AE4EU

Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU)

Towards the development of agroecology in Europe

Deliverable report D6.1 – Draft framework for a European network of agroecological LLs and RIs
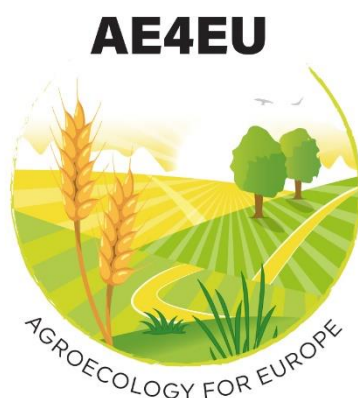
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Executive summary

In 2022, AE4EU partners embarked on a journey to create a European network in which many outside networks were invited to participate in co-creating a common purpose and goal to help accelerate agroecological transformations in agriculture and the wider food systems. The journey began by first clarifying the purpose and scope of the network in order for it to be something that should originate from, and cater to, the needs of agroecological grassroots and farmer (representative) groups, and networks—where the energy and motivation for leading agroecological transformation is strongest—although their potential is not always harnessed as innovations and networks are fragmented. In becoming more connected to other major processes related to agroecological transitions in Europe (such as the current EU agroecology partnership development processes), their contribution and capacity to accelerate agroecological transformations in Europe will be strengthened.

To this end, a process of developing a European agroecology network of networks (NofN) was started (see Deliverable 5.3). AE4EU partners first sketched some outlines of a framework to guide this development and then approached agroecological grassroots/farmer (representative) groups and networks at both the European level and country level to ask for feedback and invite them to join the journey of co-creating the network of networks. Since spring 2022, around 30 representative groups and networks have indicated their interest in actively participating in the co-creation process or at least stay connected to its further development. The initial outlines of the framework as developed by AE4EU partners have gone through a first round of interactive fine-tuning with participants. Key points of departure for the network were:

1) Support the collaboration and coordination of efforts aimed at transitioning to agroecology, allowing a space where everyone can communicate to avoid duplication of efforts and create synergies;

2) Connect the ideas, needs, interests, etc. of farmer groups and grassroots movements, and co-create the NofN with them (that is where we think AE4EU can in particular be complementary/contributing);

3) Seek to be complementary to existing projects and networks and connect to what is going on in e.g. the EU agroecology partnership process and the sister project ALL-Ready;

4) Support agroecological transformations of European agriculture as well as of wider food systems by expanding agroecology as a practice, as well as by influencing, inspiring, informing mainstream agriculture and food systems.

The first ideas on the potential added value/role of the NofN, considering that it should add value to the capacity that is already there, were: 1) Coordination: connecting networks and tuning of activities; 2) Knowledge exchange – inspiration; 3) Connecting farmers, research, NGO's, youth and citizens, education and training; 4) Enhance visibility of agroecology practices through e.g., lobbying, research based on farmers' needs; 5) Benefit from increased interest in and funding for agroecology such as in relation to the EU agroecology partnership, and 6) Connecting agroecology to food systems perspectives and programmes.

The framework will further evolve as an outcome of the continued interactive development with participants in the process. More participants may join and aid in its further development.

1. Introduction

In the beginning of the process, we noted how tasks 5.3 and 6.1 under AE4EU are closely related and the processes of developing the related roadmap (T5.3) and framework (T6.1) often overlap. Some of the introduction to both deliverables is for this reason the same or very similar.

The focus of both tasks is what we have rephrased as "a European network for Agroecological transformation of agriculture and the food systems". In other words, an architecture, an ecosystem, or a constellation with multiple functions, including Living Labs (LLs) and Research Infrastructures (RIs), that is ready and effective to support the agroecological transformation of agriculture and food systems. The architecture of this network needs to be such that it is, amongst others, strategic and appropriate. Leading to key questions to address such as "What characteristics of the network would provide the best way to see such transformation take place?" and "How does it cater desirably for context specific conditions, interests, and preferences?".

Task 5.3 is about sketching a broad perspective of what is needed to realise such a network, including how it would connect to already existing possibilities and dynamics. This is meant to result in a "roadmap" perspective that includes 1) a vision for such a network, 2) identified pathways (change processes related to specific thematic areas) that would need to be explored to see such network come into place and flourish, and 3) strategies for engaging with different pathways. As is stated in the task descriptions, the task "will result in a road map for the European network of agroecological RIs and LLs" (which has been rephrased into the network "…for the agroecological transformation of agriculture and food systems").

