



Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU)

Towards the development of agroecology in Europe

Deliverable report D4.3 – Action Agenda Report

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Executive summary

The Living Lab is a research methodology for identifying, prototyping, testing and refining complex solutions in real-life, multiple and evolving contexts. For this project three agroecological living laboratories (LLs) have been prototyped at different levels to develop action-research. This report summarises the two years' work carried out in three countries (the Netherlands, Italy and the UK) and focuses on the creation and development of the LLs at local, regional and national levels, and their similarities and differences. The report provides three examples of LLs that could be replicated in other EU countries.

The report includes six chapters: the Introduction, Experience of the project, LL in the Netherlands, in Italy and in the UK, and a Conclusion. Introduction provides definition, meaning of the LLs for agroecological development. The second chapter (Experience of LL for the project) describes the main points and activities used in each of the three LLs. Following three chapters describing each of those points applied in each of the three countries. The report ends with the Conclusions where lessons learned, supporting and hindering forces of the three experiences and action plan for creation of similar LLs are provided.

The Introduction highlighted on the one hand the value of agroecological LLs, and on the other hand, the different focus of the 3 LLs according to their scale. Indeed, LLs can contribute to the development and implementation of agroecology principles and practices in real life conditions, and contribute to better organisation of the further networks and interaction of different stakeholders beyond the farm scale.

In the second chapter 'Experience of the project', the background of the LLs is presented as well as the outcomes of the three workshops: the first meeting focused on the problem definition, the second on implementation, and the third on dissemination; a report is provided for each workshop. Moreover, the writing of a manifesto per country and the strengthening of the collaboration with authorities were two other essential results of the LLs. This chapter ends with an overview of the future perspectives and the expected impacts of the three LLs. Particularly, further activities of the LLs depend on their self-organisation, the context and the available funds to support it. Considering the three LLs as networks in real-life conditions, their impact should be understood as a transformative change depending on scale and context of each LL.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, the elements explained in the previous section are more detailed for each LL.

The conclusion chapter provides the lessons learned, the supporting and hindering forces for LL activities that were revealed during the project activity, a brief comparison based on the scale of the three LLs, and steps for creation of similar ones elsewhere.

1. Introduction

The Living Lab (LL) is a research methodology for identifying, prototyping, testing and refining complex solutions in real-life, multiple and evolving contexts. It is a methodology in which citizens, inhabitants and other stakeholders are considered key players in the action-research and innovation process. In Europe, the development of LLs has taken place since 2006 in the context of the Lisbon strategy to promote employment.

Agroecology as a science, gives priority to action research, holistic and participatory approaches, and transdisciplinarity that is inclusive of different knowledge systems (AEEU 2018). So, research communities should contribute to agroecological transition through co-creation process, innovative practices and new participatory approaches. LLs contribute to these processes. Currently, they have become a quite popular format to set up co-creation environments (Morelli et al. 2020). Thus, for an agroecological living labs (ALLs) agriculture production activities in urban and rural areas are not only valuable for their contribution to food production, but also for the ecological, social, cultural/spiritual and socio-economic values they offer. Relationships established with nature through ALLs restore ecological consciousness to the citizens and enable the formation and maintenance of socio-ecological memory (Barthel et al., 2010).

The scientists identify LLs as the territorial ecosystem where participants interact for the agroecological transition (Rapidel et al. 2019), ALL is both an approach and an arena for supporting experimentation in natural settings with a wide range of actors (Gamache et al. 2020), and as new research areas and phenomenon in which human ideas and needs, from a multi-actor and participatory perspective, are established as a starting point in innovation and transition towards new productive, governance, consuming and living models (Wibbelmann et al. 2013). Usually activities of LLs include creating, validating and testing new products, services, business ideas, markets and technologies in the real world (Garcia-Llorente et al. 2019). However, the three LLs created within the AE4EU project aimed to enhance territorial development and agroecological transition. This type of LLs falls into user-driven category of LLs, according to the four-fold typology provided by Schuurman et al. (2013), that implies a high level of participation of all stakeholders, a strong connection with the real-life contexts, and focus more on common benefits rather than on creating new products and services.

The European Network of Living labs (ENOLL) defines LLs as “user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings”. More specifically, ALLs are intended for practical development and implementation of agroecology principles and practices with a defined networks and interaction of different stakeholders beyond the farm scale. The important aspect is the direct relation as well as the co-creation of knowledge and co-conception of practices among the different types of actors.

LLs can play a significant role in strengthening the knowledge at the territory by increasing knowledge deriving from it also by improving users’ engagement in the process itself of creation and instantiating relationships among actors. A wide range of actors is considered as a key factor for the creation and development of LLs.

The focus of the 3 LLs in the AE4EU project, apart from creating and strengthening social relationships, differ by their spatial scale and countries. Thus, a national LL is focused on supporting agroecological movement in The Netherlands; a regional ALL is targeted in the Piedmont territory (Italy); and a local LL is intended as an example of the concept of urban ALLs in the UK. Several studies (De Witte et al. 2021, Tilley 2011) discuss cross-cultural differences in LLs created in the different countries. However, features of LLs created at different scales did not receive sufficient attention in studies. This practice-based report provides a description and a comparison of the main organisational and operational issues of the three LLs.

2. Experience of Living Labs for the project

2.1. Background of LL for each country

The objectives of each living lab are different: they are based on the national, regional and local context of each country. Main goal or goals of the living labs and a process of its selection are also included. Farmers and food producers are considered as the main participants and that is why they compose the majority of the LLs participants. However, policy makers and administrators are also considered as important stakeholders, whilst researchers play a role of facilitators for LL workshops and meetings.

2.2. Three workshops and their outcomes

The project methodology of developing living labs included the organisation of three workshops, three in each of the three countries. The first workshop was focused on the problem definition; the second workshop included implementation of the LL activities; and the third workshop aimed at dissemination of the LL experience. Dates of the workshops in each country are provided in Tab. A.

Table 1. The schedule of the LL workshops

Country	WS 1 “Problem definition”	WS2 “Implementation”	WS3 “Dissemination”
NL (national scale)	July 2021	October 2021	November 2021
IT (regional scale)	November 2021	July 2022	November 2022
UK (local scale)	February 2022	Planned in 2023	Planned in 2023

During the 1st Workshops, participants of the living lab got to know each other and worked on the “problem definition” or on the objectives of the living lab. Besides information concerning the concept of agroecology and its principles, the project activity was introduced to the participants during the workshop.

The 2nd Workshops aimed at implementation of LL activity and collaboration with national or regional authorities was also discussed. In certain cases, such as in the Italian LL, two preparatory meetings with researchers and farmers were carried out in order to improve a dialogue with policy makers.

The third workshop was focused on dissemination activity. Due to different levels of scale, the three LLs have different objectives such as encouraging participants to replicate this experience in other local territories or to engage new stakeholders.

After each workshop, reports with all the details (number and background of the participants, the workshop agenda, the main outcomes) were prepared and translated in English and are present in Annexes 1-3.

2.3. Manifesto of ALL

A Manifesto is described as a document widely used for political parties (Kavanagh 1981, Eder et al. 2017) or for declaration of self-existence (Badiou 1999). The ALL Manifesto is a document that combines the objectives of the LL with the shared values, the selected themes and agreed action of the participants. This document is important to discuss outcomes and for the new potential participants as well as for external stakeholders to understand the processes and content of the ALL.

The idea of a Manifesto in each of three living labs is in line with The Helsinki Manifesto (2006), which declared the need for new measures for “turning the Lisbon Strategy into a living reality and making Europe more competitive and innovative in a human-centric way”. Due to a different political connotation of the word “Manifesto” in several countries, each LL uses a specific name for this document.

2.4. Collaboration with the authorities

Collaboration of the living lab with authorities (policy makers, administrators, politicians, advisors etc.) directly depends on the scale of the living lab (at local, regional and national levels). Such collaboration is an important point, as it provides an impact in participatory approach to policy makers that identify the needs of the population and on members of the LL that finally do not delegate their voice but become active members of their community.

2.5. Outcomes, impacts and future perspectives

Creation and facilitation of the three agroecological living laboratories is part of the project activities. However, achieving stated goals, engagement of stakeholders, expected benefits and impact/change/transformation require a longer time frame rather than planned two years of the project tasks. Long-term maintenance of the living lab activities requires human resources (a person or an active group of the participants) that will organise meetings with LL participants and facilitate their discussions. Further activities of the living labs depend on their self-organisation, on the local context and on the available funds to support.

Generally, the classical impact assessment methods try to limit uncertainties by estimating the category indicators at the first stage in the cause-effect chain (Galanakis et al. 2020). Given a few impact studies of living labs existing in the current scientific literature (Ballon et al. 2017), there is no unique way for validating and assessing impact of the three living labs.

The three ALL function as networks in real-life conditions in order to achieve their objectives and to contribute to the selected problem-solving themes. Their impact should be perceived as the transformative change of the relationship inside the network, depending on the scale and context of each LL. This paragraph describes future perspectives and the transformative change of each LL expected at the end of the project.

2.6. Further activities of the pilot LLs

Each

3. LL in the Netherlands

3.1. Background

Agroecology is gaining increasing interest in the Netherlands. However, there are different perceptions of agroecology, ranging from incorporating agroecology principles in conventional farming systems to transformative changes to build a new food system based on participation, localness, fairness and justice. In recent years, isolated pioneering agroecology farmers who have the ambition to contribute to this transformation have joined forces in several networks like the Future Farmers and the CSA network. In 2019 this led to the creation of the National Federation of agroecology farmers. The Federation is a joint initiative from the NGO Future Farmers, the CSA network, Biological Dynamic Farmers and Vegan Farmers.

The ambition of the Federation is to stimulate the transition to agroecology in the Netherlands by supporting agroecological farmers, influencing policies and stimulating research and innovation that meets the requirements of agroecological farmers.

Under the umbrella of AE4EU, Wageningen Research (WR) and the Federation agreed to organise a series of living lab meetings to increase the visibility, developing a network of the “willing” including NGO’s and pioneering farmers, aligning with policy makers and research. A key topic is developing a joint problem definition and research, innovation and action agenda to stimulate agroecology.

The AE4EU National Dutch living lab objectives are to strengthen the agroecological movement and support the transition to an agroecological food system in the Netherlands. The strategy to reach these goals is (I) establishing and strengthening connections between practitioners, researchers and NGO’s, and (II) developing a plan to deal with the main challenges that agroecological farmers and movements are facing in the Netherlands. The network builds on the ambitions of and the work done by the Federation of Agroecological Farmers. The living lab meetings are organised by representatives of the Federation, researchers from WR, Transnational Institute (TNI) and representatives from NGOs. They stimulate participation of farmers, researchers, citizens, NGOs, students, educators and others interested in a stronger and more influential agroecology movement in the Netherlands.

3.2. The three workshops

The 1st Dutch LL workshop – 01.07.2021 was organised by the research group of the federation of agroecology farmers, the Wageningen Research, and an NGO (TNI). The focus was getting to know each other, collaborating to define research activities, priorities and follow up activities (action agenda). Thirty participants attended the workshop including agroecology farmers, researchers and NGOs interested in agroecology.



Figure 1. Participants of the 1st workshop in the Dutch living lab (Source: Report of the 1st WS in Dutch LL)

The 2nd Dutch LL workshop – October 2021 was organised with 60 participants including farmers, researchers and NGOs. The thematic groups active during the meeting were related to three topics, (I) knowledge for agroecology, (II) policies, (III) national and international movement building. In particular, the follow-up actions from the thematic group of knowledge for agroecology included development of an institute for agroecology aimed at mediating access to funds and research linked to agroecology, strengthening the network among agroecology farmers and researchers, and evaluation of regional demonstration agroecology farms (e.g., de Plaetse). While, the policy for agroecology thematic group developed three main follow up activities: (I) Addressing challenges to ministry and The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), (II) Accessing land and short lease contracts: creating campaigns and contacting big land owners, (III) Establishing an institute supporting solidarity economy and fair income.

The 3rd Dutch LL workshop – 11.11.2021, was organised on an agroecology farm with 6 agroecological farmers, 4 researchers and 7 policymakers. The focus was the exchange with the Ministry and RVO. The first discussed topic was the farmers’ access to land and the institutional and scientific support to farmers since Dutch research and innovation budgets are not linked to agroecology practices, and key performance indicators do not reflect agroecology practices. Related to this topic, other themes were raised, such as creating a participatory guarantee system, supporting regional demonstration/innovation farms with Boerenraad and supporting holistic and context-specific research. The other discussed topics were access to land and the regulations’ obstacles since regulations are considered too complicated and do not match agroecology practices (e.g., crop codes). Moreover, difficulties exist in getting permits for agroecology treated similarly to conventional farms. The main results so far of the Dutch living lab are (I) creation of a network among agroecology farmers, NGO’s and researchers, (II) concrete actions and follow up meetings, (III) increased visibility, (IV) exchange with policy makers, and (V) enthusiasm of the participants.

3.3. Manifesto

The Dutch Manifesto (due to a negative connotations of the word “Manifesto”, for the Dutch LL it has a title “Current working document”, Annex 4) was developed by the living lab group as a result of the three workshops presented in the previous section. This document contains two general and five specific objectives of the network as well as the LL pillars corresponding to the four thematic working groups (Knowledge for agroecology, Policy for agroecology, Land tenure rights, Commons and solidarity economy, Movement building). The four teams aim at strengthening the agroecological movement and supporting the transition to an agroecological food system in the Netherlands by, firstly, establishing connections between practitioners, researchers and NGO’s; and, secondly, developing a strategy to deal with the main challenges agroecological farmers and the agroecological movement in the Netherlands are facing. Furthermore, the five specific objectives developed during the living lab meetings and expressed in the Manifesto are:

- a. Increasing visibility of Agroecology and the principles of the Federation of agroecology farmers
- b. Connecting separated actors: farmers and their networks, researchers, policy makers and NGO’s in an Agroecology network
- c. Developing network of the “willing” including agroecology pioneers and other farmers
- d. Building Trust
- e. Defining joint problem, research and action agenda to stimulate Agroecology.

These objectives were analysed and taken into consideration by the four thematic working groups proposing and starting activities that are published in the Manifesto.

