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ALTERNATIVE RURAL FUTURES (FORESIGHT)

Authors

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Paper finalised in October 2021

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1. Headline messages

The heterogeneity of Galician rural areas makes difficult to work on a global viewpoint, thus, it is necessary to carry out a previous classification of the territory in three types of rural areas: abandoned, active and urbanised and forested rural areas.

The variables in the analysis of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to define the possible scenarios do not adjust in some cases to the Galician reality, so the MAP members considered necessary to include some nuances.

The desirable future for the MAP is the one with a coordinated governance, integrated and participative and with positive demographic dynamics. The differences between the current situation, its likely evolution and the desirable future are large, especially for the active and the abandoned rural areas.

Demography and governance, both the main variables in the JRC scenarios, do not appear within the priority goals to achieve the vision. This is because both are considered variables that depend on the selected goals. Progress in the goals will lead to the improvement of those.

The only goal that is strictly productive in the path towards the desired rural future is linked to the food and forestry sectors.

Although some of the goals are shared by the three defined rural areas, which are still able to take advantage of part of the trajectories of one type of rural area for the other two, the variations observed in the targets and paths defined to achieve those goals, justify the proposed territory classification.

2. Outcomes of the foresight exercise

2.1.   Current context of the MAP

2.1.1.   Global vision

Of the four scenarios designed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) (Bock and Krzysztofowicz, 2021), most of the MAP members (64.3%) view the scenario of rural specialisation (4) as the most likely scenario in the 2040 horizon. The future of the Galician rural areas would be defined by the continuity of the demographic contraction and a fragmented governance.

The members of the MAP pointed out that some of the variables of the different scenarios are not applicable to the Galician context and, on the contrary, some definition elements of its reality are not present in this characterisation. This led to the selection of scenario 4 with two notes:

- Six members of the MAP who chose scenario 4 expressed doubts about the relevance of the role that large corporations are going will play in Galicia in a future, both in terms of the type of farms and land uses.

- Four members pointed out their difficulties in choosing only one probable scenario due to the heterogeneity of the Galician rural areas, which makes possible it to have different scenarios depending on the type of rural area.

2.1.2.   The three Galician rural areas

The MAP pointed out repeatedly that rural Galicia is, currently, very heterogeneous, so that is necessary to distinguish the different rural areas to specify the future scenarios. For this, the typology created in the paper Estratexia de Infraestrutura Verde de Galicia (Díaz-Varela et al., 2019) was taken into account. This typology is taken from the territories of the 24 Local Action Groups (LAGs) (Galician RDP 2014-2020) and divides

them based on four groups of variables: trends in land use, urban-rural gradient, agro-livestock activity and economic and business dynamism.

The resulting classification differentiates four types of rural areas (Figure 1). Finally, the main three were chosen (urbanised and forested, active rural, and abandoned rural areas) and the MAP selected the probable scenario in 2040 for each of them (Table 1). Scenario 4 (Rural specialisation) is the displayed as the most likely for the majority of the territory, both active and abandoned rural areas. While for the urbanised and forested rural, the areas with greater demographic and socioeconomic dynamism, Scenario 1 (Rurban) was indicated as probable scenario.
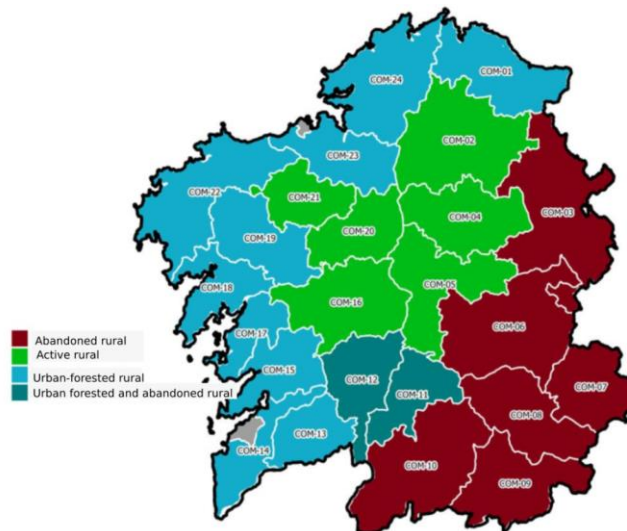
Figure 1: Typology of the rural areas of Galicia

Table 1: Probable scenario in 2040 for each of the 3 types of Galician rural areas (% of the responses).

	Urbanised and forested rural areas	Active rural areas	Abandoned rural areas
1 Rurban	**66.7**	16.7	16.7
2. Rural renewal	8.3	0.0	0.0
3 Rural connections	8.3	16.7	16.7
4. Rural specialisation	16.7	**66.7**	**66.7**
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2 allows the specification of that diagnosis because it gathers the most important variables to define the probable scenario of each type of the three Galician rural areas. The results lead to three considerations:

- The greater or lesser dynamism of agro-livestock activity, the main element that differentiates the active rural from the abandoned, is not perceived as a factor with sufficient power to change the probable future of rural areas.

- The probable scenarios for the different rural areas of Galicia coincide in the forecast that a fragmented governance will be maintained: absence of coordination, sectoral policies, competition between administrations, and limited participation of society in public policies.