Task 6.1 builds on the work of T5.3 and develops the roadmap into something more propositional. What T5.3 will have done in a "lower resolution" picture will here be translated into a proposed "plan de campagne" for the development of the desired network dimensions and dynamics. That includes making connections to ongoing and planned efforts of e.g. the EU agroecology partnership programme. We may also say that T6.1 is the culmination/ synthesis of all of AE4EU's work in terms of answering the questions of 'so what do the findings of the various WPs and tasks suggest?', and 'now what?' (i.e. where do we go from here?).

The AE4EU project acknowledges that there is a whole range of agroecology initiatives across Europe (both in research and in practice) but that there is a lack of progress in the further

uptake and upscaling of these initiatives. The project tasks 5.3 and 6.1 jointly seek to explore how this uptake process might be given a major boost. The main strategy to achieve this is not by doing something 'completely new' but by seeking to improve the efficacy and effectiveness of the variety of existing initiatives by improving the interaction and joint learning between them. We see this as an attempt to build a new network that connects a wide variety of existing networks.
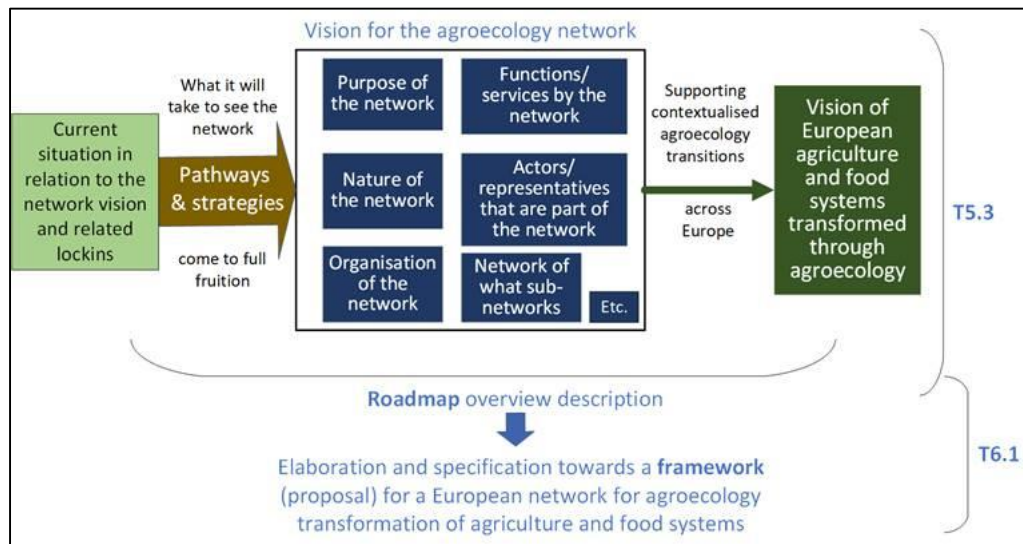
Task 6.1 seeks to develop the 'framework' for such a network structure. It will address what exactly the objective of such a network could be (to contribute to the overall goal of giving a boost to the take-up of agroecology in practice), what kind of activities it should engage in, what its membership should look like, etc. Task 5.3 focuses on the process (called the '**roadmap**' in the Description of Action of the project) by which such a network could develop. It will address what the key phases are in building such a network, who should be committed and when, in which order activities should be carried out, etc. Figure 1 summarises this perspective.

Figure 1: A simplified perspective on the relationship between tasks 5.3 and 6.1. Note: AE=Agroecology.

In this document, we focus on what task 6.1 has done so far in relation to the above, though some activities of tasks 5.3 and 6.1 have overlapped in implementation.

The process of developing the draft roadmap and EU agroecology strategy, which we will discuss further in the following chapter, involved taking the following steps:

1. Exploration by AE4EU core team of ways in which agroecological transitions in agriculture and the wider food systems in Europe could take place and what would need to be considered.

2. Based on that exploration, design a process to build a European network on agroecology to accelerate transitions to sustainable agriculture and food systems. This was done in consultation with the wider team of AE4EU partners.