The land tenure rights have proposed the following steps: commons and solidarity economy group are (I) developing campaigns for land tenure right and commons, (II) sharing of good land tenure contracts, good commons practices, sharing of good practices of solidarity economy, and (III) supporting participatory guarantee systems (PGS’s). On the other hand, the team related to movement building discussed the following actions: (I) to increase visibility of agroecology movement representing interests of peasant farmers, nature, citizens and international solidarity, (II) to connect and cooperate with other emancipatory movement for social ecological sustainability, and (III) to increase representation of farmers of all colours, genders, abilities in agroecology movement.

Finally, the last section of the Manifesto presents the principles for developing knowledge and innovation through cooperation among farmers, researchers and NGOs. Indeed, an important objective of the network is to contribute to the development of knowledge and innovation in agroecology leading to the transformation of the Dutch agricultural and food system. In order to facilitate the collaboration between farmers, researchers and NGOs the following principles were formulated.

1. Co-creation: full equality in participation and valuing of farmers and their knowledge in designing and executing research and defining potential solutions. (Also, active participation in policy processes of setting up research agenda).
2. Reciprocity: Equal valuation of farmers' knowledge compared to scientific knowledge.
3. Respecting diversity: Take diversity between farmers and their needs as a starting point for research and innovation.
4. Strengthening autonomy and sustainability of practices: Use of local knowledge and resources.
5. Free access to knowledge: Results of research and innovation should be open source, available to everyone.

3.4. Collaboration with the authorities

In the Netherlands, an increasing number of initiatives at different levels (local, regional, national, international) have the ambition to influence policies so that it supports the transition to agroecology. Many of these initiatives are not connected at the moment which limits their impact. There is also a risk that agroecology is considered and promoted as a technical application/innovation in current farming systems focusing on resource use efficiency and a prominent role for agribusiness instead of the wider. Instead, the agroecology living lab stands for a holistic view of agroecology which includes social and political issues and the transition to just and fair locally embedded food systems. In the first workshop, the LL explored how policies can be influenced by strengthening collaboration between different types of actors and the possibilities to organise a series of exchanges with policy makers and politicians were analysed. In the second workshop, the policy for agroecology working group developed a plan with four actions: (I) exchanging frequently with ministry of agriculture and RVO to address agroecological farmers's challenges and to adjust regulations that hinder the further development of agroecology; (II) stressing the need for transformative agroecology, instead of agroecology promoted as a technical application in current farming systems; (III) directing policy support to agroecology rather than to conventional agriculture; and (IV) supporting short chain initiatives from farmers and citizens.

A first important result of these policy actions is the third LL workshop where seven policymakers participated. The focus was the exchange with the Ministry and RVO and the most relevant discussed topic was the access to and the support from policy and research since not only Dutch research and innovation budgets are not linked to agroecology practices, but also key performance indicators do not reflect agroecology practices. Related to this topic, other themes were raised, such as creating a participatory guarantee system, supporting regional demonstration/innovation farms with Boerenraad and supporting holistic and context-specific research.

3.5. Future perspectives and expected transformative change of the Dutch LL

The purposes of the Dutch LL are very ambitious; therefore, the network envisions a long-term path to accomplish them. The plan is to meet four times a year to strengthen the sharing and development of transformative activities, and to involve more stakeholders through an adequate communication strategy. Particularly, the Agroecological Knowledge Exchange Hub created within the AE4EU project is an important digital tool available for the LL to disseminate actions and results.

The expected political transformative change is the decision to further advance policy for access to land and agroecology by organising other meetings with policy makers. Through these exchanges, policy makers should meet the farmers on the farm to know the realities of agroecological farmers and understand their need for political support. Other expected transformative changes arising from the two years of the LL are (i) increased visibility of agroecological farmers movement due to political awareness and increased awareness of the consumers about agroecology due to the communication strategy.

3.6. Further activities of the Dutch LL

Meeting with Green Farmers organizations and ministry of agriculture was organised in February 2023. Fifteen participants from the ministry and ten representing green farmers organizations and research were present. In this meeting, challenges and obstacles in funding for research and innovation for green farmers were discussed. The conclusion was that more attention should be given to system change, and connecting research and practice. The relation should become more equal and farmers should be acknowledged as actors with valuable knowledge. More attention and support should be given to frontrunners, like smaller AE farmers and to area-based developments. It was considered a valuable meeting and agreed to continue exchange.

Meeting on the LL Strategy governance structure of AE LL and actions was organised in March 2023 in order to discuss following: (i) four strategies of the Dutch LL (push, build, grow and break); (ii) change of the Dutch agricultural and food system, (iii) value of all strategies and how they should strengthen each other; (iv) governance structure: core team meeting on a monthly basis. Farmers organizations, NGO's and research all have their representative in the core team. New working groups will be established responsible for specific tasks like communication. The existing thematic working groups will continue their activities.

Meeting on the strategies for change was carried out in May 2023 with featuring session: What will the Netherlands look like when the future will be Agroecology. One of the co-builders of Via Campesina shared his insights for building a bottom-up organization. His lessons included:

- Take the lead yourself as farmers organizations. Don't let external organizations take over control.
- What is special about the AE movement: Food, Climate, Agricultural movements can have different contradictory orientations; what is fair for one movement can be less fair for another. What is hopeful is that these movements are now connected.
- Whether the structure of the collaboration is a network, movement or coalition depends on the objectives and starting situation. The type of structure of the organization should fit the activities.
- Building a broad platform is trial and error

In this meeting the different strategies were shared. Priority was given to develop a long-term attractive vision with visuals

In October 2023 meeting of the AE Working Group Research was organised were participants agreed on the following:

- Strengthened collaboration in the AE research group with focus on the participatory research addressing practical and strategic issues of Agroecology (farmers, movement)
- Preparation of a document describing why it is important to have a specific research group for agroecology and how to do research and collaborate with farmers/NGOs.
- Making Agroecology research group more visible as an identity.

Besides, there was organised participation of the Dutch LL in the Climate March (in November 2023), and in the strategy day focusing on structure for continuation (in December 2023).

The participants decided to continue with four yearly meetings and monthly meetings of the core team. The participants appointed cart-pullers for specific tasks like a festival in autumn 2024, an appealing narrative, and alliance building with other farmers 'networks.

4. LL in Italy

4.1. Background

The Italian LL was organised in a Monviso valley, the Val Varaita, in the Province of Cuneo, Region of Piedmont. In this context and in link with agroecology the main goals of this living labs is:

- (I) the creation of a LL model that can be replicated in other Italian and European valleys;
- (II) the recognition and valorization of the biocultural diversity of mountain areas, and
- (III) the fertile territory of Val Varaita with movement of (young) people re-populating the valley through sustainable agriculture and related activities.

The stakeholder's engagement into the living lab activities included the following activities:

- A preliminary meeting with producers and food processors rooted in the territory;
- A meeting with the representatives of local authorities;
- The PhD research (2021-2022) by Chiara Bassignana (a member of the UNISG Agroecology group) carried out in Val Varaita, provided materials and contacts for the LL.

Need in enhancing the local territorial development and in enabling local food sovereignty are the main stakeholders' motivations to participate in the Italian LL.

The preliminary meeting with the producers – 20.05.2021 was organised with representatives of CSA (CRESCO4), of a collective garden (Milpa), producers of local beer (Antagonisti5), and the UNISG researchers (Agroecology group of UNISG). The meeting allowed to define the list of potential LL participants and potential themes of the LL.

After the first preliminary meeting, potential participants of the LL were asked to rank several themes/objectives through a disseminated online questionnaire. Based on the results of the questionnaire, four themes/objectives were selected for further discussion:

- Creation of food district in the valley;
- Relational Economics;
- Tourism in Low season;
- Food Sovereignty and land access

Then was organised a first meeting with the representatives of local authorities – 20.10.2021, participated 6 out of 11 representatives of municipalities of the Mountain Union6. We presented them the project, the methodology and the ALL initiatives. They showed their interest and willingness to participate.

⁴ <https://noisiamocresco.it/>

⁵ <https://antagonistimelle.com/>

⁶ <http://www.unionevallevaraita.it/>

4.2. The three workshops

The 1st LL Workshop was held in the municipality of Venasca on November 26 2021 with 30 participants including farmers, food producers, citizens and advisors (Fig. 1). In order to facilitate a dialogue with LL participants during the LL workshop, a methodology and facilitation process employed maieutics method⁷ and action learning. The methodology was developed in collaboration with the association Il Limone Lunare⁸, based in Genova, that develops creativity for social inclusion. The workshop’s objective was to strengthen the network among producers, policymakers and researchers, thereby identifying the needs for agroecological innovation and developing action strategies.



Figure 2. Participants of the 1st workshop in the Italian living lab (Source: Report of the 1st WS in Italian LL)

The 2nd LL workshop was organised in Melle (province of Cuneo, Piedmont, Italy) on July 8, 2022 as one of the activities of the Micro festival “Rediscovering our lost lands”. Combination of both these events allowed 40 participants in the workshop. The Workshop included following activities; a short presentation of the project AE4EU, a brief discussion with the representative of the local authorities, collective reading of Manifesto, brief maieutic activities, collective signature of Manifesto and further discussions.

Il Limone Lunare, was responsible for the design of the Manifesto, for printing the distributed materials and for a contribution to the constructive dialogue between academia and the farmers. All the workshop participants have received copies of Manifesto in order to read it together. As the main result of the Workshop, all participants signed the Manifesto (Annex 5).

The next part of the workshop was a presentation of agroecology with further discussion on how to develop agroecological practices in the valley. One of the important actions of the living lab was the presentation of one of representatives of local authorities concerning opening a “front office” for further counselling activities and bureaucratic assistance to the producers to explore access to regional/EU funds.

The 3rd Workshop was carried out at the end of November 2022 in Brossasco (province of Cuneo, Piedmont region, Italy). Due to appropriate communication - prepared and distributed flyers and posts in social media -, 48 people with different backgrounds (students, farmers, advisors, administrators and politicians) from nearby valleys have participated in the Workshop.

⁷ The maieutic approach facilitates learning and deep thinking, making space for what we already know (Walker & Bayles 2016)

⁸ <https://www.illimonelunare.it/>

The main objective of the Workshop was dissemination of the LL experience, that is why the agenda of the Workshop included the following activities: introducing agroecology and its principles, the project activity and LL experience, 4 thematic tables (Soil health, Sustainable Tourism, Food sovereignty and land access, Relational Economics for food value chains and Bio-districts) with 2 questions for discussion (Which aspects need research activity? Which policies can be useful to realise these themes?) and networking activities. The workshop ended with aperitivo where food and drinks from local producers were provided, thereby allowing participants from different valleys to know each other.



Figure 3. Education activity of the 3rd Workshop in the Italian living lab

The workshop raised a great interest of participants and their willingness to participate in further similar thematic events. The workshop revealed the fact that participants had no clear understanding of practical benefits of the research. Therefore, participants' responses were limited, and more suggestions of the stakeholders were expressed for policy rather than for research needs. Suggestions for future research and for policies are context-specific and differ depending on each theme discussed. All suggestions for future policies could be divided into two main groups: (i) general, or suggestions to increased efficiency of the policies: coordination, dissemination activities, organisation, participation; (ii) thematic, or suggestions related to specific issues (themes) that should be addressed: for example, soil fertilisation without manure, or subsidies for more efficient practices.

All mentioned best practices included aspects that are common for all four thematic tables: communication, creation of relationships, inclusion, collaboration/ shared activities, education activities.

Participants of the table “Low-season tourism” did not provide aspects for further research and innovation, but discussed the necessity for more political coordination and creating a tourist desk. The following good practices were mentioned in this table such as organisation and participation in the local markets, development of the communication strategies and administration support.

Participants of the table “Relational economy for food chains and bio-district” expressed the need for research and innovation strategies including: definition and quantification of ecosystem services; creation of experimental field, research of products, raw materials, research of the local and traditional methods of production; improvement of communication and transports; and research of shared values and needs

between producers and consumer. In this table, two topics crossed over between politics and research: marketing research and the capacity to use the French experience concerning local supply chains.

The listed needs in the political measures included: involvement of the producers and researchers in the budget planning; enlargement of the pool of the Green Community, including farmers, consumers and schools; simplifying the bureaucracy for the small producers; development of a good communication strategy, to put price limits for the local products such as chestnuts; using empty space as shared stores for the producers; organisation of meetings and exchange/sharing; simplifying norms on shared equipment /common spaces; and setting incentives for promotion market of the local products.

The good practices for this table are: organisation of local markets, sales and buying groups, meetings of the local producers, communication activities, short food chains, networks, days of shared work, 'Therapeutic activities' based on working outside, education on food production methods, CSA and cooperatives of small producers.

Outcomes of the table "Land access and food sovereignty" contained several very specific requests including the following:

- research should focus on the necessity to develop a territorial map defining the ownership of lands (private, municipal, etc); and needs of the EU Common Agricultural Policy to be adapted to mountain conditions and needs.
- politics should solve offshore pastures (they monopolise potentially arable lands) and, secondly, land fragmentation.

As for the best practices related to land access, the role of land associations is to bring together the fragmented lands for simplified land management. It is not a sufficient measure to facilitate contracts and access to land, but it is important to request at the municipality an access for available municipal land. Concerning good practices of food sovereignty, there were mentioned the following activities: collecting water basins for the water problem; accessible goods with food prices associated with cultural awareness about quality/quantity of water for the food; market access for the diffusion of products of the network; and learning food sovereignty at schools.

The outcomes regarding research and innovation of the "Soil" table were the demands for researching soil fertilisation without manure in the field, studying and evaluating outgoing biodigestion, and evaluating bio intensive methods. In terms of political measures, subsidies for good practices and taxes for bad practices. Furthermore, suggestions varied from the needs for specific measures for small enterprises (their settlement and maintenance), food education policies, educational and dissemination activities, to supporting policies for virtual and real networks (buying groups), and communication policies.

4.3. Manifesto

Before the 2nd Workshop, the Manifesto was drafted by the UNISG group in English, and its Italian version was shared with the LL participants in order to collect their feedback. After approval by all participants, the Manifesto was printed with the artistic settlement, distributed between the participants and signed by all of them (Annex 5).

