example, DLG is using their experience in public private partnerships.

Results

At the end of the process, the three pilot projects will be evaluated. If the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and other public organisations can play a role in the development of Care Estates to achieve public, green goals, in symbiosis with financing private parties, the concept of Care Estates might be enrolled for the whole of The Netherlands.

Relevant data

Project name:

Pilot project Care Estate Klarenbeek

Innovation:

Care Estates with private investors to achieve public and green goals

Country:

The Netherlands, province of Noord-Holland

Status of the project:

Pilot project, started in 2006

Involved parties:

Cordaan
Municipality of Amsterdam
Principaal/de key
Staatsbosbeheer
Province of Noord-Holland
Dienst Landelijk Gebied (Government Service for Land and Water management)

Project leader pilot projects:

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

2.6 City Forest Ghent, Flanders (Belgium)

“A NEW FOREST FOR THE CITIZENS OF GHENT AND BEYOND”

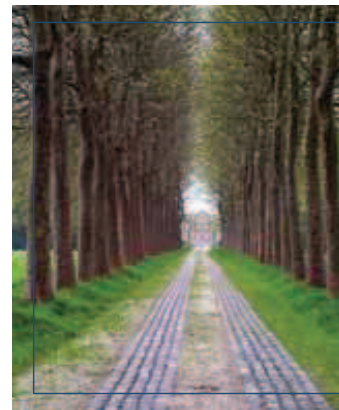
Introduction

Flanders is one of Europe's least forested areas. However, forests play an important function from an ecological point of view and fulfil the population's growing need for a green environment where to relax.

The problems

The Flemish government is aware of the need for more forest areas. Therefore, in 1997 they decided upon an ambitious plan of 10.000 ha forest expansion. This goal should be reached in 2007. Special attention was paid to new public-accessible forests in the urban fringes, the so called 'city forests'.

For the province of East Flanders the coverage of forest is less than 6%, 80% of which is privately owned and often not open to the public. Ghent, the provincial capital with 225.000 inhabitants has no public forest. People from the city have to travel a long distance to reach a free accessible forest which is the reason why the creation of a city forest in the vicinity of Ghent was one of the first projects approved by the Flemish government.



As in all urban fringe areas, the 1200 ha spot south of the city that was suitable for the creation of the forest was under high pressure of urbanisation but, in accordance with the zoning plan, still under agricultural use.

In search of innovations

In 1999, the Provincial government of East Flanders, the agency of Nature and Forest of the Flemish government, and the Flemish Forestry Organisation joined their forces to create a new forest of about 300 ha, interwoven with a park-like landscape. During the development of the project, more and more partners contributed to the success of the project.

The achievement of a broad support on political, administrative, and social levels was an essential part of the project from the very beginning of the planning process. The project tested new strategies to involve the target groups (e.g. website, popular newsletter, individual visits to farmers, field trips, social events) to create broad public support. Participation of and communication with the residents and future users of the urban forest was given ample attention, focusing on the expectations of all social actors. The target groups were involved to take initiative but also bear responsibilities.



From the technical point of view, a new zoning plan needs to be adopted. Currently, the department of spatial planning is developing this plan in accordance with the general spatial plan of the city area

that is under construction. At the same time different detailed development plans are being drawn up that fill in the zoning plan using the legal framework of Land Development. The Flemish Land Agency (VLM), the agency of Nature and Forest, the Flemish Forestry Organisation, and the department of Cultural Heritage and Landscapes all contribute to these plans within their own competencies.

A crucial point of the project is the availability of land to be used for afforestation. Not the whole project area will be transformed into forest. In most parts, measures of accessibility and landscaping created an open park-like landscape in which well-considered agricultural land use has an important role to play. This implies that not all owners and users are evenly affected. VLM and the agency of Nature and Forest use a variety of acquisition strategies to best fit the local user- and ownership situation.