3. Start that process by approaching the envisaged key partners outside AE4EU to test the appropriateness and attractiveness of the ideas with them and make adjustments where needed.

4. Implement a co-creation process of what came to be referred to as an EU Agroecology NofN with a group of (at the start) about 30 European organisations and initiatives. This start-up took place in March 2022.

5. Continued process of co-creating the NofN through a rather organic process in which participants outside AE4EU are invited to take active roles. This includes fine-tuning developments with processes related to the envisaged EU agroecology partnership and the other CSA project ALL-Ready.

2. Towards a framework for a European network on agroecology

In this chapter, we summarise a number of initial framework ideas that we developed interactively with AE4EU partners. In chapter 3, we describe how we built on this in further developing framework dimensions with wider participants in the NofN co-creation process.

2.1. Positioning the (role of) the network of networks in a multi-level perspective

Our reference point for the aspired future state of the European network for agroecological transformation of agriculture and food systems will be an integrated perspective of agroecology as food system approach. To allow Europe to benefit from the full breadth of what agroecology has to offer, in terms of science, practice, and movement.

To achieve this, we are interested in any move in that direction, including certain conventional farmers who are only just starting to apply some of the agroecology principles and practices. The network will need to be able to cater to this. Supporting conventional farmers, for example, will require a different approach than is needed for supporting organic farms or movements around agroecological territories. Furthermore, it will also need to be able to cater to differences between (countries) situations ranging from differences in soils and climates to differences in culture, history, and local preferences. There are various ways in which this can be illustrated. One is through a multi-level perspective (Figure 2).
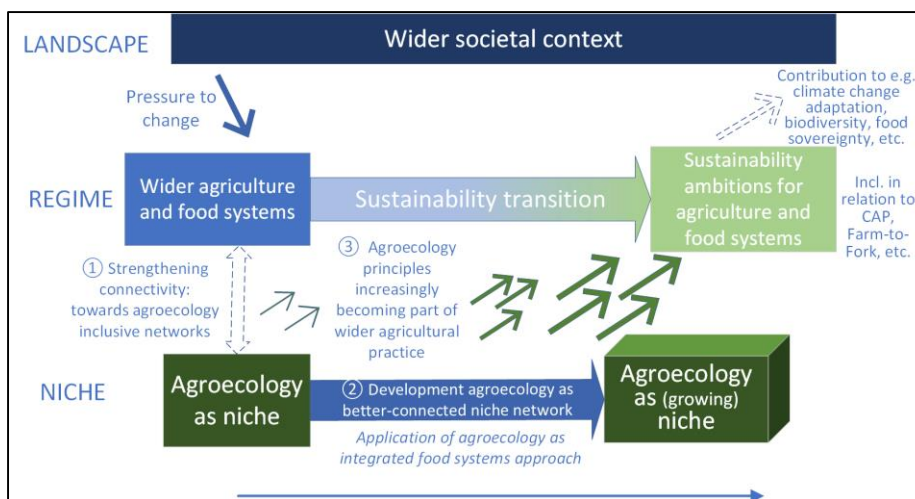
Figure 2: Agroecological transformations from a multi-level perspective (MLP)