- The variables gathered in the analysis of JRC in order to define the scenarios are not adjusted in some cases to the Galician reality, especially for the active rural areas and the abandoned rural areas. Thus, when the MAP members pointed out the variables that determined their election, there were three for the urbanised and forested rural areas: population, relationships between the rural

areas and the urban areas and work activity. Nevertheless, for the other two types of rural areas, the dispersion of responses is greater: none of the variables considered by JRC were selected by more than 3 members, with the only exception of the type of agriculture, in case of the active rural areas.

Table 2: Most relevant variables to define the probable scenario for each of the 3 types of Galician rural areas (number of responses).

	Urbanised and forested rural areas	Active rural areas	Abandoned rural areas
Population (structure and demographic dynamic)	6	2	3
Relationships between the rural and the urban areas	7	2	3
Work activity	5	3	3
Governance: solidarity/competition between administrations	2	1	0
Multilevel governance	1	2	0
Governance: sectoral policies	0	2	1
Governance: participation	0	0	2
Governance: institutions	0	0	1
Infrastructures	2	1	3
Services	1	0	2
Community relationships	1	1	3
Land uses	1	2	1
Types of agriculture	0	5	1
Climate change approach	0	2	1
Natural resources	0	0	1

2.2. Desirable future of the MAP

Contrary to what we saw for the probable future, the MAP defined the same desirable future for the three Galician types of rural areas: Scenario 2 (rural renewal). Most of the members therefore establish as desirable for the different types of rural areas a future in 2040 where governance has a more coordinated, integrated and participative structure. Furthermore, these areas register positive demographic dynamics (Table 3).

In this sense, the great leap between the probable and the desirable scenarios should be emphasised (Table 4). The changes between one and another are especially ambitious for the abandoned and the active rural areas, where the changes would mean the establishment of coordinated governance and, at the same time, reversing the current demographic contraction. While for the urbanised and forested rural areas, the changes would focus on the improvement of governance.

Table 3: Desirable scenario for the three Galician types of rural areas in 2040 (% of the responses).

	Desirable scenario 2040			
	1 Rurban	2 Rural renewal	3 Rural connections	4 Rural specialisation
Abandoned rural areas		66.6%	33.3%	
Active rural areas		66.6%	33.3%	
Urbanised and forested rural areas		66.6%	33.3%	

Table 4: Probable and desirable scenario in 2040 for the 3 types of Galician rural areas

Types of rural	Probable scenario in 2040	Desirable scenario in 2040
Abandoned rural areas	4. Rural specialization	2. Rural renewal
Active rural areas	4. Rural specialization	2. Rural renewal
Urbanised and forested rural areas	1 Rurban	2. Rural renewal

Once the desirable future has been established, the MAP worked on the definition of the goals to achieve the ideal scenario. Thereupon, they emphasised goals for each of the rural areas are summarised.

2.2.1. Relevant goals in the urbanised and forested rural areas

- ***Improve the quality and sustainability of the food and forestry production (1).*** The MAP highlighted the need to improve land management and wood production in this type of rural area. It is necessary to advance in the diversification, industrial transformation, and economic valuation, starting out from the design of long-term policies. Moreover, the MAP considers that is necessary to advance in the production of quality food, sustainable and linked to the territory.

- ***Advance in reconciliation and overcoming the traditional roles that link family care and gender (2).*** The MAP considers that this element is essential to tie people to the territory.

- ***Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers for the environmental services provided (3).*** It is necessary to compensate those producers that apply practices that generate environmental benefits in the long term. This is extremely important to change the forestry model.

- ***Advance in digitalisation and connections through high-quality broadband (4).*** This element is valued as essential for the competitiveness of the companies and to make these territories appealing for the population.

With regard to governance, although coordinated and participatory governance is a defining element of the chosen scenario, MAP members do not consider it necessary to act on it directly and explicitly, as its improvement will emerge on its own, as far as progress is made on the 4 previous goals. Finally, the MAP does not have a clear answer regarding the following question: which role should the administrations develop to offer attractive services and activities for the younger population.

### 2.2.2. Relevant goals in the active rural areas

- *Improve the quality and sustainability of the food and forestry production (1).*

- *Achieve effective land management (5).* Moreover, to expand the area of crops and pastures and decrease the dependence on imported agricultural inputs (especially food for livestock).

- *Improve the value of forestry, agricultural and livestock production (6).* Especially through the development of small companies in the agro-industry.

- *Improve/establish quality public services (7).* The MAP highlights those services that make it easier to reconcile family and professional life. These and other public services should be provided at the supra-municipal level (for example, through a municipal association or other entities) in order to facilitate access to those services for all the rural population.

2.2.3. Relevant goals in the abandoned rural areas

- *Achieve an effective land management (5).*

- *Improve the quality and sustainability of the food and forestry production (1).*

- *Actions to promote participatory governance (8).* The inhabitants of these areas should have different effective forms of participation in the decision-making processes. The MAP considers that in this type of rural area, the community still exists but there is a lack of mechanisms that facilitate their participation in the definition and management of public policies.

- *Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers for the environmental services provided (3)*. This is a key element in this type of rural area, so that their inhabitants obtain economic return from the natural capital they maintain.

- *Improve/establish quality public services (7).* The services must be adapted to the special characteristics of these territories (very low demographic density, aging and distance from the urban centres...).