Initially, the zoning plan contains an expropriation zone for the core forest area. However, no expropriation is done without offering a solution for the affected farmers. For this, a local land bank with voluntary land exchange has been established as a central tool to accompany the expropriation. However, simple land banking and plot exchange is not always the proper solution and can create another suboptimal situation in the new location for the farmers. Therefore, by the end of 2007, the start of a modern land consolidation procedure was considered for a larger area to complete the gaps of acquisition and to optimise the displaced properties.

Results

On the first plot of land bought, the first trees were planted in the autumn of 2002. Children from several local primary schools were helped by the Flemish Minister of the Environment and Agriculture, Chief Raoni of the Kayapo Indians, the Belgian prince Laurent, and the local authorities' representatives.

It was clear from the start that the creation of the forest in the urban fringe of Ghent was not going to be an easy overnight project. Even five years after planting the first trees, the search for land and solutions for the affected farms is still ongoing. But the well considered communication strategy keeps the "city forest idea" alive and growing.

Relevant data

Project name:
City Forest Ghent

Location:
Flanders, Belgium

Land use/landscape:
Agricultural land in urban fringe and castle sites.

Innovation:
Different strategies of land acquisition are put into action to free land and find alternatives for farmers in a high pressure urban fringe

History:
1997: aim of creating 10.000 ha new forest was stated by the Flemish government.
1999: the Province, the Flemish Communities' Forest and Green division and the Flemish Forestry Organisation joined forces to create the urban forest of Ghent.
2002: first trees were planted on the first land that was bought for afforestation.

Status:
In execution

Project partners:
Agency for Nature and Forest of the Flemish community
Province of East Flanders
Flemish Forestry Organisation
Municipalities
Flemish Land Agency

Project size:
Total project area: 1200 ha
afforestation area to be acquired: 300 ha

Contact:
Head of the VLM division of East Flanders:

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

2.7 Integrated Water and Land Management Jánd – Bereg Pilot Project (Hungary)

“LAND CONSOLIDATION AND VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROJECT”

Introduction

In 2001 a dramatic flood on the river Tisza caused enormous damage to property in Bereg, a rural area in the Upper Tisza region. The Hungarian government rebuilt the villages but the flood risk remains and increases with the years. Local citizens are aware of the flood risk and fear the weather extremities that cause large fluctuation in the water levels.

The municipality of Jánd is in a unique situation, having three oxbows with high potential for water retention, nature protection, and rural development in its territory. Nevertheless, current ownership structure; land use patterns; and water infrastructure of the target area did not provide the basic conditions for implementation. Moreover, a 240 ha grazing area in the village could not be utilised by local farmers, due to unfinished land privatisation that blocked grazing development.



The problems

The general aim of the project was to elaborate feasible plans for sustainable land use, water management, and rural development in an area endangered by natural disasters. Thus, the project contributes to the livelihood of the rural population concerned.

The project intends to introduce a new approach and propagate the experiences about sustainable land management, the related integrated water management, environmental protection and regional development.

The FAOTCP project is closely connected to the national framework of future land consolidation. The pilot project at Jánd includes one oxbow with the aim of creating a community area (village renewal) there and a sustainable grassland management part on a grazing area. Implementation was organised within the existing legal framework (voluntary land exchange).

In search of innovations

The project aims to apply different means and alternatives in a combined way such as institutional development, organisational development, planning of participation, change of land use for the purpose of better land management, nature conservation, income raising, extension of employment facilities, and



village development. Land consolidation activity is closely related to the project's land use strategy and the pilot project reveals new approaches in sustainable land management.

Results

Based on the first outcomes of the pilot project, sustainable grazing is solved through settling ownership rights and land utilisation and by creating a grazing association involving former land users.

On the other site, the project reached an agreement on water retention in the oxbow but this only refers to keeping the existing water level. Further development is needed to enhance the area of the oxbow, to create a community area, and to apply compulsory participation of those owners who refused co-operation.

The implementation of the pilot project can serve as an example for organising landscape rehabilitation and water retention projects. During the implementation of the project it was researched whether certain procedures can be implemented. Difficulties of organisation were identified, and recommendations were made for required modifications in the legal framework (law for land consolidation) as well as for subsidies to be provided. Landscape rehabilitation should serve the long-term interests and development of the whole society.