The Manifesto of the Italian living lab is a short document that contains a common vision of the living lab participants regarding the development of the valley, and two main objectives (the four themes were merged into two) for future development selected and elaborated during the previous project LL activities (themes): Relational economics and tourism in low seasons; and Food sovereignty and access to land.

According to the Manifesto, the main objectives of the LL are the following:

- to create and maintain the relationships based on tangible and intangible values;

- to activate processes that can draw on existing good practices and create new ones;
- always to keep in mind the concreteness of the real life of those who participate, in order to formulate clear and shared objectives;
- to work with politicians at local and regional level to alleviate bureaucratic procedures.

The original text of Manifesto can be found here: <https://www.unisg.it/assets/Manifesto-LL-photo.pdf>

During the 3rd Workshop the participants read together the text of Manifesto; they were exposed with its digital version in order to create a similar document in the future living labs.

4.4. Collaboration with the authorities

Given the regional context of the Italian living lab, it collaborates with the regional authorities, namely with representatives of the municipalities, political advisors and mayors of the towns. This collaboration was initiated at the beginning of the LL activities and facilitated by the researchers. One of the important points in the collaboration was a preparatory meeting with participation of researchers, farmers from the LL, local and regional policy makers. This meeting allowed to demonstrate the activity of the AE4EU project including current activity of the LL, to listen to its participants and their proposals for future territorial development.

Furthermore, representatives of the authorities participated in the 2nd LL Workshop and signed the Manifesto. During the workshop they provided a proposal in order to meet the farmers' requests, namely a proposal of a Front Office to give information and bureaucratic support for access to the regional funds.

Further collaboration between farmers and policy makers included farmers' participation in meeting "Green Community9" in October 2022, where the budget of 9 future directions was discussed in 9 round tables. This meeting revealed the fact that an efficient collaboration between farmers and authorities should be based on farmers' participation into future financial planning. Finally, representatives of the local authorities participated in the 3rd LL Workshop, where ideas of different stakeholders in 4 round tables were discussed.

4.5. Future perspectives and expected transformative change of the Italian LL

As far as achieving the objectives mentioned in Manifesto requires a long time, activity of the Italian living lab will be continued after the projects' end. Participants are very interested in future living lab activity and particularly in their further collaboration with the local authorities. Facilitation of the living lab will be funded by other international projects. Further activity of the living lab will include regular (monthly) meetings and use of digital tools including Agroecological Knowledge Exchange Hub and shared space for electronic information.

An expected transformative changes of the Italian LL activity will be expressed in (i) the future collaboration with the authorities, that will allow to enhance access to funds allocated for territorial development, and to bridge decision making process with realities of the mountain rural areas; (ii) collaborative activity of the young farmers - participants of the LL, that provides strategic thinking of the long-term territorial development; (iii) disseminating of principles of agroecology and engaging more people interested in agroecology, that is a result of several education activities; (iv) provided informational support to all LL participants through a communication channel (WhatsApp group) and (v) better understanding of the farmers needs for the researchers.

⁹ <https://www.parcomonviso.eu/news/554/a-saluzzo-progettare-insieme-la-green-community>

4.6. Further activities of the Italian LL

During 2023, activity of the Italian LL was targeted at creating a new farmers' market. To do so, regular monthly meetings were carried out with the most active LL participants. As a result, 3 farmers' and artisanal markets were organised in Varaita valley in August, September and December 2023.

On the 24th of August, the first Farmer and Artisanal Market in Val Varaita (province of Cuneo, Piedmont) met its consumers. The market of the local food producers was organized by the Agroecological Living Lab of Val Varaita in collaboration with the agroecology group of the University of Gastronomic Science (Pollenzo). The Market was one of the tangible outcomes of the Italian Agroecological Living Lab that was created within the AE4EU project.

All local food producers of the Market applied and used the agroecological principles. Thus, the consumers could buy and taste agroecological food products. Sixteen stands have participated in the Market with organic fruits and vegetables, sourdough bread, flours and legumes, meant from a short food supply chain of wild-breeded animals, beers, wines and ciders, and mountain honey as well. The consumers had pizza, aperitivo, drinks and a lot of fun from direct dialogue with the producers! Conception of the market was successfully repeated in September, thereby providing mutual benefits for the local producers as for the consumers.

After both these markets in 2023, the active group of the LL decided to continue the self-organisation of this local market channel to sell their products in the valley and increase the visibility of their businesses among the valley's citizens.

Therefore, they carried on with organising monthly meetings in order to create an 2024 edition of the market from May to September (being the agricultural productive months in this mountain valley). In order to organize this, the group of 15 producers created operational groups with different tasks: bureaucratic issues, creation of guidelines of the Market, communication to the producers, organisation of an 'aperitivo', accountability management of the market, organization of the logistics, dissemination the event in (i) social media, (ii) local and regional journals, and (iii) locally through the creation and distribution of flyers.

Due to this collaboration, the farmers of the living lab gained more awareness on the real objective of the market: a political action to affirm the essential role of agroecological transition in the agrofood system to create a food production chain that is sustainable for the future generations, particularly for the young people willing to live and produce food in the currently underpopulated mountain valleys.

Another new activity of the LL was collaboration with the HUMUS1 project funded by H2020 and focused on soil health. Particularly, after meetings and interviews with LL participants in 2023, it was decided to bring the living lab actions and dialogues on soil at a regional level. Consequently, in 2024, both farmers and municipal policy makers of the valley will be involved in a regional discussion on soil health that will be carried out in the 2 workshops organised by the UNISG team. The objectives of the workshop include further improvement the dialogue between the LL participants and local and regional authorities, raising awareness of good soil health practices among all stakeholders. The main result of the HUMUS activities will be the creation of a manifesto for soil health in the valley and potentially in the region.

¹ <https://humus-project.eu/>

5. LL in England (UK)

5.1. Background

In 2019, Coventry University purchased the 9-hectare Ryton Organic Gardens site, five miles southeast of Coventry city. The decision to purchase was preceded by several years of creative discussion on the need for outdoor living laboratories by researchers in the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) that had been a tenant at the site since 2014. There were other important stakeholders in place at the site including Warwickshire Local Food CIC which operates 5 Acre Community Farm.

The Ryton site has multiple functions, including being a LL. The living lab for challenge-led research on food, farming, water and sustainability from across CU, is focused on the following:

- Continuation and long-term security as a resource for externally funded projects which have the Ryton site written into their grant agreements – using the research facilities, greenhouses, experimental field sites, and indoor laboratories. All focus on Ryton’s unique position as an organic certified agroecological site of world-leading excellence.
- Further integrated, transdisciplinary, scalable research on: agroecological food production, hydrology and water management, social and therapeutic horticulture, fundamental processes and resilience, sustainable drainage, and sustainability aspects of materials, buildings, architecture, energy, engineering, health, design, peace & trust building, etc.
- Supported by state-of-the art indoor/outdoor facilities and linked to other living labs (e.g. European Network of Living Labs, ENOLL) and research networks.

Universities are also charities under UK law and therefore the continued use of the site in line with Garden Organic’s memorandum could be guaranteed. Examples are the continued certification of the land as ‘organic’, ‘protection of the wildlife and biodiversity on site’, ‘research for the purpose of organic horticulture and agriculture’, public access to the land, and use for educational purposes. This is mentioned here as all charitable aims are also akin to the ALLs now being developed. They are in accordance with the original memorandum going back to the founder of Garden Organic, Lawrence Hills, and the pioneering ideas around citizen science, and on-site practical experimentation and research in horticulture.

In addition to Coventry University and Garden Organic, other stakeholders including CU Social Enterprise (CUSE) and South Warwickshire Local Food CIC, are also based on the Ryton site. They are included in the ALL development. List of the stakeholders is provided in Table X.

The Governance structure will be led by a senior Coventry University academic with a farming licence to run the site as a commercial professional enterprise according to the legal and financial obligations a farm requires under UK law and its certification organic/agroecological production. In addition, there will be a dedicated full time site manager with long-term professional organic and horticultural knowledge, directly reporting to the academic lead of the unit. A ‘Ryton Advisory Council’ will be established consisting of all site users and members of the living lab. The Council’s role is advisory; it will not be burdened with legal responsibility. This remains with Coventry University.

Table 2. List of participants of the ALL

Type of participants	Name of organisations	Links
	Coventry University-CAWR	www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/agroecology-water-resilience
	Community Supported Agriculture Farm ‘5 Acre’	www.fiveacrefarm.org.uk

Key partners	Research charity Garden Organic	www.gardenorganic.org.uk
	UK Heritage Seed Library	www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/the-heritage-seed-library
	BEST In Horticulture Limited	www.bestinhorticulture.co.uk/rhs-exams-at-ryton
	Foleshill Social Supermarket	www.coventry.gov.uk/directory-record/57895/social-supermarket-at-foleshill-community-centre
	Fab Lab Coventry	https://fablabcov.coventry.ac.uk
	Coventry City of Culture, Feeding Coventry	www.sustainweb.org/foodpower/map/feeding_coventry https://letstalk.coventry.gov.uk/feeding-coventry
Further partners (research and agriculture)	Organic Growers Alliance – network of organic growers	https://organicgrowersalliance.co.uk
	Landworkers Alliance (LWA) - union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of our members and create a better food and land-use system for everyone	https://landworkersalliance.org.uk
	Farm Start - involves classroom training covering the key topics for commercial scale organic growing and on farm practical experience.	https://kindling.org.uk/farmstart
	OFRC - UK's leading independent research centre for the development of organic/agroecological food production and land management solutions to key global issues including climate change, soil and biodiversity conservation, and food security	www.organicresearchcentre.com
	Innovative Farmers - network of farmers and growers who are running on-farm trials, on their own terms	www.innovativefarmers.org
	FarmED – aims to accelerate the transition towards regenerative farming and sustainable food systems by providing inspirational education, innovative research, practitioner-led knowledge exchange and personal development opportunities	www.farm-ed.co.uk
Further partners (society and farming)	CSA Network UK - is working solely to promote CSA - community supported agriculture - across the UK.	https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk
	Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) - want to see a living, working countryside where land is valued as a way to enhance the good of community, countryside and the natural world. Revitalising rural economies, new entrants are supported into agriculture by making access to land a reality for all.	https://ecologicaland.coop

	Soil Association – organic farming charity working across the spectrum of human health, the environment and animal welfare.	www.soilassociation.org
	Permaculture Association - is working to radically and positively change the way we live in the UK and actively supports a worldwide movement by educating, networking, supporting and redesigning all aspects of our daily lives to transform ourselves, our communities and our landscapes.	www.permaculture.org.uk
	Social Farms and Gardens - a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together.	www.farmgarden.org.uk
	Ruskin Mill Land Trust -we help create lively centres for special needs education, arts and culture, festivals, social enterprise and community. As well as buildings we help protect the landscape, with woodlands, farms, market gardens and a fish farm that is reputed to be the oldest in the country, all looked after through holistic, biodynamic agriculture	www.rmlt.org.uk
	New Economics Foundation - works with people igniting change from below and combines this with rigorous research to fight for change at the top	https://neweconomics.org

5.2. The three workshops

A preparatory workshop was held to develop the business plan and manifesto. Its outputs are documented in a 65-page business plan with confidential financial data. The full business plan is available on request.

Following the preparatory workshop to develop the business plan, major changes had to be made as the business plan was put on hold and some parts (use of buildings and labs) parked for some time and not enacted. Buildings intended for the expansion of the Agroecological Living Lab are now earmarked for use as alternative temporary University office space and are not available for the next 5 year period. Therefore, it was necessary for the living lab to make adjustments and focus on parts of the vision where access to the site is possible e.g. the cooperation with Ryton site users CSA 5 Acre Farm, Garden Organic, Heritage Seed Library and BEST in Horticulture, and the link to urban and peri-urban areas in Coventry, Warwickshire and the Midlands of England.



Figure 4. Discussion of vegetable and fruit growing at Ryton site, CSA ‘5 Acre’ during a visit of ISARA researchers (Spring 2022)

The first UK LL Workshop was in February 2022 at the Foleshill Community Centre, and it was organised as a local meal with stakeholders including Coventry Food Network, Support for Foleshill, Feeding Coventry/Social Supermarket, Researchers, Students, Foleshill Schools, 5-Acre Community Farm, Coventry City Council, Friday Gardening group and Foleshill Health Centre.

In the first workshop the Coventry team explored the potential for a local LL to benefit an area of Coventry city called Foleshill with some of the Ryton stakeholders. The ‘Benefits of Local’ recognised by the English team are the stakeholders’ physical proximity that facilitates in-person meetings and activities, the possibility for a local LL to be very specific to the needs of the community, and, since local networks already exist, a new LL can tap into these relationships. Finally, if this LL is successful, its creation process can be replicated in other small communities.

The objective of the first LL workshop was to develop a process of co-creation; therefore, the meeting created a safe space for local people and groups to think about what they want and need for Foleshill. The ‘aim’ was listening to the area’s experts, understanding what exists and what is missing, and facilitating stakeholders in establishing an objective for the LL with design of follow-up activities.

The first outcome of the first workshop was an understanding of the comprehensive and ambitious character business plan developed during the preparatory workshop, thus it could not meet all the stakeholders needs.

The second outcome of the first workshop was that for Coventry and especially the district of Foleshill, the issues of health and food sovereignty, food poverty are much more important. This is particularly the case for public health, mental health, social supermarkets, food banks and food poverty and the general cost-of-living crisis which make many citizens of Coventry struggle with their daily food supply, increasing mental health issues.

The third main outcome of the first workshop was a creation of the network despite a challenging period for its many participants. This living lab network and support structures are a flexible web of personal engagement, SMEs, social enterprises and staff from Coventry Council to make urban agroecology a realistic coping strategy with the external food and health pressures. The urban/peri-urban agroecology living lab is evolving from this and several further workshops are planned.

The fourth main outcome of the first workshop was that food is a link for all these wider issues with poverty in Coventry and food growing locally and food processing and storage can at least make a contribution in the fight against poverty.

Now a **second workshop** with the subject of agroecological growing in Coventry city centre ‘The Pod10’, starting week 20th of February 2023 is forthcoming. Within 2023 are planned at least two further dissemination workshops, and in addition, more site walks/workshop type activities, however this depends on the interest of stakeholders in the living lab.