The MAP defined a total of 8 goals, some of them common to several types of rural area while others are specific for any of the 3 types of Galician rural areas (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Goals established for each of the three types of Galician rural areas.
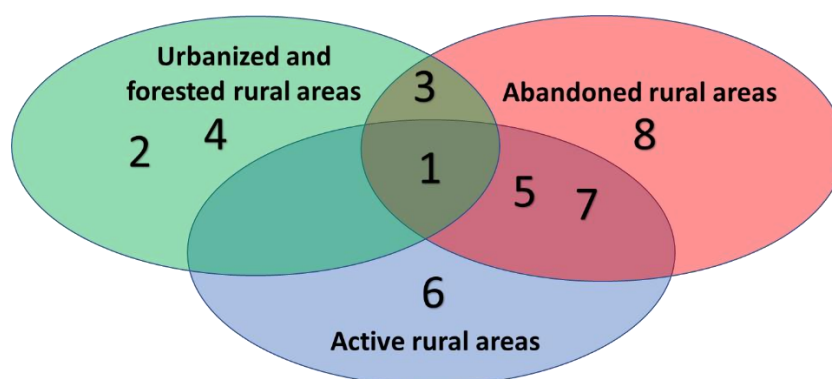
2.3.   **Goals and targets of the MAP**

The aim was not only to establish the desirable scenarios and goals but also to define the targets and identify itineraries. Therefore, it is considered necessary to reduce the number of goals on which we work so that it is possible to define targets, actions, agents, roles, barriers and opportunities. This is why the MAP was asked to select two goals for each of the different types of rural area. Table 5 shows the summarised results.

Table 5: Goals selected for each of the three types of rural (% of responses).

Abandoned rural areas	
Improve/establish quality public services	33.3
Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers regarding the environmental services provided.	26.7
Active rural areas	
Improve/establish quality public services	33.3
Improve the valuation of the forestry, agricultural and livestock production	26.7
Urbanised and forested rural areas	
Advance in reconciliation and overcoming the traditional roles regarding family care and gender	26.7
Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers regarding the environmental services provided.	26.7

As figure 3 shows, the initial list of 8 goals was reduced to 4: two specific to a type of rural area and another two shared (between the abandoned rural areas and the active rural areas and between the urbanised and forested rural areas and the abandoned rural areas). There are two elements of the election of the MAP that deserve to be highlighted:

- Demography and governance: the two main variables that define the scenarios are left out of the prioritised goals. Not because they are considered irrelevant, but because the members of MAP understand that they depend on the selected goals. On one hand, with improving services and employment opportunities it will be possible to boost the demographic dynamics of rural areas. On the other hand, the advance in the prioritised goals will be associated with an improvement of the governance.

- The actions of productive character seem to be in a secondary place in the itinerary towards the desirable future. Two of the selected goals are related to the improvement of living conditions of the population of rural areas, and a third one with the income from the environmental services provided by the primary sector. The only goal strictly productive is linked to the agri-food sector, which indicates that the MAP attributes a prominent role to this sector in the future of the Galician rural areas.

Figure 3: Prioritised goals for the three types of Galician rural areas.
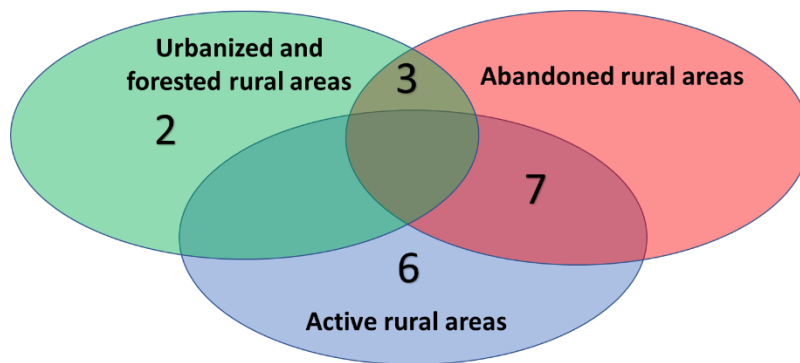
Figures 4, 5 and 6 show the sub-goals and targets for each of the prioritised goals in the different Galician rural areas. As we can see, the members of MAP were able to identify a high number of sub-goals and targets. In relation to those goals, the following considerations should be made:

- The improvement of public services appears as a prioritised goal for the active and abandoned rural areas. But, while there is a coincidence in three sub-goals (education, health care and accessibility), the active rural areas add two sub-goals more, and the targets related to accessibility are different in both cases. Thus, in the active rural areas, mobility and the creation of spaces that facilitate social interaction and leisure were pointed to as sub-goals, but not for the abandoned rural areas. The targets related to accessibility in abandoned rural areas focus on access to public services for 100% of the population. Either through the implementation of transport services or the approach of the service to certain types of population (dependents).

- The achievement of an adequate income for the environmental services provided by the primary sector is a common goal for two types of rural area: the abandoned rural areas and the urbanised and forested rural areas. Again, while there are common elements in the sub-goals and targets (such as the relevance of organic farming and the enhancement of agricultural landscapes), important differences are also noted. For example, there is a greater concern for leisure in the urbanised and forested rural areas, and heightened relevance of the sub-goal of facilitating coexistence with wildlife in abandoned rural areas.