During landscape rehabilitation, the options corresponding to natural conditions of the area have to be determined, the parcels involved have to be identified, and the potential transition of land use have to be planned. In land use planning, special attention needs to be paid to applying traditional land management methods.

Relevant data

Innovation:

sustainable land management by combining institutional development, organisational development, planning of participation, nature conservation, and village development

Size:

250 hectares

Type of Land:

areas with environmental values

Status:

in process (2005 April – 2007 October)

Type of area:

Grassland and wetland

Objectives:

Planning and elaborating a land use strategy that is widely accepted and supported by the society and economically sustainable with respect to the regions stricken with its natural risks (flood, inland waters, drought) and having a high natural value. Improving the skills of the people involved in the region and the forming of regional affairs with special attention to the disadvantaged rural population.

Costs:

50 thousand Euros

Location:

Settlement of Jánd, Tisza River Bank, South Bereg, North East Hungary

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

2.8 New Land Management Strategy in Mação (Portugal)

“TOGETHER AGAINST THE FIRE IN MAÇÃO”



Introduction

In Mação, as in many other Portuguese municipalities, forestry production of eucalyptus and pine is the main purpose of land use. The depopulation process during the past decades has caused most of the population to move abroad. In addition, the local inhabitants are becoming increasingly older and strong land fragmentation makes farming very difficult for technical and economical reasons.

In the past afforestation with eucalyptus had been a popular choice among landowners. However, during recent years, most of those forests were almost abandoned and a large portion of them were destroyed by fires.

After a disastrous fire in 2003, the municipality of Mação decided to change its strategy and to completely innovate the way the territory was being managed. Dealing with land property and land use was fundamental to this change.

The problem to solve

Due to the demographic situation in Mação and small property sizes, a large portion of the woodland is abandoned and maintenance activities do not exist. This can be further highlighted by the fact that in Mação, where the population is only 8.000 inhabitants, 15.000 people own a piece of land.

Both agricultural activities and livestock have almost disappeared and the landscape has become minimally fragmented. The whole municipality is covered by a "continuous blanket of biomass" mainly formed by a forest of eucalyptus and shrubs. Goats no longer control the growth of those shrubs!

Paradoxically, an extreme parcel and property fragmentation resulted in a dangerous homogeneity in landscape, and climate conditions had greatly increased the risk of forest fires. Indeed, fires have become quite an usual phenomenon affecting broad municipal areas. After each fire, the vegetation growth created renewed conditions for fires.

This has pushed the municipality to considerably extend and modernise its fire fighting capabilities, causing expenses to soar. During the disastrous fire in June 2003 more than 50% of the municipality (21.000 hectares) was totally burnt in just a few days. Buildings and villages were also affected.

In search of innovation

During that time, Antonio, a councillor of Mação, and some of his technicians put together an action plan, which was presented to the president of the Portuguese Republic during his visit of the affected area.

Immediately a working group was created which included Antonio. On the day the working group began its activities, two forestry engineers arrived in Mação with the idea of launching a new forestry business. While the timing was not right, Antonio decided to enrol them in the working group anyway and later on in the Association that was created. In addition, the working group consisted of external experts such as an old friend of Antonio who had an important role in idea definition and strategic structuring.

After two months of hard work, the group presented its conclusions to the council board. Surprisingly, all the councillors accepted the analyses and agreed that the recommendations be implemented. One of the main recommendations was that an effective fight against forest fires should be supported by structural changes at property and land use level instead of merely increasing fire fighting capacity.

Relevant data

Project name:

New land management strategy in Mação

Innovation:

Owners' associations as an innovative strategy against forest fires and in favour of sustainable land management

Location:

Municipality of Mação

Size of project:

40.000 ha (the whole municipality)

Land uses:

eucalyptus and pine forests, shrubs

Status of the project:

in process; started in 2003.