The second implementation workshop focuses on skills and knowledge mapping and exchanging existing knowledge. The CU team has prepared a specific focus on climate change and adaptation of growing systems in the urban and peri-urban settings. This was initially on grafting of fruit trees to rootstocks adapted to climate change (e.g. drought, salinity can be issues within a 30 year time horizon) equally flooding. For some decades commercial fruit trees e.g. apples were planted on slow-growing rootstocks with shallow roots and in need of higher irrigation and fertiliser supply (e.g. East Malling, Kent, UK rootstocks M9 and M26). These are however unsuitable for urban settings and organic growing as their root growth is too weak to reach water and nutrients in deeper soil layers, which in urban settings are also often compacted and root space restricted. For all these reasons different rootstocks are required.

However, following discussion with stakeholders, we found that grafting as a technique has already been done in previous workshops and for this reason we have decided not to focus on this and instead examine **Perennial crops** and **Asian vegetables** (or both combined perennial Asian vegetables). Perennial vegetables (e.g. perennial kale, artichokes, asparagus, soft fruit) are in contrast to annual vegetables. Perennials do not require yearly soil cultivation. In general, they can grow for longer, build larger root systems and the soil requires minimal or no tillage - all advantages for climate change adaptation with higher tolerance to dry spells and no or very little requirement for fertiliser inputs, not even for fertilisers approved in organic agriculture.

This work is done within an urban and peri-urban food growing and gardening environment which includes private and community gardening and storage activities, small-scale starter farms, market gardens, community supported agriculture and private commercial horticultural farms. At the workshop we get all growers in and the association of allotments around a table and finalise the living lab case study collection. The urban agroecological living lab includes growing trails at several sites (4-5) with a focus on Perennial and Asian vegetables.

The Ryton site where Coventry University’s Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience is based will be one of the sites and this can include several of the site users: Coventry University¹¹ itself, the Community Supported Agriculture 5 Acre Farm, the research charity Garden Organic¹², the UK Heritage Seed Library¹³ and ‘BEST In Horticulture Limited¹⁴’ with their centre at Ryton for training.

This is managed by the Living Lab coordinator and the recording of data is done with the assistance of the coordinator, but can also be done by growers themselves. If growers also want to study further crops like beans, soft fruit and amaranth this will be supported by the ALL, too. This information will be collected in the pilot phase of the ALL in 2023 and can include: water use; yield; germination rate; losses through pest and disease occurrence, weed pressure; inputs used (e.g. fertilisers, pest control - either certified organic or not, both systems are studied).

The Asian vegetable theme builds Sally Cunningham’s work on the Sowing New Seeds project of Garden Organic. The ALL team has a long working relationship with her. Cunningham’s book details over 40 fruit and vegetables grown on the Indian subcontinent, with different varieties, their nutritional value and cultivation know-how in the UK’s mild maritime climate and especially in urban settings with their ‘heat-island’ effect¹⁵. The ALL will develop this further and specifically combine it with the theme of perennial vegetables of Martin Crawford¹⁶ and the needs of urban and peri-urban growing in UK’s multi-ethnic urban areas in the Midlands like Coventry, Birmingham or Leicester.

¹⁰ www.coventry.gov.uk/pod-1/pod

¹¹ www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/agroecology-water-resilience

¹² www.gardenorganic.org.uk

¹³ www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/the-heritage-seed-library

¹⁴ www.bestinhorticulture.co.uk/rhs-exams-at-ryton

¹⁵ www.gardenmediaguild.co.uk/guild-members/directory/profile/Sally-Cunningham/78

¹⁶ www.agroforestry.co.uk/about-us-research

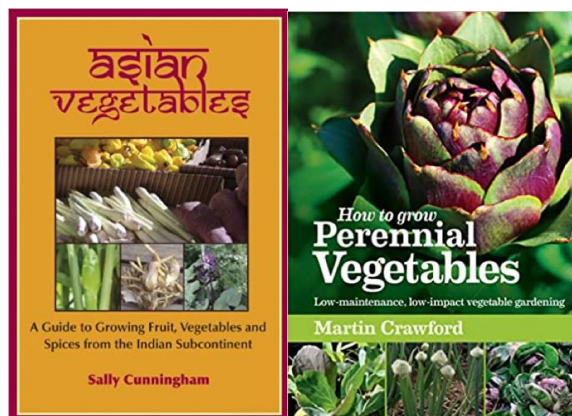


Figure 5. Asian vegetables and perennial vegetables (both books available on e.g. amazon.co.uk)

The work is done in close co-operation with another EU funded RISE17 project studying agroecological transitions on a territorial food systems level (ATTER18). While ATTER focuses on a food system level, AE4EU, agroecological living lab has a practical agroecological crop growing focus, both are therefore complementary. The ATTER focus has allowed the AE4EU ALL to focus more on Gliessman Levels 1-4, while ATTER covers 4-5, together they provide a more comprehensive picture.

5.3. Manifesto

The Vision: research excellence in a healthy environment

The vision for the site is an internationally esteemed, LL and hub for high impact, transdisciplinary research, education and enterprise in a decarbonised circular economy

An agroecological beacon of low impact production and consumption integrated into an active, viable and vibrant network of food citizens: consumers, producers and researchers committed to agroecology and food sovereignty also in the urban / peri-urban space.

Ultimately, a mosaic of agroecological farms and food processing enterprises, supported by regenerative water systems, will ensure more resilient and ecological food systems for rural and urban areas - putting healthy food, healthy people and a healthy planet centre stage.

The Ethos – One Planet Living

“Imagine a world where everyone, everywhere lives happy, healthy lives within the limits of the planet, leaving space for wildlife and wilderness.”

Developed by WWF and Bioregional, this ‘One Planet Living’ framework, comprises ten simple principles that cover social, environmental and economic sustainability.

¹⁷ <https://www6.inrae.fr/atter-rise/>

¹⁸ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101007755>

	Health and happiness	Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing
	Equity and local economy	Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade
	Culture and community	Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living
	Land and nature	Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife
	Sustainable water	Using water efficiently, protecting local water resources and reducing flooding and drought
	Local and sustainable food	Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal, organic food and vegetable protein
	Travel and transport	Reducing the need to travel, encouraging walking, cycling and low carbon transport
	Materials and products	Using materials from sustainable sources and promoting products which help people reduce consumption
	Zero waste	Reducing consumption, re-using and recycling to achieve zero waste and zero pollution
	Zero carbon energy	Making buildings and manufacturing energy efficient and supplying all energy with renewables

Figure 6. The One Planet Living Principles (source www.bioregional.com)

Mission: delivering Coventry University’s Strategic Aims

The vision for the site is an internationally esteemed, agroecological LL and hub for high impact, transdisciplinary research, education and enterprise. This vision is based on the ethos of One Planet Living – a framework developed by WWF consisting of ten simple principles that cover all aspects of social, environmental and economic sustainability. These principles map directly onto the Strategic Aims of the university – its Corporate Strategy, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and People and Planet University League.

Putting this vision into practice means combining these strategic aims with the potential of the farm site. To fully realise the potential of the 9.2 ha (22 acre) site requires a layering or ‘stacking’ of multiple functions - for excellence in research, education and training, enterprise, experience and impact - at the same physical location.

The certified organic/agroecological farm enterprise as the foundation of operations both ensures the site’s professional maintenance as being cost-neutral to CU, and provides the critical living, real-world enterprise environment for research, education and experience.

A ten-year consultative and cohesive development process will take place in four phases. The first phase - Site Planning - comprises developing, costing and agreeing the plan. Phase 2 – Site Preparation – involves addressing urgent necessities as well as low cost ‘easy wins’, whilst building stakeholder and funder engagement. Phase 3 - Site Development – is the external investment phase for larger scale infrastructure, while Phase 4 - the Consolidation Phase – is the time for bedding-in, adjustments, and planning for 2030-50. The site development and the ALL will therefore continue after the time the AE4EU project ends in 2024.

There are two main objectives of the ALL as a network:

- connecting the various users of the Ryton site. On this site there are different users: university, research charity, heritage seed library, community supported farm and horticultural trainers - a commercial limited company. Combining and giving governance structure to such a complex network of users is challenging and the first objective is to establish, implement and perpetuate this.
- connecting the various users at the Ryton site to the peri-urban food growing in Coventry, Warwickshire and the West Midlands Metropolitan region, a poly-centric metropolitan area with nearly 3 million inhabitants. This is done first with the key partners described below and then with the further partners and wider stakeholder groups.

In addition, there are two further objectives as themes, meaning what the ALL is going to change and improve in the territorial development at the local level of Coventry and the West Midlands:

- improve the understanding of urban agroecology, in contrast to urban agriculture. Adding and exploring a metropolitan dimension for agroecology and linking food systems at a larger spatial level (Gliessman level 4 -5) together with partner project ATTER.
- creating a living lab with the initial focus of learning how to grow and use (use includes knowledge creation on how to harvest, process, store and cook) perennial vegetables and asian vegetables in the urban and peri-urban growing spaces (gardens, allotments, community farms and market gardens) of Coventry, Warwickshire and the West Midlands..

5.4. Collaboration with authorities

Cooperation of the UK LL with Coventry is already good and long standing. Coventry University organised a food justice walk and was also contributing, researching the development of the Coventry Food Charter¹⁹. This however has wider aspects than growing sustainable food in Coventry and the metropolitan area and takes a broader approach. Key aspects of the Coventry Food Charter are demonstrated on Figure 7.

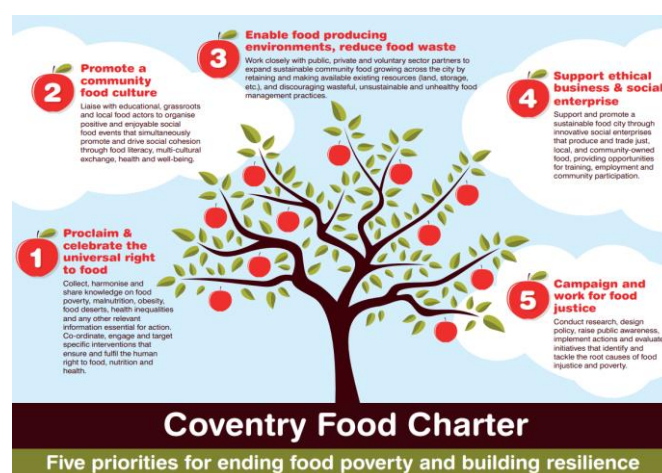


Figure 7. Coventry Food Charter (source <https://letstalk.coventry.gov.uk/feeding-coventry>)

Besides, an interesting new aspect is the creation of ‘Metro Mayors’ in England. These are regional authorities for several cities combined to create a metropolitan area. This was first used for the creation of Greater London with the Greater London Assembly and the ‘metro mayor’ as a first minister. Greater London is a 8 million conurbation centred around the ‘City’- this is the City of London and City of Westminster, the second city and borough in Inner London. This city state has not quite the same level of devolved power as e.g. the German city states Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, but the benefits of metropolitan areas and their relative self-rule and organisation has been recognized and is developed further.

For Greater Manchester and Coventry and Birmingham (West Midlands) this has been recently established and some limited authority for food planning can come with it. The ‘Mayor of the West Midlands’ has been created as a directly elected political post. This ‘metro mayor’ chairs the West Midlands Combined Authority, covering the Birmingham and Coventry metropolitan area with about 3 million inhabitants in the metropolitan area²⁰.

The ‘metro mayor’ is responsible for economic growth in the region, improving the transport network, improving housing, tackling unemployment and developing jobseekers’ skills, tackling homelessness, improving air quality and improving relationships between different

¹⁹ <https://letstalk.coventry.gov.uk/feeding-coventry>

²⁰ www.wmca.org.uk

parts of the community in the region. Currently, the main idea of English Combined Authorities is to grow an inclusive economy in their regions. The West Midlands Combined Authority invests in transport, skills and wellbeing. A combined authority is not a council, collecting rubbish bins, partners deliver most services. The authority's focus is on planning, delivering the plans and funding that unlock those services (e.g. also food planning). The West Midlands Combined Authority represents 18 Local Authorities and 3 Local Enterprise Partnerships. This political development is so recent, and it is too early to establish with certainty what additional benefit it can have for metropolitan food planning. The ALL will try to explore this further and make recommendations also on the metro mayor authority level.

5.5. Future perspectives

The **long-term future perspectives** for urban agroecology and the ALL in Coventry and the Midlands are very positive as traditional urban planning will have come to an end as petrol and diesel vehicles are phased out in the UK i.e. no new ones can be sold from 2030. This gives much more room for converting urban space (not only roof-tops) to growing food including trees. Although climate change is also a threat, the increased temperatures in UK cities can improve food growing conditions also during mild winters, giving potentially a second growing season, like in tropical climates. Although longer droughts are possible, there is still a year-long rainy season to support a second growing season with water. In addition, water storage, adaptation of crops with the addition of more Mediterranean and Asian species including different rootstocks and perennial vegetables (the specific focus of the ALL) make it possible to grow more and different vegetables in a city.

The inclusion of trees (urban agroforestry) to lift water and nutrients from lower condensed soils (also improving urban drainage) can only be good to improve the microclimate. New ways are needed to harvest a patchwork of crops over many locations, seasons and for this apps and smart GIS based systems could help to manage a complex and diverse system. This will be more akin to a tropical food forest than a rural farm with few crops in a rotation, or mono-culture in the worst case.

However, **short-term** there could be serious challenges including the following:

- Agroecology is currently less supported by CU top management, and this is in contrast to the enthusiasm inside the agroecology centre CAWR for the uniqueness of the Ryton site.
- Alternative uses and priorities of the university to use the site as an office with a garden. CAWR enthusiasts have called this *“like buying Space Lab and then deciding to use it as a caravan site to live in it on earth, it makes a nice office, but is not realising its true potential”*.
- The networks are too scattered and not working together well enough.
- Urban Agroecology is weak and fragmented, many activities are part-time, hobby, but with high social and wellbeing benefits; it is not taken seriously, it's city planners underestimate potential
- Food culture is often based on fast-food, high meat content from intensive ('cheap') industrial indoor livestock, with low vegetable and fruit content in the diet.
- Cost of Living crisis and forthcoming recession in the UK could overlay all other attempts to engage stakeholders, as they struggle too much
- Cities have still too many cars, roads and pollutions so food growing is not possible fFarm land, unlike city parks, is not protected in urban and peri-urban settings, there is a threat of more houses, roads
- New housing is still built with cars and not including public transport, cycleways. Public transport is not free (like in other countries) and cars are indirectly subsidised (very low road tax or no tax for electric cars, although they require road maintenance, too.