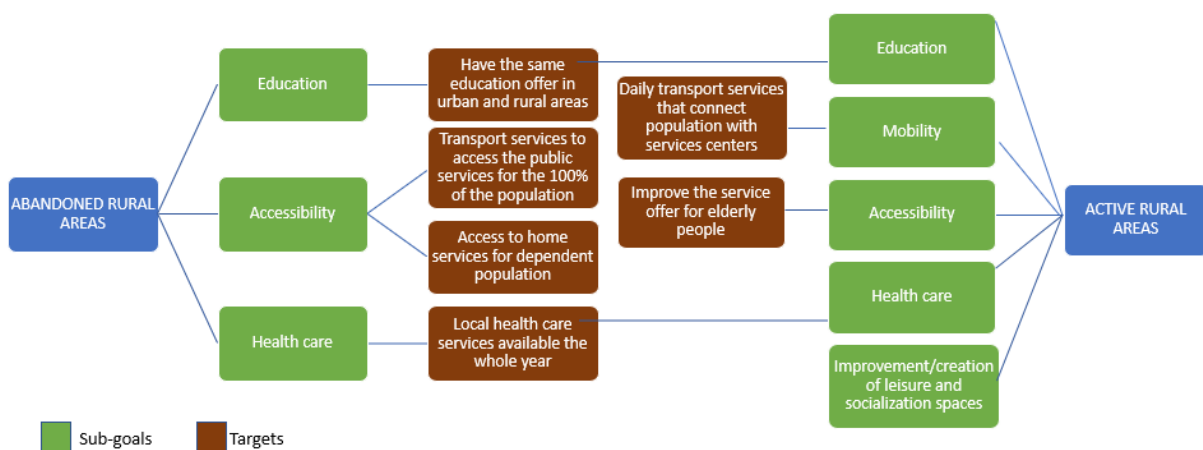Figure 4: Goal of improvement/establishment of quality public services. Sub-goals and targets.

Figure 5: Goal of adequate remuneration for producers for environmental services. Sub-goals and targets.
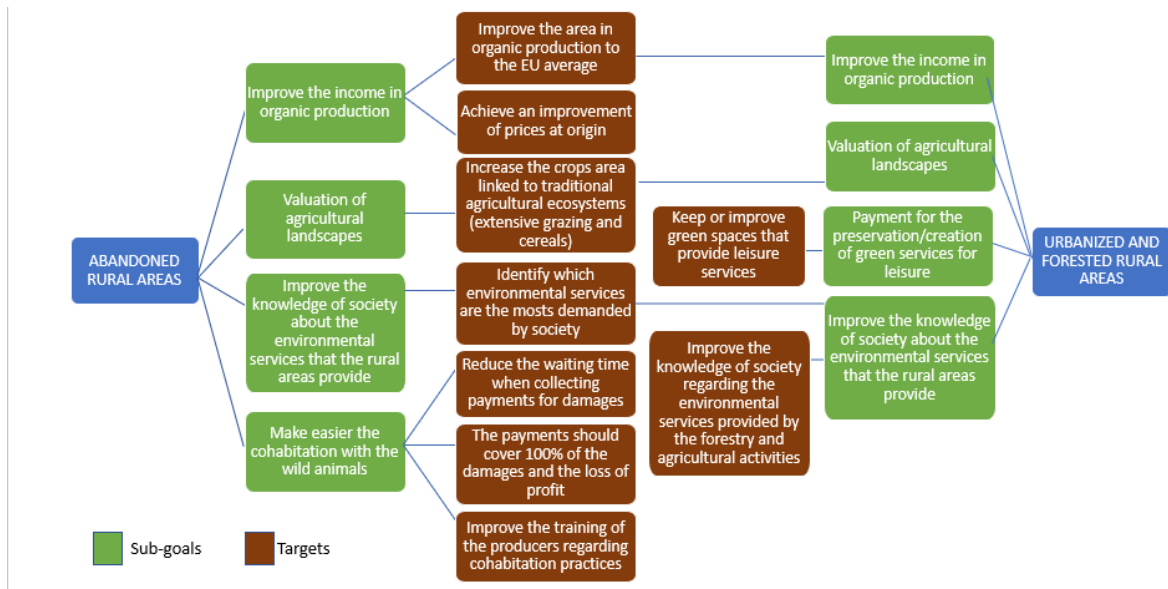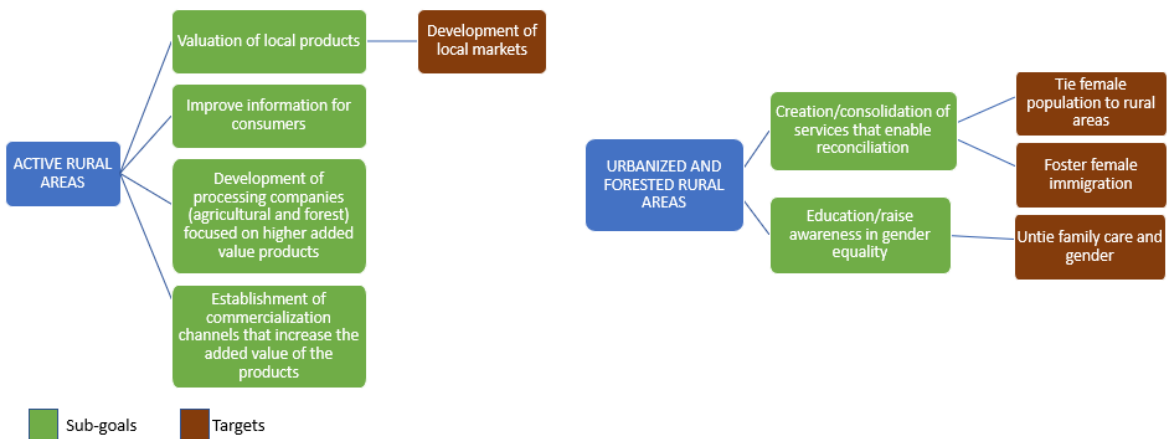

Figure 6: Goals: Improve the value of the agro-livestock production (left) and advance in reconciliation and overcoming the traditional roles regarding family care and gender (right). Sub-goals and targets.