Type of area:

Area with high risk of forest fires. In the past, the biggest pine grove of Europe

Objective(s) of development:

To promote new land management practices in order to prevent big forest fires

Implementation parties:

Municipality of Mação and Aflomação association

Contact:

<http://www.aflomacao.pt/>
aflomacao@gmail.com

Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area

Given that most of the proposals needed to be established by higher authorities of the Portuguese government, the municipality of Mação decided first to present them to neighbouring municipalities in order to reach a consensus. However, Mação did not find any support from the other municipalities.

So they decided on trying other ways and contacted some organisations at national level (such as General Directions) to get support for their ideas. One of the most important and also a more contentious one was the so called "Núcleos" (nuclei). These are a type of owners' associations which aim to overcome extreme fragmentation by being responsible for the management of all the properties of its members and main infrastructures. This required a specific legal framework of the national government. Mação was too small, they thought.

Meanwhile, the working group in Mação decided not to wait for government action. At the beginning of 2004, the local government decided on the constitution of AfloMação, an owners' association of the municipality of Mação.



AfloMação aimed from the very beginning to establish the pre-conditions for better and faster implementation of the expected reforms that would be carried out by the national government and to promote the idea of associations among the owners. The demographic situation made an autonomous movement without clear guidance by the authorities impossible. Thus they decided to act themselves and not to wait for the national government, and the popular initiative.

By that time, during 2004, many areas of Portugal were also devastated by large fires. The timing was right and after several meetings, their ideas reached the right persons in the government.

Two years after the first proposals at the council of Mação, the Portuguese government finally approved a new law creating something similar to the "Nucleous" that Antonio had previously proposed: the Forest Intervention Zones (ZIF's).

At that time in Mação there were already almost two hundred owners willing to incorporate their properties in such innovative entities. The association AfloMação had done its work. Those owners held together more than 1.300 ha allocated in more than 1.600 parcels. The constitution of two ZIF's meant changing the situation into only two new forestry units of production. The fact that during the previous two years the association had been proposing to the owners an alternative quite similar to the one that was finally approved by the government was an important trigger.

Results

At the municipal level, there was a new and completely different strategy against the fire that created the sustainability of land management as the main objective. There was a new land management plan for Mação and many of its proposed actions to be implemented in private properties had been executed

without any opposition from the owners, such as the clearance of forests and improvement of rural infrastructure, etc.

The association AfloMação was constituted by the municipality to carry out the fundamental task of revitalising the owners and promote enrolment in the association. By the end of the process, only 31 management units would be responsible for the exploitation of 40.000 hectares, including some 80.000 parcels and more than 15.000 owners. Each one would have more than 1000 hectares.

Another important achievement was the strong partnership that was created between the municipal authorities and the owners. Although at national level the ZIF's were supposed to be executed through owner initiative, in this case the municipality assumed an important role justified by the population conditions (dwindling headcount, ageing, absenteeism etc.). The reaction of the owners in general and of the local inhabitants in particular were very positive.

At a national level many of the proposals made by Mação have pushed and/or inspired new instruments and policies. The new Law that regulates the ZIF's is a clear example, but also other actions in the fields of forest planning, fire fighting capacity etc. were also influenced.

During this time, a change of government caused a temporary disruption when the new authorities did not participate directly in the discussion process. Currently, the municipality of Mação is proposing to continue the ZIF's approach by considering their specific kind of ZIF as pilot projects in Portugal.

2.9 De Merode, Flanders (Belgium)

“DE MERODE, PRINCELY COUNTRYSIDE!”



Introduction

“De Merode” is a pilot project of regional and integrated rural development where different instruments will be applied with regard to a sustainable countryside.

The opportunity to take

In January 2004, the VLM had the opportunity, with the support of local partners (municipalities, nature associations, nature and forest administrations etc), to buy the 1.250 ha forest and 250 ha farmland of the noble family de Merode. The de Merode domain is a vast green area in the vicinity of densely populated areas and surrounded by large infrastructures. This acquisition gave the opportunity to start an integrated rural project to boost the natural, cultural and landscape quality of the region.