Furthermore, agroecology is still not fully understood and implemented by key decision makers. Many cling to the hope that perpetual material growth is possible on a limited planet and are not yet ready to shift management to fully embrace diversity and organic growth. Embracing diversity of diets, crops and people, while equally taking the hard, and often unpopular, step to phase out pollution (zero-pollution), fossil-fuels and exploitation of labour.

There are **fast developments** which were thought not possible only a few years ago, one of them in the UK is the rapid rise of vegetarian and vegan food. This is not only consumed by vegetarians and vegans, which are also rapidly increasing, it is also in high demand from 'flexitarians'

seeking to reduce their meat consumption for health, environmental or spiritual reasons. The food and diet of England, especially in metropolitan areas with their high ethnic diversity has changed beyond recognition.

5.6. Further activities of the English LL

After some discussion and meetings through 2022, three further workshops were organised for the UK LL participants.

The first workshop was held in April 2023. Most people attending the workshops are from small businesses, charities, allotment growers, or other local groups that are growing food to be consumed by citizens in the immediate vicinity. The participants discussed the terms ‘agroecology’ and ‘living lab’ to find out what they mean to people. It was also collectively agreed that the previously suggested theme ‘more diverse crops for a changing climate’, was a common problem that all participants wanted to tackle. Climate change in the UK primarily means more erratic weather with greater extremes of temperature, wind, rainfall and summer draught, so growing a much more diverse selection of crops could be an important strategy that all the Living Lab participants expressed an interest in pursuing. Anton Rosenfeld from the Coventry-based national NGO Garden Organic gave a presentation based on a previous project conducted in the area, which examined the diversity of crops being grown by home-growers and allotment holders who had brought them to the UK from other countries and cultures.

The second workshop was held in May 2023 at a community centre in Foleshill, a Coventry suburb where there is a ‘Social Supermarket’ and also a small garden that aims to supply some fresh food for the ‘Social Supermarket’. ‘Social Supermarket’ sell food donated from other supermarkets, farmers and own gardens at a discounted and voluntary base to all local residents with limited access to good food. The participants built on the theme of improving resilience through diversifying the range of crops grown. Besides, there were discussed following themes: (i) a genetic diversity in crops and its importance for future resilience; (ii) heritage varieties, e.g., underutilised and ‘forgotten’ crops that several growers were excited about, including lentils, chickpeas and beans for drying. Participants were particularly interested in legumes due to the potential advantages to soil health/fertility and the additional climate-benefit of being a non-animal protein source. Following this workshop, Coventry University was able to supply some seeds of underutilised/forgotten crops and to make available seed from the Heritage Seed Library.

Furthermore, the participants discussed the need to have an online space that would act as a central hub for LL participants to share information and ideas, and availability of all of the resources elaborated before, such as crop factsheets and templates for experimental design. This resulted in a Teams site being set up for the group by Coventry University.

The third workshop was held in June 2023 as part of an open day at Coventry University’s CAWR research centre at Ryton Organic Gardens. Participants were keen to share accounts of what they were currently growing to diversify their range of crops this year. For example, Coventry University’s own Grounds and Gardens team have planted a wide range of new crops on their ‘edible campus’ (an area in the city centre from which students can harvest the crops grown). They have also collaborated with 5 Acre Farm, a CSA farm at Ryton, to propagate soft fruit plants – and underutilised crop identified by the LL - which can then be shared with other growers. The participants were also joined by a representative of a local allotments organisation, an aspect which has so far been missing from the conversations. Other issues discussed included a desire to have more involvement/contact with local government, the potential to supply food banks and thoughts on securing the longevity of the LL. As part of impact, Coventry University is committed to fund a 0.2 FTE position for the coordination and continuation of the living lab for the next 5 years. Other sources of further funding are also perused including NERC UK funding and Horizon Europe. This is to expand into further reducing environmental pollution (e.g. plastic use in agriculture), but also organic food processing and citizen science for sustainable diet change.

6. Conclusions

6.6. Lessons learned

As far as networking activities and stakeholders' participation is a base for the living laboratories, a human factor and all related issues (cross-cultural differences, regional and local cultures) are considered as main components for future development of LLs. Respectful personal relationships within the network is an important component for building a trust between different groups of the stakeholders, and thereby for maintaining activity of the LL. Furthermore, understandable wording and an appropriate language are crucial for networking, communication and for engagement of different stakeholders, as well as for defining themes and objectives of the LL. The living lab experience revealed two main challenges in linking the stakeholders: creating a dialogue between academia and farmers; and creating a dialogue between farmers and policymakers.

Use of maieutic approach provides a positive contribution to construction of dialogue between academia and farmers. It helps to make farmers more open and more willing to share. In order to improve a dialogue with policy makers, it is important to organise regular communication between farmers and representatives of local authorities (for example, sending communication letters every month and engaging policy makers in LL activities).

Besides, following five good practices were revealed as a result of the LL experience.

- **Good practice 1:** combination of the local and regional events with LL workshop activities allows to engage more stakeholders.
- **Good practice 2:** communication channels and communication activity are important for engagement of new stakeholders (for example, creation and distribution of flyers with non-scientific and informal description of the WS allows to engage more different stakeholders)
- **Good practice 3:** using an education activity as a part the LL workshops (for example demonstration and explanation of agroecological practices) allows to provide benefits to the participants
- **Good practice 4:** organising networking activities for the stakeholders (aperitivo or light lunch) with food of the producers participating in the Workshop allows to promote local food products and to connect potential consumers with the producers
- **Good practice 5:** farmers participation in project activities should be paid (for time investment). This will allow to engage more farmers into research and LL activities and to make their participation more efficient

6.7. Supporting and hindering forces for LL activity

Table 3. Supporting and hindering forces in the LL development

Supporting forces	Hindering forces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willingness to change/improve the territorial development - Willingness to collaborate of majority participants - People's need in support to each other - Peer support for farmers using agroecology - Lots of professional knowledge available due to LL experience - Future opportunities for creation of new jobs and for training of new skills (particularly for the local scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of time from stakeholders - Lack of funding - Lack of an appropriate infrastructure for good function of the LL - Lack of people with open mind in the territory - Lack of common language for all stakeholders - Weak participation of the authorities in the LL activities

Table 4. Comparison of main factors of the three living laboratories

Factors	NL LL	IT LL	UK LL (ALL)
Current and further collaboration with other projects	Agroecologie Netwerk	HUMUS	ATTER, RISE
Scale	National	Regional	Local
Authorities involved into collaboration	Ministry of Agriculture of the Netherlands	The Mountain Union (union of 11 municipalities)	Metro Mayor, West Midland Combined Authority
Expected transformative change	Increased agroecological movement and visibility of agroecology	Created mechanism of information and bureaucratic support for improved access to funds	Used urban agroforestry and urban drainage for improved microclimate
Content of Manifesto	Main objective and sub-objectives	Objectives, themes and principles of LL activity	Objectives, vision and mission

6.8. Action plan

Notwithstanding the diversity of the three living laboratories and their different scales, there are necessary actions for creation of the user-driven LL and for its successful implementation. The necessary actions include following:

- 1) Contact to already existing network;
- 2) Facilitation of the living lab by the researchers (at least at the beginning);
- 3) Contacts with the authorities of the same scale;
- 4) Defining themes and objectives relevant for all participants of the LL;
- 5) Preparing a Manifesto or similar document with the same contents, engagement of all participants in the contribution to the Manifesto;
- 6) Identifying organisation and management of the LL, i.e. active person or group of people, frequency of meetings depending on available time;
- 7) Creation of a communication channel (mailing list, group in Whatsapp, use of other social networks);
- 8) Involvement the LL participants into collaboration with a university or educational institution.

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Annex 1. Report of the 1st Workshop in the Dutch living lab

Report of the Online Living lab meeting Agroecology network building July 1 2021

Background

Agro ecology is gaining increasing interest in the Netherlands. There are however different perceptions of agroecology, ranging from incorporating agro ecological principles in conventional farming systems to transformative changes to build a new food system based on participation, localness, fairness and justice. In recent year isolated pioneering agro ecological farmers who have the ambition to contribute to this transformation have joint forces in several networks like the Future Farmers and the CSA network. In 2019 this has led to the National Federation of agro ecological farmers. The Federation is a joint initiative from the Future Farmers, the CSA network, Biological Dynamic Farmers and Vegan Farmers.

The ambition of the Federation is to stimulate the transition to agro ecology in the Netherlands by supporting agro ecological farmers, influencing policies and stimulating research and innovation that meets the requirements of agro ecological farmers.

Under the umbrella of AE4EU, Wageningen Research and the Federation agreed to organize a series of living lab meetings to increase the visibility, developing network of the “willing” including NGO’s and pioneering farmers, align with policy makers and research. A key topic is developing a joint problem definition and research, innovation and action agenda to stimulate agro ecology.

At the moment there is hardly any connection between agro ecology pioneers and policy makers, research, and conventional farmers and limited exchange with NGO’s.

We decided to follow a step by step approach of a series of living labs contributing to connections, trust and visibility and agenda building.

The first online LL meeting took place on July 1. A second LL meeting will take place on October 16 2021 in Leiden. A meeting of agro ecological farmers and policy makers is foreseen for November 2021.

Focus and organisation of living lab meeting July 1

On July 1 the first living lab meeting of the agro ecology network in the Netherlands took place. The meeting was a joint initiative of the Federation of Agroecological Farmers, with support of Wageningen Research and Trans National Institute.

The focus of this first living lab meeting was threefold:

- getting to know each other
- strengthening the network
- developing a strategy to tackle challenges agro ecological farmers are facing and support the transition to agroecology

In preparation of this living lab meeting, the Federation of Agroecological Farmers had prepared a paper focusing on the main principles as stated in the Nyeleni declaration. In addition, an inventory was made of the main obstacles agro ecological farmers and the agro ecology movement in the Netherlands are facing. These obstacles had been collected in several meeting with members of the Federation of Agro

ecological farmers. The identified obstacles were headed under four themes. For each theme the Federation had prepared an introduction with input from Wageningen Research and Trans National Institute. The themes were discussed during the living lab. In four thematic groups participants discussed how the agro ecological transformation could be stimulated, and which actions and alliances would be necessary.

The main objective of this Living Lab meeting was strengthening the agro ecological movement and supporting the transition to an agro ecological food system in the Netherlands by

- establishing and strengthening connections between practitioners, researchers and NGO's
- develop a strategy to deal with the main challenges agro ecological farmers and the agro ecological movement in the Netherlands are facing

Participants

In total 50 participants were invited and over 30 people participated.

The participants represented farmers and their networks: CSA organisation, Federation of Agroecological Farmers, Biological Dynamic farmers, UsHof, Wilde Peen.

The research and education community: Wageningen University and Research, Radboud University, Trans National Institute, Free University Amsterdam, University of Utrecht, Copernicus Institute, University of Applied Sciences Den Bosch, Schumacher Institute for Economics and Louis Bolk Institute;

NGO's: Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace, Cultivate!, Milieudefensie, Voedsel Anders, Pesticide Action Network, Groen Geloven, Lau Dato Si, Degrowth, Grond van Bestaan

Programme

1. Welcome, short introduction with overview of food initiatives and agro ecology in the Netherlands and the need for better collaboration and networking
2. Presentation of principles of Agroecology based on the Nyeleni declaration
3. Exchange and discussion in four thematic groups
4. Wrap up and follow up activities

Summary of the focus and discussion in the four thematic groups

Group 1: Policy for agroecology and access to land.

Background

An increasing number of initiatives at different levels (local, regional, national, international) have the ambition to change policies in such a way that it supports the transition to agroecology. Many of these initiatives are not connected at the moment which limits their impact. There is also a risk that agroecology is considered and promoted as a technical application/innovation in current farming systems focusing on resource use efficiency and a prominent role for agribusiness instead of the wider, The federation stands for a holistic view on agroecology which includes social and political issues and the transition to just and fair locally embedded food systems. In this group participants explore how policies can be influenced by strengthening collaboration between different types of actors. The possibilities to organise a series of exchanges with policy makers and politicians are explored.

Participants: A-C H (WEcR, WUR), J. van de W. (MD), P. van IJ. (farmer, BD-vereniging, PAN), V. O. (Extinction Rebellion), S. V. (VU), M. G. (FNP, WUR, Toekomstboeren), S.W. (Wageningen Plant Research)

Exchange

The participants presented their activities. They are involved in advising and influencing policy makers and policies at national level (ministry of agriculture), European level and more local level. Current activities of the participants include among others

- Organizing an exchange between agro ecological farmers of Future Farmers organisation with the working group on circular farming of the ministry of agriculture, to make policy makers aware of the practices and challenges of these agro ecological farmers.
- Organizing an exchange between researchers and policy makers of the ministry of agriculture on agro ecology
- Bringing the issue of short term lease contracts for agricultural land which limits the transition to sustainable farming practices to the political level,
- Campaigning with focus on meat and dairy industry with fairness as focus. Looking at the responsibilities in the food chain and whether it is in line with the Paris (MD) and
- Action oriented campaigning in order to influence policies of banks and companies active in the agricultural sector (ER)

Proposed activities and strategy for the coming year

The proposal is to advance policy for access to land and agroecology by organizing a series of meetings with policy makers. Through these exchanges policy makers should meet the farmers on the farm to get to know the realities of agro ecological farmers.