2.4.   Pathways identified by the MAP

In total, the MAP identified 16 sub-goals to advance towards the desirable future of rural areas. The establishment of actions, agents and their roles, barriers, opportunities and indicators were requested for each of them. The high number of sub-goals prevented the itineraries from being completed in all 16 cases, but progress was made in defining actions and, to a greater or lesser extent, complete itineraries. Figures 7 to 12 show the summary results for each of the goals and types of rural areas.
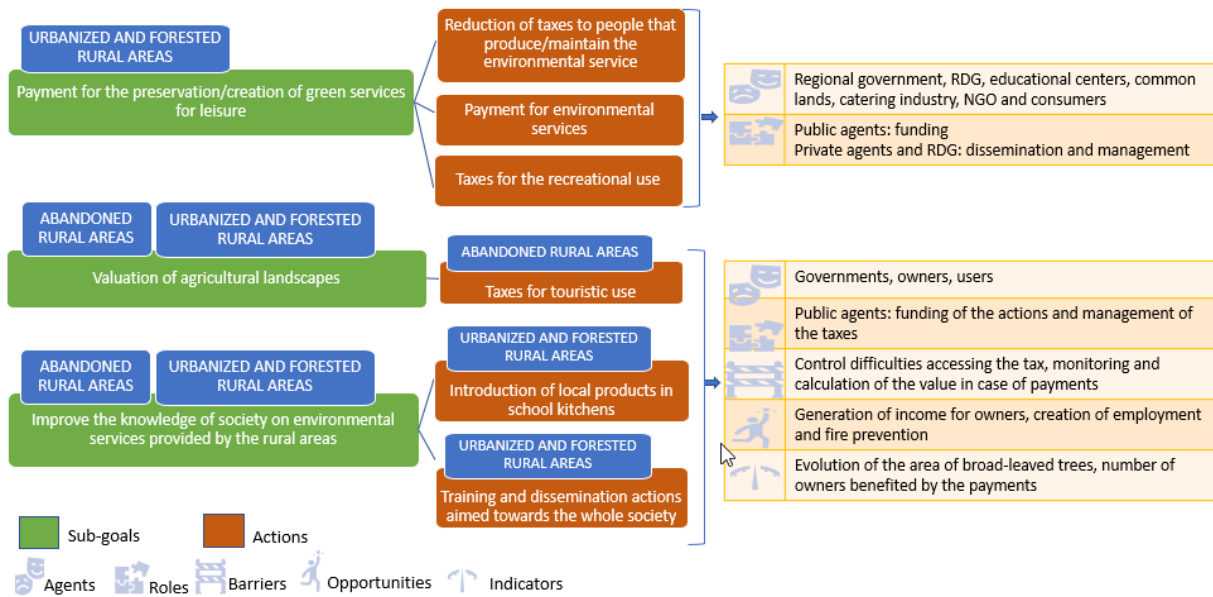