The decision to start a pilot project of integrated rural development in the area is mainly due to a number of important positive aspects. The Merode and its wide surroundings are characterised by the presence

of rich and diverse landscapes marked by vast forests and nature areas, of which parts have been incorporated in the Flemish ecological network and Natura 2000. There are a lot of historic and cultural heritage sites in the area. Examples of this are two important abbeys, Averbode and Tongerlo; the castle of the family de Merode at Westerlo; the basilica of Scherpenheuvel etc.

Farming activities here are incorporated and in balance with the original landscape more than in other regions of Flanders, with a clear relationship between the landscape and the historical agrarian activity.

Moreover, the area strongly distinguishes itself from its surroundings. It is delimited by pronounced urban and economic structures, like the economic network of the Albert Canal in the north and the Flemish urbanised area between Antwerp and Brussels. The important presence of relict landscapes and of historic and cultural monuments and small towns gives the area important tourist potential. The basis of the broad political support on several administrative levels for the development of an integrated rural project probably lies here. The Interreg IIIB project – LIFESCAPE your landscape - showed the possibilities to generate new pulses for regional and local economy by revaluing nature, landscape and cultural heritage in the area.

The problems

The first problem to tackle is the complexity of the web of interest groups and partners. The project area is situated on the territory of three provinces and six municipalities, and involves areas where private nature organisations and other groups have high interest. All these partners have their own responsibilities and tasks and a high level of independence in working. Thus, working on agreements is a key success factor.

The second central problem is the complexity of the project itself. Developing and realising integrated projects take time, while public support has the habit to decline when there are no quick tangible results. Moreover, there is not one single legal instrument to fit the broad spectrum of measures to take in the area.

Project partners together with the VLM found a solution in developing an approach which is broad in application and flexible in timing.

In search of innovations

After this acquisition in 2004, all the partners signed the Charter of "de Merode" in which they engaged to preserve the unity and to improve the accessibility of the region for the broad public. They recognised the basic values of the

Relevant data

Project name
de Merode

Location
Flanders, Belgium

Land use/landscape
forests and nature areas, agriculture, cultural elements.

Innovation
Integrated rural development using different instruments on different time tracks (e.g. quick wins)

History of the project
2004 January 28: permission for the acquisition of the domain.
2004 May 16: family programs to create overall public awareness
2005 November 30: sale of the properties to the partners
2006 January 25: Minister of rural development as chair of the steering committee de Merode
2006 June 19: start of the rural development project
2007 start of the execution of the project

Project size:
Total project area: approx. 25,000 ha

Costs:
Estimated investment is approx. 19,000,000 Euro

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area



area, such as sustainable agriculture, valuable nature and the rich natural and historical cultural landscape and engaged in taking optimal measures for the development of these values. Furthermore, all partners gathered in a steering committee to guard the general rules of the project and to ensure that individual actions fit in the general framework.

The steering committee, the local partners, the VLM, and the involved ministers then approved a set of “quick-wins”. These are small projects which can be realised in the short run without having to go through lengthy procedures. Eight of these quick wins also came out of an open call for ideas from the public. Examples are the embellishment of farmsteads and the creation of an educational trail for children.

On a second and longer track, legal procedures of land development, land development for nature and land banking started to complete some bigger actions with more physical impact, like the transformation of a monotonous spruce forest to a varied and open heath landscape with high nature values, accessible to the public.

On a third track, an integrated plan was drawn up in a collaborative way by the partners, in which nine strategic missions were developed, realised by a set of 26 sub projects. These range from nature development, water management, land consolidation, to actions of regional branding, organising social events and developing educational kits.

Results

In an early stage attention was paid to traditional legal instruments such as land development and land development for nature to get the project started. Later, new ways to protect the natural and cultural landscape, such as farming for nature, involving children through education and stimulating social projects were started to realise the deeper and broader scope of the integrated plan.

Results have already shown quick wins. De Merode is an experimental application of the tool-box idea where a wide range of actions are taken by a variety of instruments while working on different time tracks but fitting into a general vision. Here, much attention is paid to a bottom-up approach, which is believed to be a critical success factor to get things going in the region.

Nowadays, it is apparent that the projects' framework increasingly serves as a structuring agent for all sorts of actions and events in the region. The region starts to act as a whole and more importantly, starts to feel as a whole.