A number of considerations were raised:

- "It should be made clear that circular agriculture is not really about just closing the cycle. More should be possible and if this is not negotiable, then we have a problem."
- "Yes, but it is also necessary to recognize that civil servants are sometimes quite willing, but simply work in a certain policy environment. So rushing it doesn't help. Saying we're going to do it the AE way now doesn't work."
- "Yes, but the minister herself has also said that civil servants are bulldozed by agribusinesses. The minister wants to do things differently and would be able to get along quite well with the Nyeleni principles. It is therefore necessary to work on a broader awareness of how processes (of influencing) currently work. So mindsets affected. Because if we don't, we won't get anywhere. But of course, at the same time you also have to maneuver cleverly within a relevant (policy) context."
- "The problem is not with the minister. Officials say (too) quickly: there is no other way. Politicians see room for change more quickly."
- "Actually, civil servants are not actually the problem, but they are quite stuck. Politicians must free up money for the transition. That's not what officials are about. They wanted the change, but that's what politics is about. Our organisation therefore want to focus on system change."
- "Indeed, system change is needed. There will be an event in Leiden (October 16). What if we search near Leiden for examples of suitable agro ecological farms. People are often mainly concerned with policy and less with (inspiring) practice. You need people who can tell the story well in that practice."
- "You have to clarify the objectives. What exactly would you like to lobby for? Which "connections" can be made with policy objectives?"
- "You might want to provide multiple "connections" in different places simultaneously. Or in one place, but address those different things there."
- "We should Not only approach policy makers and politicians but also banks
- "Should it be a lobby activity or should we focus on content"
- "Good to arrange something to politics."

By handraising it became clear who would like to be involved in organizing something, and whether it should be more content-oriented or more lobbying. Most are interested in organizing a series of meetings together and turning it into something substantive - besides lobbying-.

This will become part of the Agroecology Network conference scheduled for Saturday, October 16.

Group 2: Agroecological research: Time for an Institute of agroecology?

Background

Agroecology argues for full participation of farmers (organizations) in research. This means that problems, observations and solutions of farmers are included in research. That farmers are compensated for their contributions to research projects. And that research results (directly or through policymakers and implementers) contribute to a better life for farmers, citizens and nature. In this session we explore how we can work towards this. We discuss, among other things, the possibilities for an Institute of Agroecology: a research center with a farmer's heart. What can such an institute add to the current landscape of research initiatives? What connections can be made with other initiatives (e.g. with the plaetsen, regional farmers' council support centres) and with different themes (e.g. climate, biodiversity and health)? And what are the possibilities for financing (for example SABE) and for the institutional embedding of such an institute (for example in the context of top sectors policy or current structures in science).

Participants: I. G. (Louis Bolk Institute), M. S.S. (WUR), C.B. (WUR), F.P. (HAS), K.v.V. (WUR), D.R. (WUR, RSO), L.v.O. (Utrecht University), J.v.D. (Utrecht University), B.H. (Federation, CSA Network, Ūs Hof), J.H. (WUR Agrosystems Science),

Exchange

M.S.S. is team leader of Agrosystems Science at Wageningen University and mainly works on agroecology in developing countries. However, she is also involved in European developments in AE. I.G., director of the Louis Bolk Institute. F.P. works at HAS as a lecturer in future food systems and leads one of the largest project on food transition in the Netherlands: "Transition to a sustainable food system". C.B. is working on herb-rich grassland through a project on biodiversity and agroecology. L.v.O. is a PhD candidate, with a research focus on Community Supported Agriculture. J.v.D. works at the Future Food Center of Utrecht University. K.v.V. researches, teaches and guides many students in the field of agroecology through the Farming Systems Ecology group of Wageningen University. D.R. works for the Rural Sociology group of Wageningen University and education and guides students in the field of transitions, agro ecological networks, etc. J.H. (WUR Agrosystems Science), network agro ecological farmers and biodiversity, EU project mapping, roadmap and framework agro ecology .

Strategy

The motivation of many people to participate in this conversation is to give the voice of farmers a place, support innovators, create a network and make researchers and research accessible for the federation of agroecological farmers. A new institute of agroecology could achieve this.

Two participants quickly argue in favor of setting up the institute at the LBI. Others are against it. It's not about putting the flag somewhere right now. The conversation should be about what is the purpose of the institute, in what way is it complementary to what is already available in institutes/training/knowledge centres. Questions that should be discussed in more depth were identified:

- What kind of questions/bottlenecks experienced by the agro-ecological farmers and networks are not addressed in present research.
- What is their knowledge agenda, how do they present this to the ministry, for example.
- Strategic thinking is needed to explore how an institution is part of shaping the movement and how it can support the movement and make it more visible.

- How can the Federation be in the lead.
- What would be the function of such an institute: a place where knowledge questions from farmers can be submitted, a center for knowledge building and knowledge - We should be careful that it is about more than the practical questions of the farmers. It should concern all 13 principles of agroecology. Another characteristic is that it has a focus on integral knowledge. It should involve different disciplines.
- It should be a place where practice, research, but also policy and NGOs find and meet each other.
- It should strengthen the knowledge infrastructure for agroecology.
- It is striking that, with the exception of Bregje, there are no farmers in this group.
- So what is needed to get farmers involved?

Group 3: Commons and solidarity economy

Background

More and more initiatives are committed to an economy in which profit does not predominate, but in which other values are just as important. Some of these initiatives go a step further by focusing on co-ownership and shared ownership of local farmers and citizens. This process of “commoning” can be found, for example, on farms where citizens are co-owners. In places where farmland becomes a good of the local community. And in markets in which sustainability certification is organized locally and from the bottom up. In this session we explore how we can strengthen commoning. We discuss, among other things, how we can help farmers who want to bring land into local co-ownership. And how we can scale up the commoning of farms, markets and land.

Participants: M. v.M. (Future Farmers, De Wilde Peen), O. (Louis Bolk Institute), N. (Ground of Existence and Schumacher Institute for Economics), N. (Ground of Existence, Schumacher Institute for Central Economics), E.H. (Radboud University)), P. (Wageningen University), P. (Future farmers), E. (Future farmers)

Exchange

M.: Commons of course that the earth cannot belong to anyone. That it is accessible to everyone. Essence is sharing things with people you are in contact with. Decide for yourself about the things you are in contact with. Now process of making our horticultural commons. To make that idea more common.

O. PhD role of animals in the circular food system. Very theoretical, now practice. Problem is commerciality and individuality. Now look at other models at LBI, valuing non-financial things. How are we going to talk about that. How do you make this conversation inclusive, how do you give the people who have an opinion about this a voice. Many different initiatives on alternative value models. Do we need to streamline that? If so, how? I would like to discuss: is there a central role for a knowledge institute or government to play a role in this? How do you maintain local autonomy?

N.: very busy with the commons in recent years. Very good solution for the problems we are in. Ground of Existence still under development. People talk to people who are also working on this, and hear insights from others. Most important topics for me, peer governance, how do we finance it, and how do we ensure that we can work together again.

E. teacher of spirituality at Radboud. The good life. Elinor Ostrom, Tragedy of the Commons. We as humans tend to exploit commons. Can also be different. Questions about how can you show that commons contribute to the good life for everyone, and how can you translate that concretely to agriculture and horticulture. Member of “ Land of ours” . Is a way to work on the problem of how do you pay for that land. Seeks collaboration and see what to contribute to the debate.

P.: member of the commons concept group TB. Also while of practical commons group. Now theoretically. It is important to that more people take more action in the squatters' movement. This is an option and can lead to change, communities and attention. In other countries this works quite well, in the Netherlands it is also possible. we must claim land if it is mistreated. How can we put this in an easy language, not academic. Combined with frameworks for legislation. When are we going to take our conversations to politics? Will politics create space for us? This happened in Scotland, a good example. Practical combined with legal framework.

P.: in addition to what E. mentioned, commons is very important towards a transition to a sustainable society. Connection with nature, lost connection is the cause of the problems we now have as a society. Now time for a conversation. Do you want to talk about setting up commons practice,

Strategy

- “Enthusiasm about squatting ground. In the past I had a lot to do with the squatters' movement. Haven't thought about the commons yet.”

- Is it about vacant land? Pushing conventional farmers off their land?

Mix between anarchist and ecological movement. Both highly and less educated people who find each other within a community. Central to care is connection and peace. It is injustice and we must deal with it in a peaceful and careful way. In practice you see filthy squats with junkies, but also functioning societies with jobs and children, with their own mini-economy.”

- “Not for occupying used land, but for occupying under-used land. There should be a campaign to show that squatting is not a dirty word. Has been done for hundreds of years. Important for upgrading things that are not used. people are creative in using houses. Safety is a matter of information and training. We want to break through stigma. We want to show that old buildings give new meaning, but also make farmers who do not have the time to use all their land available. Urban nomads too: they are allowed to farm on fallow land where construction will take place. once you have squatted, you are in the middle of the issue of the commons.”

- “Long relationship between commons and anarchism. Can scare people off. I am for going beyond temporality. That is why we are also busy buying land. Insane amount of money, but surprised how relatively easy it is to get money. You only need to have money at once. Combination of cultural, social and com. Idea to clear ground forever (7 generations). Both are important: showing that other forms of ownership are possible, while exerting pressure by occupying land. I was quite surprised, there is a lot of money in circulation, there are many banks that want to put money in land. Interest rates must

remain low to take the financial pressure off. The issue for me is a fiscal legal issue, how do you create robust legal structures within a capitalist “robbery” system, a shell that offers protection. 400 years ago there were many commons, then it was enough to make agreements with the neighbours, those agreements were culturally determined. Ostrom has shown that it works. Within a system such as ours, this is not possible with cultural agreements, legal agreements are also necessary. Otherwise, the commons will be eaten.”

What does it take to contribute to this as a movement?

Organisations as Land van Ons offer a solution. You can contribute, you know you don't get any interest, with the aim of good farming."

- "I'm critical. Love what they do and how much support there is. Not the solution yet. They have no local governance. Very important to me. They have mobilized a lot of money, but have not succeeded in the long term and it is locally. Still experimental. We all have yet to discover how that works. She is also in development. Threefold engineering would be nice, how do you put that into practice?"

- "What are local initiatives doing to get it done? What are you encountering, and how could we as a movement be able to make a difference?"

- "I think we need to talk about it very much with everyone. On the contrary, I am very afraid of driving people from their country if they do not treat their country well. Still a kind of tension, downside, good, bad. Demand is also scale. If the group gets too big you lose content and what is the right size then. Upscaling is not really possible."

- "scale and distance is fixed. "

Group 4. Movement building

Background

A foundation in agroecology is building a caring relationship between people and between people and nature. We share this foundation with many movements that advocate for the climate, the environment and marginalized groups. It also binds us to people, nations and initiatives outside the Netherlands. In this session we explore the possibilities to strengthen these connections. How can we build a (wider) movement? What are methodologies and examples that can help? How can we avoid or bridge polarizing narratives, for example between agriculture and nature conservation? And how do we connect with relevant international networks and make strategic use of international and regional policy instruments to strengthen agroecology in the Netherlands and beyond?

Participants: H.A. de V. (Greenpeace), A. (XR Agriculture), K.S. (TNI), L.v.d. B. (Federation, Future Farmers), J.B. (Food Anders, Cultivate!), M.T. (Groen Geloven, Lau Dato Si), R.v.M. (XR Agriculture), S.K. (TNI).

Exchange

How do we arrive at a broader and stronger movement that fits with the holistic approach to agroecology (scientific knowledge, practical experience, and movement building)?

Within this group there are already many contacts and relationships with different networks. We have connections with the following target groups: mainstream farmers, consumers, climate and environmental organizations, churches and their communities, policy makers, refugees / diaspora.

Target

groups not yet mentioned/engaged, but important to involve are:

- Feminist movement (Women Engaged for a Common Future, Rural Women, World March of Women)
- Anyone looking for a different economic system. Anti-capitalist vision.
- Nature organizations; connection between nature & agriculture

- COP 26 – working group: climate, food, nature / biodiversity (evening sessions)

(Code Rood);

- Food processing / further down in the food system, people / organizations, etc.

must also join in and be involved

- Youth / young adults → education, broad, at primary and secondary schools, and at agricultural institutes, etc.!
- Seek more connection with faith communities, as also happens in Latin America

Strategy

How to reach and connect with these target groups? For this we need a connecting narrative that is politically relevant, that focuses on system change, and that outlines a future perspective. The Nyéléni declaration can be a starting point for this, but will have to be further elaborated.

Possible joint action moments:

- H.A. de V. will share climate moments later (after meeting) (in 2021)
- Degrowth Symposium, workshops on land and degrowth, 24-28 August, The Hague.
- October 16 – Next Farming Conference
- UN Food Systems Summit: pre-summit July 26-28, joint opinion piece on the Summit and the role of the Netherlands
- Possible conference organized by Lau Dato Si – focus on soil / land
- COP 26 – Global Actions Planned November 5-6
- Nitrogen crisis (new protests are planned)
- Caring Farmers – TV commercial fundraiser
- XR activist campaign against Rabobank

Follow up

For each theme a core group has been appointed. These core groups will prepare and facilitate the continuation of the exchanges and discussions. October 16 a live living lab is organised. During this living lab next steps will be discussed.

Appendix 1: Program

Part I

Opening

Presentation Nyeleni Declaration Agroecology Presentation 7 pillars for Agroecological Transformation Breakout session in 4 groups

Feedback to plenary

Part II

Follow up and closing

Annex 2. Report of the 1st Workshop in the Italian living lab



REPORT

LIVING LAB VAL VARAITA

The 1st Workshop for Living labs in Italy

within the frame AE4EU project

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Venasca, Piedmont, Italy

26 November 2021

1. Background and creation of the LL

The Italian living lab (LL) created under the project AE4EU is coordinated and organised by the UNISG team. The scale of the LL is regional and its biophysical dimension is a mountain valley (Val Varaita) in the region of Piedmont. Regarding networks and interactions of the LL, the aim is to enlarge and strengthen the network among producers, policy-makers and researchers through developing an agenda towards common innovations. An important element is the collaboration with Humus Job – a regional project, a social business, innovative and social start-up with the objective to create a network of enterprises to create sustainable work for people working in agriculture. Particularly, in Val Varaita, Humus Job has contributed to the recent creation of a Territorial Group to have legal guarantee of the mutual help among local enterprises: development of guidelines to share machineries, spaces and employees.

The envisaged added values of the Italian LL are:

- Creation a LL model that can be reproduced in other Italian and European valleys
- Recognition and re-assessment of biocultural diversity of mountain areas.
- The fact that Val Varaita is a fertile territory with movement of (young) people re-populating the valley through sustainable agriculture and related activities.

2. Steps for organization of the 1st living lab workshop

2.1 Creation the new LL and the stakeholders' engagement into LL

The actors involved in the LL were selected through:

1. A preliminary meeting with collective producers and food transformers rooted on the territory
2. A meeting with local administrations
3. The PhD research (2021-2022) by Chiara Bassignana (member of the USING Agroecology research group) carried out in Val Varaita.