Figure 7: Itineraries defined for the goal: Advance in reconciliation and overcoming the traditional roles regarding family care and gender.
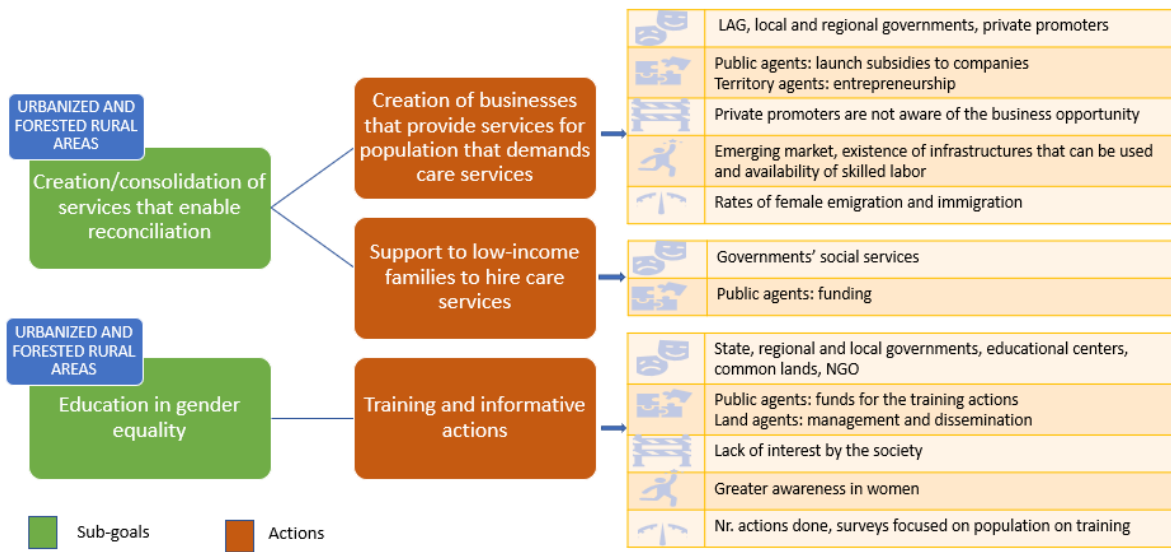
Figure 8: Itineraries defined for the goal: Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers regarding the environmental services provided (1).
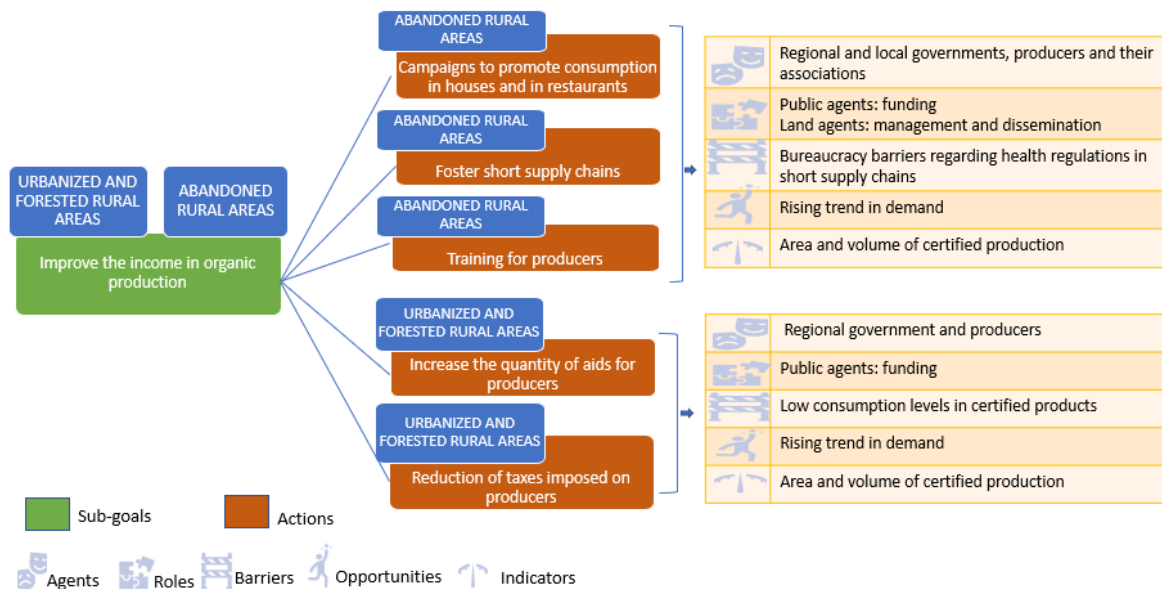
Figure 9: Itineraries defined for the goal: Achieve adequate income for agricultural producers, farmers and forestry producers regarding the environmental services provided (2).