2.10 Public Private Partnership, Meerstad, Groningen (The Netherlands)

"HOUSING, GREEN AND BLUE IN A JOINT (AD)VENTURE"

Introduction

If you add up all the spatial functional needs in The Netherlands like traffic, industry, agriculture, public green, etc. there is a lack of space. Spatial actors nowadays are forced to cooperate in all possible ways. Public private partnerships (PPP) are an example of integrated cooperation and a rather new instrument for green areas. Meerstad is the first example of PPP on a large scale.

The problems

Until recently, urban development and 'rural' (or rather 'green environment') development in metropolitan areas have been planned 'back to back' by both Red and Green, with separate flows of money. Profits from urban development ended up in the pockets of private investors and the government was trying to guide this development in the landscape with little available money.

In addition, agricultural land prices around cities are booming. Only a small part of the price is determined by the agricultural value of land. The driving force in these areas is land as a speculative investment. That is the reason why farmers can sit and wait until a big buyer comes along and they are no longer willing to sell land at low prices for green purposes.



The private sector as a partner for green areas

Public partners realised that combining strengths with the private sector could pay off and solve the problem of speculation.

Making the assumption that a green surrounding results in a surplus value of houses leads to the question: why not use this surplus value for promoting the surroundings? This is where private actors and the need for spatial development strategy aimed at coalitions between stakeholders and shareholders comes in.

In 2005, the Dutch Government adopted a new National Spatial Strategy that creates more space for private initiatives and urban activities in rural areas. Coalitions with public and private partners had already existed in urban areas, but not yet in relation to the realisation of green.

The concept of PPP for green areas was tested in small pilot projects in estates while a philosophy and a process architecture was under development by DLG, Habiforum and private parties.

A PPP comprises long term cooperation from commencement of a project between public and private actors associated in a relatively high risk operation. The cooperation is registered by a contract or a joint venture regulating investments and risks.

The advantage of this construction is a better integration of spatial functions because the plans are developed irrespective of the initial property boundaries.

The input of land is effectuated at one fixed unit price to create a neutral playing ground for the starting search of the best project plan. Both private and public partners assign one representative to play the game. They start a process of designing and calculating, and every phase ends with a contract.

About 15 % of the green projects of DLG currently take place via PPP constructions. The expectation is that within the next few years 1/3 of the turnover will be determined by the private sector. PPP is even surrounded by a perception of trendiness while certainly not a panacea for every situation.



One of the disadvantages is the financial risk of investing at an early stage in realising blue or green functions that can only be compensated at a late stage by surplus value of houses.

Another consequence of PPP is that DLG, in order to enter and stay in negotiations for the realisation of the national ecological network, should actively participate as land owner to enhance its position.

First example at large scale

In Groningen there was a need for extension of housing capacity. A new lake (600 ha) surrounded by 10.000 new houses was foreseen embedded in a green area. At an early stage DLG and the public bodies decided to start a cooperation with municipalities, the province, the Ministry, water boards and private partners. It took two years to investigate the financial and legal feasibility of a joint exploitation. It resulted in a joint venture and master plan in 2005. Meerstad acts as a learning-by-doing pilot for PPP at large scale projects. In more densely urbanised areas the PPP will encounter higher land prices and a more complex administrative and managerial context.

Relevant data

Project name:

Meerstad

www.meerstad-groningen.com

Country:

The Netherlands, province of Groningen

Innovation:

Public private partnership for green areas

Status of the project:

Master plan & joint venture defined in 2005, finalised in 2026

Type of area:

2.340 ha, metropolitan landscape

Objective of development:

A new lake (600 ha) surrounded by 10.000 new houses, embedded in a nature area of 830 ha

Implementation bodies:

Province of Groningen, municipality of Groningen and Slochteren, water board Hunze and river Aa's, Ministry of Agriculture, AM Development company, Koop Holding, Heijmans IBC, Real estate developer and BPF Bouwinvest, DLG (Government Service for Land and Water Management)

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Flexible
Decentralised
Integrated
Agricultural area
Environmental sensitive area
Metropolitan area