In order to involve different stakeholders into the new created LL, there were organized 2 meetings (Tab1.) with producers and representatives of the local authorities (policy makers).

Table 1. Preliminary meetings with producers and policy makers

	Meeting with producers	Meeting with policy makers
Date	20.05.2021	20.10.2021
Objective	Possible collaboration for the establishment of a LL	
Participants	Collectives (CRESCO CSA, collective garden Milpa, Antagonisti), Researchers (Agroecology team of UNISG)	6 municipalities out of 11 of the Mountain Union
Outcomes	- List of possible LL actors - List of possible implementation themes of the LL	Involvement of policy-makers in the LL; list of producers for participation

2.2 Definition of the LL objective through a Questionnaire

The objectives of the LL were defined through an online questionnaire distributed among the LL's participants. The following list offers the agroecology themes proposed in the questionnaire, the X represent the number of stakeholders interested in the issue as their focus during the 1st workshop.

- Food sovereignty (XXXXXX)
- Development of a district of food (XXXXXX)
- Development of sustainable low seasonal tourism (XXXX)
- Access to the land (XXX)
- Relational economy (XXX)
- Local Recognition of local sustainable productions (XX)
- Education and communication about AE (X)
- Development of the producer network in the valley (X)
- Development of the network with other valleys (X)

Thus, 4 themes (Food Sovereignty, Development of a district of food, Development of sustainable low seasonal tourism, Access to the land) were selected as the main themes of the LL and suggested to the participants for further discussion.

3. The 1st LL workshop

3.1 Place, participants and program

The workshop was organized in a municipality of the valley called Venasca on the 26th of November 2021. The organization was carried out by UNISG in collaboration with the Association “Limone Lunare” to develop a methodology and facilitation process based on maieutic and action-research. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the network among producers, policy-makers and researchers identifying the needs for agroecological innovation and developing action strategies.

Thirty people participated in the Workshop with following types of the stakeholders:

- CSAs;
- Food transformers (brewers, sap of birch, officinal herbs, honey);
- Farmers (agroecological, certified and non-certified organic, certified biodynamic, conventional);
- Collective farms;
- NGOs, activists (Proloco);
- Agricultural associations/Chambers of agriculture (COLDIRETTI);
- Farmer’s network (Humus Job, Monviso d’Oc);
- Local authorities (Unione Montana, UNCEM);
- Citizens;
- Researchers;
- Students



Figure 1. UNISG team, Limone Lunare and food producers after the Workshop



Figure 2. Four thematic tables

The program of the Workshop included follow:

- 1) Presentation of the project and agroecology Prof. Paola Migliorini
- 2) Round table – Participant presentation (the context - genius loci)
- 3) Group activity on each of 4 identified themes: needs, talents, obstacles and actions
- 4) Round Table – Sharing of the thematic groups' results

3.2 Results of the Workshop

After the group activity in four thematic tables (Fig 2), there were collected 4 papers (Fig. 1) with information concerning development of each theme.

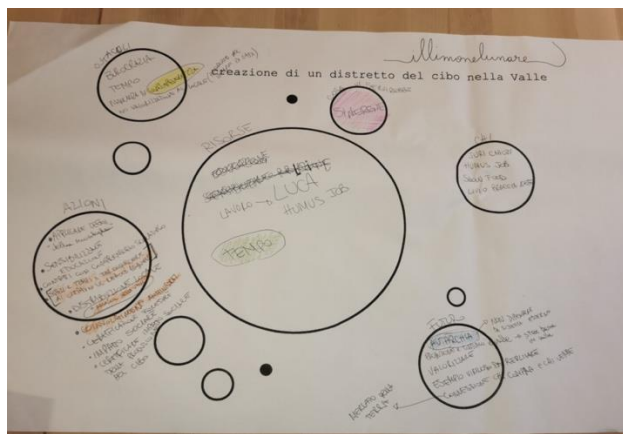


Figure 2. Actions, resources and needs for development of Bio district (In Italian)

Information from the papers was translated in English and provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Actions and obstacles for development 4 themes (assumptions highlighted in bold are common for all 4 themes)

	Creation of the food districts	Relationship economics	Tourism in the low season	Food sovereignty based on access to land and production of cereals
Actions	Local distribution 'Amazon valley'; Apply specific laws for mountain areas; Adjustment of education; Contacts with the school district; Create spaces to introduce local citizens to the productive realities that exist in the valley; Administration involvement; Forest certification; Certify the social impact of food production	Collective points of sale; GAS and CSA creation; Collective workplaces; Join forces to share costs, bureaucratic procedures, slaughterhouse and transformation lab; Network between local activities; Capillary points of sale; Education; Canteen connected to the territory; Product traceability	Group work for cleaning walking paths; Job opportunities for young people; Collaboration with public bodies; Events Network of companies promoting trails and events (Protocol of Valley) Tourist offices! Programming Allocation of funds Tourist tax	implementation of law that aggregated land; Synergies between veg farmers and livestock farm; Shared machine To map abandoned field; Collaboration between public and private; Development of processing collective points (e.i. miller; processing fruit; ..)

Obstacles	<p>Low awareness of people and institutions; Enhancement of local products; Bureaucracy; Lack of Time</p>	<p>Lack of time, Lack of money, Lack of people with appropriate vision</p>	<p>Lack of trust, Lack of infrastructure and services Lack of tourist office and will, Communication</p>	<p>Access to land (Fear of giving land to others); Lack of mill, mountain machinery and tools; Limited arable land; Prices still high in relation to the characteristics of the land Too much bureaucracy</p>
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Furthermore, for theme “Creation of bio districts” the participants mentioned following assumptions for the desire future:

- Valley that doesn’t depend on external system;
- What is produced in the valley is consumed locally or create a virtuous example to replicate,
- Connection between producers and consumer (land market)

For theme “Relational economics” the following assumptions were mentioned as the necessary issues:

- Appropriate scholar education (for increasing awareness);
- Pre-funding;
- Appropriate local policies for development of the mountain territories

For theme “Tourism in the low season” the following assumptions were mentioned as the necessary issues:

- Historical and cultural events
- More open services (for young people)
- Promotion of the already existing activities
- Museums
- Enhancement of paths (unmarked trails)
- Sustainability education for walkers (respect for the environment and lawns – no waste)
- Collaboration

For theme “Food Sovereignty” the following assumptions were mentioned as the necessary issues:

- Funding;
- Laws that facilitate land consolidation;
- Experimental fields for cereals, hemp;
- Synergy breeders-farmers (rational grazing);
- Mill;
- Evolutionary populations;
- Co-financing (Economic resources to leave);
- Contrast to abandonment;
- Access to mountain machinery;
- To increase crops;
- Public-private collaboration for land concession;
- Land associations and greater trust;
- Institutional support of mapping of uncultivated land to redistribution of them

3.3 Main reflections and lessons learned after the workshop

General reflections of the workshop:

- positive mood of the participants during the meeting;
- good organisation expressed in putting many different people together making them understand the value of coming together;
- working in small groups allowed to the participants to speak more;
- discussing everyone's fragility was an ice breaking activity;
- the participants have demonstrated desire to express themselves and tell their stories, in groups even more than in plenary;
- bringing together people who had never met before;
- it is important to consider personal differences of the facilitators;
- each activity was carefully planned;
- contribution of the artistic association was very important for creation of the participants' interest, providing mind maps and creation a dialogue with the participants.

Time management:

- Duration of the workshop was challenging, as people asked more time for all those activities, whilst other participants could not be available more than that was planned;
- Big topics required more time for discussion, at the same time more time caused loss of peoples' attention;
- Careful planning was important;
- Different points of view within groups were expressed in differently viewed future

Agroecology:

- Theme of agroecology needs more time for discussion;
- Narrative about agroecology should not be limited by its principles, but should be completed with maieutic approach

Annex 3. Report of the 1st Workshop in the UK living lab

Report on LL Workshops in Coventry University

1. Background

In October 2019, Coventry University completed the sale for the purchase 9-hectare Ryton Gardens site, just five miles south of Coventry. The decision to purchase had been preceded by several years of creative discussion on the need for outdoor living laboratories by researchers in the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) that was renting the site, as well as other stakeholders including CU Social Enterprise (CUSE) and South Warwickshire Local Food CIC which operates “5 Acre” Community Farm - also based on the site. These discussions had led to CAWR providing the content for the business case for the purchase of the site in 2018. Additionally, several researchers in CAWR had been previously employed at the Ryton site since the 1980s for its then-owner, the NGO Garden Organic (formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association - HDRA).

The vision for the site is an internationally esteemed, living laboratory and hub for high impact, transdisciplinary research, education and enterprise around a decarbonised, circular economy. This vision is based on the ethos of One Planet Living – a framework developed by WWF comprising of ten simple principles that cover all aspects of social, environmental and economic sustainability. These principles map directly onto the Strategic Aims of the university – its Corporate Strategy, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and People and Planet University League.

The Governance structure will comprise a Ryton Advisory Council, advising to a Ryton Management Committee that will be responsible for ensuring the ongoing management, legal and financial obligations are met, with a dedicated full time Site Operational and Facilities Manager to coordinate whole-site issues including the living laboratory with dedicated outdoor lab technicians to manage the field research labs.



Agenda Item 6: Appendix A Ryton Site Aerial View

Figure 1. Ryton Site aerial view 2009

2. Objectives

Ryton site has multiple functions, and a living lab is one of them. A living laboratory for challenge-led research on food, farming, water and sustainability from across CU, is focused on following:

- Continuation and long-term security for externally funded projects which have the Ryton site written into their grant agreements – using the research facilities, greenhouses, experimental field sites, labs. All focus on Ryton’s unique selling point as a certified agro-ecological site of world-leading excellence. Whilst the organic food sector continues to expand²¹, very few other universities in the UK hold organically-certified experimental land²².
- Further integrated, transdisciplinary, scalable research on: agroecological food production, hydrology and water management, social and therapeutic horticulture, fundamental processes and resilience, sustainable drainage, and sustainability aspects of materials, buildings, architecture, energy, engineering, health, design, peace & trust building, etc.
- Supported by state-of-the art indoor/outdoor facilities and linked to other living labs (eg. European Network of Living Labs, ENOLL) and research networks.

3. A preparatory Workshop

All the main outcomes of the preparatory Workshop held at Ryton are documented in a comprehensive 70-page Business plan. This available on request as it contains confidential data.

4. The 1st LL Workshop

In the 1st workshop the Coventry team has explored the potential for a local LL to benefit an area of Coventry city called Foleshill with some of the Ryton stakeholders. The ‘Benefits of Local’ recognized by the English team are the stakeholders’ physical proximity that facilitates in-person meetings and activities, the possibility for a local LL to be very specific to the needs of the community, and, since local networks already exist, a new LL can tap into these relationships. Finally, if this LL is successful, its creation process can be replicated in other small communities.

The 1st UK LL Workshop was in February 2022 at the Foleshill Community Centre, and it was organized as a local meal with stakeholders including Coventry Food Network, Support for Foleshill, Feeding Coventry/Social Supermarket, Researchers, Students, Foleshill Schools, 5-Acre Community Farm, Coventry City Council, Friday Gardening group, Foleshill Health Centre

The language of the meeting was not just be around agroecological transition, but also more straightforward health and environmental issues: public health, mental health, food poverty, green recovery.

The vision is that the LL could help build a chapter on Coventry Food Strategy, considering where to grow locally, what land is available, and how to bring healthy food to the city. Potential stakeholders are Coventry Food Network, ‘Support for Foleshill’, Feeding Coventry/Social Supermarket, Researchers, Students, Foleshill Schools, 5-Acre Community Farm, Coventry City Council, Friday Gardening group, and the Foleshill Health Centre.

The objective of the 1st LL workshop was to develop a process of co-creation; therefore, the meeting created a safe space for local people and groups to think about what they want and need for Foleshill. The ‘aim’ was listening to the area’s experts, understanding what exists and what misses, and facilitating stakeholders in establishing an objective for the LL with design of follow-up activities.

²¹ The UK organic market continued its eight year growth by 4.5% in 2019. Organic Market 2020. Soil Association, Bristol.

²² Only Royal Agricultural University, Newcastle University, Plymouth (Duchy College) and Scottish Agricultural University.

The first outcome of the 1st Workshop was that the business plan of the first workshop was to comprehensive and ambitious. It has not, or not yet the support of all stakeholders needed.

The second outcome of the 1st Workshop was that for Coventry and especially the district of Foleshill, the issues of health and food sovereignty, food poverty are much more important. This is particularly the case for public health, mental health, social supermarkets, food banks and food poverty and the general cost-of-living crisis which make many citizens of Coventry struggle with their daily food supply, increasing mental health issues.

The third main outcome of the 1st Workshop was that despite this critical and tense situation, local citizen can act and come together as a community. This living community and support structures are a flexible web of personal engagement, SMEs, social enterprises and staff from Coventry Council to make urban agroecology a realistic coping strategy with the external food and health pressures. The urban/per-urban agroecology living lab is evolving from this and several further workshops are planned.

The fourth main outcome of the 1st Workshop was that food is a link for all these wider issues with poverty in Coventry and food growing locally and food processing and storage can at least make a contribution in the fight against poverty. A living wage and a better social network would help and cheap food (i.e. not valuing the people how grow the food and squeezing their income) is not an answer.

Figure 2. The preparatory workshop



Business Plan (full text available on request as it contains confidential financial data, for full text please contact ulrich.schmutz@coventry.ac.uk)

The University on the Farm
@
Ryton Gardens

Business Plan
Draft Living Lab plan to share
Site Redesign Workshop (Appendix 12)



Annex 4. The NL Manifesto

Manifesto Living Lab ‘Agroecology Network’ in the Netherlands

Starting situation

- The network builds on the ambitions of and the work done by the Federation of Agroecological farmers. The living lab meetings are organised by representatives of the Federation, researchers from WUR, TNI and representatives from ngo’s.
- We stimulate participation of farmers, researchers, citizens, NGO’s, students, educators and others interested in a stronger and more influential Agroecology movement in the Netherlands

Starting point Federation of Agroecological Farmers

- Agroecology is a science, a movement and a set of practices that design, develop and transform the Dutch agricultural and food system based on agroecological principles as described in the Nyéléni declaration.