Figure 10: Itineraries defined for the goal: Improve the economic valuation of the forestry, agricultural and livestock production.
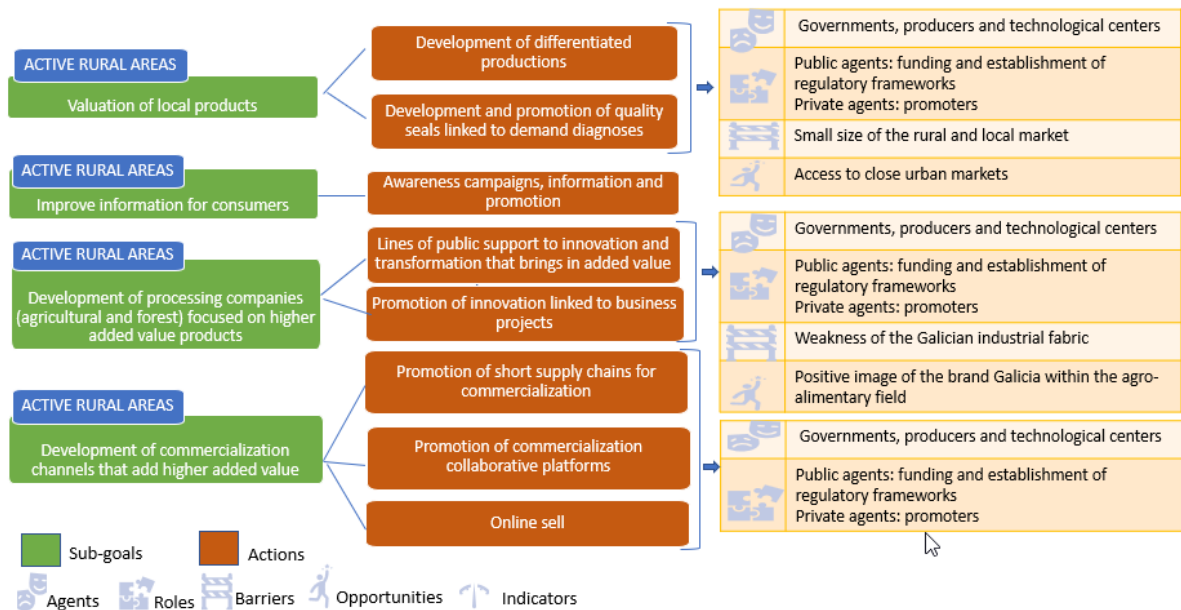
Figure 11: Itineraries defined for the goal: Improve/establish quality public services (1).
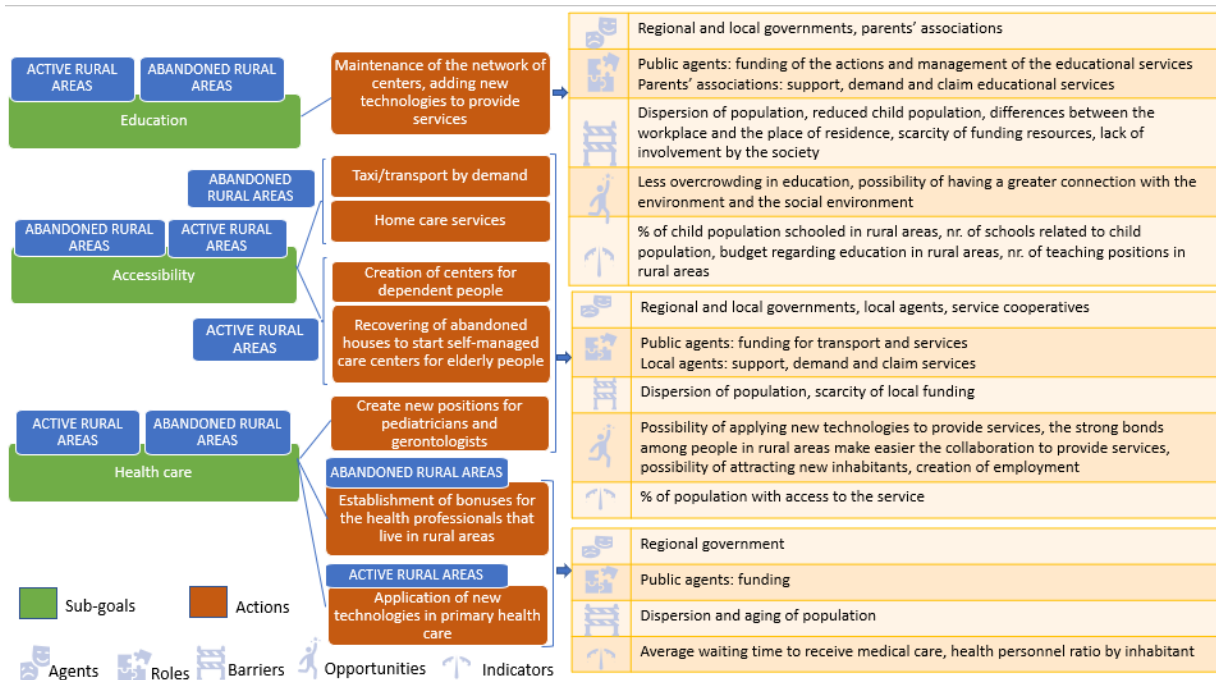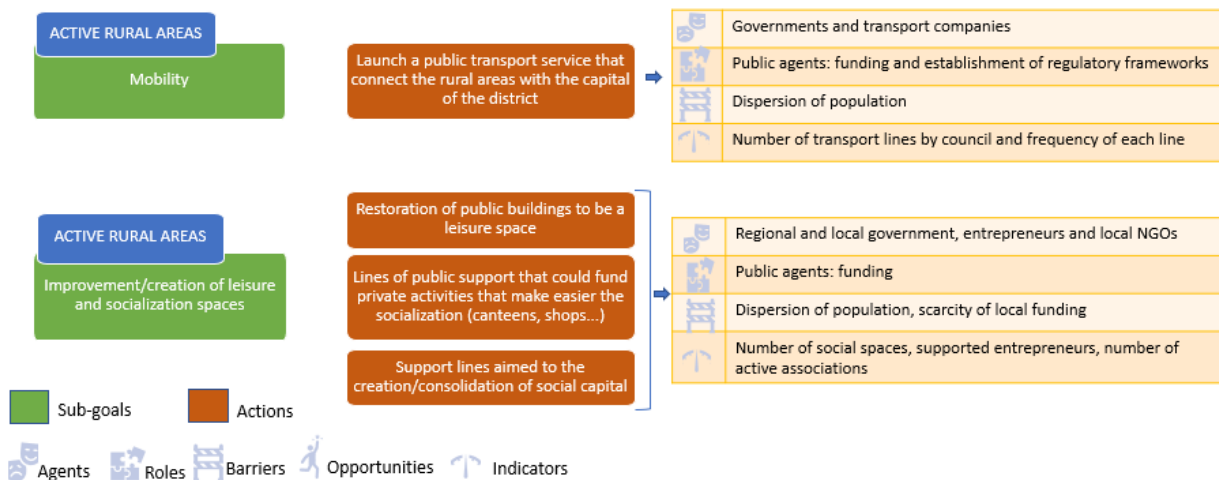

Figure 12: Itineraries defined for the goal: Improve/establish quality public services (2).

2.5.   Adjustment(s) towards the vision

The members of the MAP agreed that the difficulty in reaching the desirable future was much greater for the abandoned rural areas than for the urbanised and forested rural areas. Regarding the active rural areas, they concluded that this would depend on the model towards which agro-livestock activity tilted. Furthermore, it was stated that part of the trajectories defined for a specific type of rural areas could be perfectly valid for the other two types.

3. Recommendations and conclusions

In conclusion, the Galician MAP considered that, in order to imagine the future of the rural areas, it was necessary to consider as many perspectives as types of rural areas exist in Galicia. Based on the three types of rural areas, a scenario in which fragmented governance is maintained (lack of coordination, sectoral policies, competition among administrations and limited participation of society in public policy formulation) is considered probable; and for most of rural Galicia (the active and abandoned rural areas) a demographic regression was also considered probable. The desirable future is very different to these scenarios, and the MAP pointed to the Rural Renewal Scenario as the ideal to aspire to. Nevertheless, the distance between the probable and the desirable future is acknowledged because this distance is especially strong in the abandoned and active rural areas.

Both the goals and the targets, as well as the trajectories to achieve them, vary according to the three types of existing realities in rural Galicia. From the reading of the goals and imagined trajectories, we can highlight that the Galician MAP emphasises especially those that would need a great investment and management effort on the part of the public sector when choosing main goals such as the improvement of the public services, the improvement of the remuneration of the ecosystem services produced by the rural, and the overcoming of gender roles. This does not mean that private and social agents should not contribute to the transformation imagined by the MAP, which in the productive field is committed to improving the value chain in the agri-food and forestry sectors, and the quality and rooting of these productions in the territory.

4. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the 17 members of the Galician MAP for the work done.

5. References

Bock, A. and Krzysztofowicz, M. 2021. Scenarios for EU Rural Areas 2040, EUR 30755 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. ISBN 978-92-76-39407-5, doi:10.2760/29388,JRC125368.

Díaz-Varela, E., Ferreira-Golpe, M.A., García-Arias, A.I., Pérez-Fra, M.M., López-Iglesias, E. and Rodríguez-Morales, B. 2019. Estratexia Galega de Infraestructura Verde. 7.1. Estratexias para o aproveitamento das potencialidades da infraestructura verde para o desenvolvemento socioeconómico. Unpublished.

Annex 1. Methodology used in the MAP

Given the complexity of the scenario methodology, it was considered necessary to carry out work prior to the holding of the first workshop. Thus, a summary document and a comparative table with the main characteristics of each scenario was prepared. This material was sent by e-mail to the MAP members, and they were asked to answer a brief questionnaire of 3 questions: 1. in which scenario would they place the probable future of rural Galicia; 2. which defining aspects of the chosen scenario would not be applicable to the Galician reality; and 3. which defining aspects of rural Galicia did not appear in the description of the chosen scenario. 14 people answered the questionnaire: 8 from civil society, 3 from sciences and 3 from politics. This previous exercise helped the members of the MAP and the USC team to become familiar with the scenarios and the foresight exercise to be developed during that cycle.

The first workshop took place in person in June. 12 members of the MAP (8 from civil society, 1 from science and 3 from politics) attended. The workshop started with a brief reminder of the work developed during the first cycle of MAP. After a brief introduction to the JRC scenarios, the questionnaire results were presented and a round of comments was opened. It is necessary to highlight the consensus, which was already detected in the first cycle, about the heterogeneity of rural Galicia. This is why the option was to work with a classification of 3 different rural areas. Then, using a web form, the members were asked to place each of the 3 rural areas in the scenarios described by the JRC.

The vision defined in the first cycle of the MAP was introduced at this time, asking MAP members, first individually, to assess the vision based on the scenarios and the desirable future situation of each of the 3 rural defined in one of the scenarios designed by the JRC. They were divided into 3 groups (1 per each type of rural area) and they were asked to create a first list of goals to achieve the desirable rural. Each group presented, orally, their results, and the dynamic was repeated, this time, working within Galicia as a hole. Thus, the end of the first workshop was achieved.

The members of the MAP established a list of priority goals to achieve the extended vision, so before the second workshop they were sent a second survey in which they were asked to choose the two goals they considered essential for each rural area. The questionnaire was accompanied by a summary of the results of the first meeting of the MAP.

The second workshop took place in September, also in person. 7 members (6 from society and 1 from science) attended. After a brief reminder of the main results of the first workshop (10') and after the exposition of the results of the second questionnaire (10'), they began by defining in plenary the targets for each of the goals chosen as priorities (40'). Once that the targets were drawn up, the members were divided in 3 groups, one per each type of rural area in order to define the necessary actions to achieve them (50'). The definition of the trajectories to achieve that desirable rural future included, not only the description of actions but also the description of agents, barriers, opportunities and trade-offs (50'). Back to the plenary and after a brief presentation of the results of the work of each group, the results were discussed and reflected on their coherence regarding the vision (50'). Thus ended the second workshop.

The USC team drafted a first version of the Position Paper in Galician in order to send it to the MAP members. After the document was reviewed, it was translated into English and afterwards, the final version of the Position Paper was sent to SHERPA in October
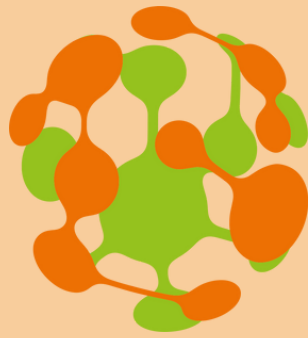
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