The starting situation concerning Agroecology in the Netherlands can be described as follows:

- Limited connection between the pioneering AE farmers and more “conventional farmers” and with research, policy makers, NGO’s
- Limited visibility of the agroecology movement in the Netherlands
- Different perceptions on Agroecology. The ministry of Agriculture and many researchers are not familiar with the Federation of Agroecological farmers and their vision
- Increase sense of urgency for transforming the Dutch agricultural and food system due to negative impact of current practices, polarization between farmers’ organisations and policy makers due to increased political pressure on farmers to speed up the transformation

Main general objectives Living Lab

- Strengthening the agroecological movement and supporting the transition to an agroecological food system in the Netherlands by
 - establishing and strengthening connections between practitioners, researchers and NGO’s
 - develop a strategy to deal with the main challenges agroecological farmers and the agroecological movement in the Netherlands are facing

Objectives living lab meetings

- Increase visibility of Agroecology and the principles of the Federation AE farmers
- Connecting separated actors: farmers and their networks, researchers, policy makers and NGO’s in an Agroecology network
- Developing network of the “willing” including AE pioneers and other farmers
- Trust building
- Joint problem definition, research, action agenda to stimulate Agroecology

Pillars of the Living Lab

During the first Living Lab meeting the main themes were selected and explored and four working groups were established:

- **Knowledge for agroecology**
- **Policy for agroecology**
- **Land tenure rights, commons and solidarity economy**
- **Movement building**

The network with the four working groups decided to meet 4 times a year. Each meeting was prepared by one of the working groups. During the meetings the groups discussed and shared their ambitions and activities.

The following actions were proposed and started:

Knowledge:

- Creation of network of agroecological farmers and researchers
- Creation of knowledge agenda for agroecology
- Active participation of agroecological farmers in setting up research priorities by ministry and research organizations
- Creation of an “Institute for Agroecology” with access to funding
- Establishing regional demonstration farms (de Plaetse)

Policy for agroecology:

- Frequent exchange with ministry of agriculture and RVO to address challenges agroecological farmers are facing leading to adjustments in regulations that hinder the further development of agroecology
- Stressing the need for transformative agroecology, instead of agroecology promoted as a technical application in current farming systems
- Change in policy from support for more “industrial” type of agriculture to agroecology
- Support short chain initiatives from farmers and citizens

Land tenure rights, commons and solidarity economy

- Campaigns for land tenure right and commons
- Sharing of good land tenure contracts, good commons practices
- Sharing of good practices of solidarity economy
- Supporting participatory guarantee systems (PGS’s)

Movement building

- Increase visibility of agroecology movement representing interests of peasant farmers, nature, citizens and international solidarity
- Connect and cooperate with other emancipatory movement for social ecological sustainability

- Increase representation of farmers of all colors, genders, abilities in agroecology movement

Principles for developing knowledge and innovation by cooperation between farmers, researchers and NGO's

An important objective of the network is to contribute to the development of knowledge and innovation in agroecology leading to the transformation of the Dutch agricultural and food system. To guide the collaboration between farmers, researchers and NGO's the following principles were formulated.

1. Co-creation: full and equality in participation and valuing of farmers and their knowledge in designing and executing research and defining potential solutions. (Also active participation in policy processes of setting up research agenda).
2. Reciprocity: Equal valuation of farmers' knowledge compared to scientific knowledge.
3. Respecting diversity: Take diversity between farmers and their needs as starting point for research and innovation.
4. Strengthening autonomy and sustainability of practices: Use of local knowledge and resources
5. Free access to knowledge: Results of research and innovation should be open source, available to everyone.

Organisations participating in the Living Lab

Farmers' networks, NGO's, Researchers:

Stichting Demeter, Biocyclyc Vegan Network, CSA-Network, Toekomstboeren, Agroforestry Nederland, Buurttuinen, Drechtstadsboer, De Plaetse, Caring farmers

Extinction Rebellion (XR), Transnational Institute, Toekomstboeren, Greenpeace, Transnational Institute (TNI), ASEED, Solidariteitsnetwerk Buurttuinen, ActionAid, ECVC, Voedsel Anders, Cultivate! Collective, WWF-NL, Oxfam Novib, Both ENDS, Transnational Institute, Profundo, Gira Holanda, protopia.be, Het Middenland, Eerlijk Loon!, Milieudefensie, Natuur en Milieufederaties, Lenteland, St. Kapitalocean, Jade Reforestry, Boerengroep, de Kleine Aarde

Wageningen University and Research, University Leiden, University of Twente, Utrecht Universiteit, Maastricht Sustainability Institute & Hogeschool Inholland, TiFN, Universiteit Groningen, Louis Bolk Institute.

Annex 5. The Italian Manifesto

Living laboratory of Varaita valley

(Piedmont, Italy)

Manifesto for Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Varaita valley

We are inhabitants, farmers, traders, educators, volunteers, restaurateurs who work in agriculture and food supply chains in the Varaita Valley.

Through the agroecological living laboratory, we join our skills, paths and visions in order to share, implement and support the agroecological principles on our territory.

Agroecology is a science, a movement and a set of practices that designs, develops and promotes the transition to agricultural and food systems that respect biodiversity, have low environmental impact and are socially and economically fair.

Agroecology includes thirteen principles that work for entire agri-food chains: recycling; reduction of external inputs; soil quality; animal welfare; biodiversity; synergy; economic diversification; co-creation of knowledge; social values and sustainable diets; fairness; connectivity; management of land and natural resources; participation.

We believe that working in synergy within the agroecological paradigm can help our communities in the valley to: support those involved in agriculture in mountain areas, improve agri-food supply chains, sustain the local tourism, preserve and improve bio-cultural diversity, deal with climate change, make our activities more sustainable at an environmental, economic and social level, for associations and farms.

The Living Laboratory was created as part of a European H2020 project "Agroecology for Europe" and was facilitated by the agroecology group of the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo together with the Limone Lunare association.

A living laboratory (LL) is a working group created for developing a transdisciplinary research and innovation activities in a territorial, local and participatory context with all the actors of the LL.

We share the ambition and challenges of creating a living laboratory based on the "bottom-up" approach, which goes beyond traditional schemes and which has the following objectives:

- create and maintain the relationships based on tangible and intangible values;
- activate processes that can draw on existing good practices and create new ones;
- always keep in mind the concreteness of the real life of those who participate, in order to formulate clear and shared objectives;
- work with politicians at local and regional level to alleviate bureaucratic procedures.

Through the Living Laboratory we have identified and shared the fragilities that we perceive in the agri-food chains in the valley that include: lack of collaboration, seasonal challenges, complexity of bureaucracy and lack of directives adapted to the mountain contexts, difficulty in collaboration with local institutions, lack of support in the agroecological field.

Starting from these fragilities we have chosen to work in the direction of two main themes:

1) Relational economics and tourism in low seasons

2) Food Sovereignty and access to Land

For the two themes, after collective discussion, we have drawn up actions and proposals for collaboration with local administrations.

Concerning the **Relational economics and low season tourism**, we intend to propose and to achieve the following:

- the creation of an office/counter to provide different types of support to local associations, farmers and producers with access to regional projects including financing, access to loans and investments
- the introduction of a tourist tax
- the census of tourist initiatives
- collaborative planning of events and associated activities.

Regarding the **Food Sovereignty and Access to Land**, we intend to propose the following:

- a census of state-owned land;
- the creation/ identification of a place and shared equipment in order to transform the agricultural production of the valley, (such as a common mill);
- the implementation of experimental fields for the production of cereals and legumes;
- the support for training in the agroecological field and for the facilitation of bureaucracy for new agroecological farms.

The living laboratory is committed to working in these directions. This Manifesto is a guideline to the continuous development.

Annex 6. The UK Manifesto

The University on the Farm

@

Ryton Gardens

Agroecological

Living Lab (LL) and Research Infrastructure

Manifesto and Business Plan

2020-22



**Research Centre
Agroecology, Water
and Resilience**

The Vision: research excellence in a healthy environment











~ The vision for the site is an internationally esteemed, living laboratory and hub for high impact, transdisciplinary research, education and enterprise in a decarbonised circular economy ~

An **agroecological** beacon of low impact production and consumption integrated into an active, viable and vibrant network of food citizens: consumers, producers and researchers committed to agroecology and food sovereignty also in the urban / peri-urban space.

Ultimately, a mosaic of agroecological farms and food processing enterprises, supported by regenerative water systems, will ensure more resilient and ecological food systems for rural and urban areas - putting healthy food, healthy people and a healthy planet centre stage.

The Ethos – One Planet Living

“Imagine a world where everyone, everywhere lives happy, healthy lives within the limits of the planet, leaving space for wildlife and wilderness.” Developed by WWF and Bioregional²³, this ‘One Planet Living’ framework, comprises of ten simple principles that cover social, environmental and economic sustainability.

	Health and happiness	Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing
	Equity and local economy	Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade
	Culture and community	Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living
	Land and nature	Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife
	Sustainable water	Using water efficiently, protecting local water resources and reducing flooding and drought
	Local and sustainable food	Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal organic food and vegetable protein
	Travel and transport	Reducing the need to travel, encouraging walking, cycling and low carbon transport
	Materials and products	Using materials from sustainable sources and promoting products which help people reduce consumption.
	Zero waste	Reducing consumption, re-using and recycling to achieve zero waste and zero pollution
	Zero carbon energy	Making buildings and manufacturing energy efficient and supplying all energy with renewables

The One Planet Living Principles (www.bioregional.com)

²³ <https://www.bioregional.com/one-planet-living> There are now 600,000 people around the world living in, working at or visiting organisations and communities with a commitment to One Planet Living.

Mission: delivering Coventry University's Strategic Aims

In October 2019, Coventry University completed the sale for the purchase of the £2.4 million, 9 hectare Ryton Gardens site, from the national charity for organic horticulture, Garden Organic. It was the close institutional relationship between the charity and CU that had led to the formation of the joint Centre for Agroecology and Food Security (CAFS), one of the Grand Challenges of Coventry University in 2011, and from there to CAWR in 2014. The challenges that the 65 year old charity was addressing: of human and environmental health, as well as citizen engagement and access to both food and productive resources, have not gone away. The unprecedented environmental and human health crises, and concerns around the quality and quantity of resources required not only for our survival but for us to thrive, provide the backdrop for the Ryton vision.

The vision for the site is an internationally esteemed, living laboratory and hub for high impact, transdisciplinary research, education and enterprise.

This vision is based on the ethos of One Planet Living – a framework developed by WWF comprising of ten simple principles that cover all aspects of social, environmental and economic sustainability. These principles map directly onto the Strategic Aims of the university – its Corporate Strategy, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and People and Planet University League.

Putting this vision into practice means combining these strategic aims with the potential of the farm site. To fully realise the potential of the 9 ha (22 acre) site requires a **layering or 'stacking' of multiple functions - for excellence in research, education and training, enterprise, experience and impact - on the same physical location.**

The certified organic/agroecological farm enterprise as the foundation of operations both ensures the site's professional maintenance as being cost-neutral to CU, and provides the critical living, real-world enterprise environment for research, education and experience.

A ten year consultative and cohesive development process will take place in four phases. The first phase - Site Planning - comprises developing, costing and agreeing the plan. Phase 2 – Site Preparation – involves addressing urgent necessities as well as low cost, easy wins, whilst building stakeholder and funder engagement. Phase 3 - Site Development – is the external investment phase for larger scale infrastructure, while Phase 4 - the Consolidation Phase – is the time for bedding-in, adjustments, and planning for 2030-50.

LL Partners, Stakeholders and Supporters:

Key partners

1. Coventry University (lead), Garden Organic, Five Acre Farm, BEST in Horticulture (all based at Ryton farm site)
2. Foleshill Social Supermarket, www.coventry.gov.uk/directory-record/57895/social-supermarket-at-foleshill-community-centre
3. Fab Lab Coventry <https://fablabcov.coventry.ac.uk>
4. Coventry City of Culture, Feeding Coventry

Further Potential partners, stakeholders and supporters

Research and Agriculture

OFRC - UK's leading independent research centre for the development of organic/agroecological food production and land management solutions to key global issues including climate change, soil and biodiversity conservation, and food security. www.organicresearchcentre.com

Innovative Farmers - network of farmers and growers who are running on-farm trials, on their own terms. www.innovativefarmers.org

Organic Growers Alliance – network of organic growers <https://organicgrowersalliance.co.uk>

New Economics Foundation - works with people igniting change from below and combines this with rigorous research to fight for change at the top. <https://neweconomics.org>

Farm Start - involves classroom training covering the key topics for commercial scale organic growing and on farm practical experience. <https://kindling.org.uk/farmstart>

Civil Society

Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) - want to see a living, working countryside where land is valued as a way to enhance the good of community, countryside and the natural world. Revitalising rural economies, new entrants are supported into agriculture by making access to land a reality for all -- not just the few. <https://ecologicalland.coop>

Landworkers Alliance (LWA) - union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of our members and create a better food and land-use system for everyone. <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk>

CSANetwork UK - is working solely to promote CSA - community supported agriculture - across the UK. <https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk>

Soil Association – organic farming charity working across the spectrum of human health, the environment and animal welfare. www.soilassociation.org

Permaculture Association - is working to radically and positively change the way we live in the UK and actively supports a worldwide movement by educating, networking, supporting and redesigning all aspects of our daily lives to transform ourselves, our communities and our landscapes. www.permaculture.org.uk

Garden Organic - aims to educate and train people about Organic gardening and runs the Heritages Seed Library preserving old (de-listed) varieties. www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Social Farms and Gardens - a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together. www.farmgarden.org.uk

FarmED – aims to accelerate the transition towards regenerative farming and sustainable food systems by providing inspirational education, innovative research, practitioner-led knowledge exchange and personal development opportunities. www.farm-ed.co.uk

Ruskin Mill Land Trust -we help create lively centres for special needs education, arts and culture, festivals, social enterprise and community. As well as buildings we help protect the landscape, with woodlands, farms, market gardens and a fish farm that is reputed to be the oldest in the country, all looked after through holistic, biodynamic agriculture. www.rmlt.org.uk