There are already many great examples of agroecology, at the farm level, at the level of farmer-citizen collaborations, and at the level of agroecology territories/landscapes. They have a potential of inspiring change in other places but they also have a dynamic of their own which may remain more of a niche-level endeavour or a constellation of niches. Much can be won by strengthening such niche-level dynamics. At the same time, we would like to see agroecology principles becoming guiding principles, even in conventional agriculture. This is more of a regime-level dynamic. It may not go (quickly) as deep into agroecology as niche dynamics do, but it does contribute to agroecology becoming more defining for agriculture and food systems at large. This is further illustrated in Figure 3.
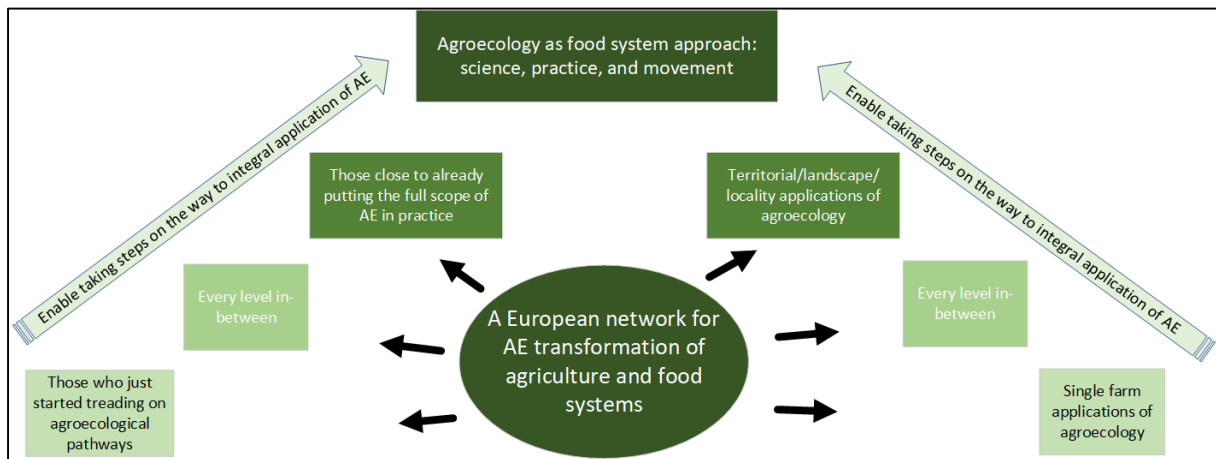
Figure 3: Illustrating how the proposed European network would contribute to a range of different processes that all play a role in agroecological transformations of agriculture and wider food systems

This approach is in line with Anderson et al. (2019) who suggest that agroecological transformation reflects not one grand theory of change, but a recognition of a co-evolutionary and adaptive approach that involves, "multiple transformations that will intersect, overlap, and conflict in unpredictable ways".[1]

The European network will engage with such dynamics. In terms of time frames, this network is meant to become fully functional and effective within the next few years. It is meant to contribute to seeing visions of European agriculture and food systems being transformed through agroecology principles and practices increasingly becoming a reality as we move closer to 2030 and beyond.

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[1] Anderson, et al. (2019).

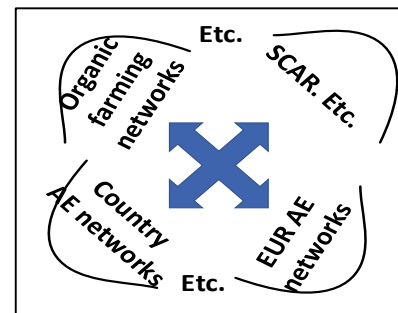## 2.2. Initial working principles/premises for the network

The following principles and premises were identified in the early stages of this WP, and were later revisited when engaging with broader (beyond AE4EU) participants in the network of networks.

1. Thinking in terms of a NofN rather than in terms of one grand, centrally governed, network. Seeking to enhance smart connectivity (see Figure 5). This will involve establishing connectivity at European level, at national/local level, and on the interfaces of different levels (mutually strengthening). Enabling/facilitating connections of networks (can be also sub-level collaboration of only some already existing networks) will be a key for achieving this. An overarching network could support existing networks in acquiring new EU funds for agroecological transformations.

Figure 5: Illustrating the idea of establishing smart connectivity in a European agroecology network of networks.

2. In taking the network of networks forward, we consider agroecology as an integrated food system approach. This means it will be important to be informed about developments of the SCAR sustainable food systems partnership proposal and to include territory/landscape level expressions of agroecology principles.

3. The SCAR agroecology proposal and other agroecology related policy endeavours need to be taken on board and connected to, but we will not limit ourselves to the focus and scope of that. That includes not limiting the scope to (project-type) LLs and RIs in terms of what the network will encompass, and taking a broader perspective towards all entities that can play a role in the agroecological transformation of European agriculture and the food systems.

4. Specifically involve existing (bottom up) organised agroecology networks at European and national level networks such as Agroecology Europe[2], Via Campesina Europe[3], Urgenci[4] and ARC[5], in exploring and defining the contents of steps to be taken, besides other key representatives from research and policy circles. This may be framed as informing the vision from *both the 'bottom up' and the 'top down'*, without compromising the bottom-up perspectives in the integration, as well as

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[2] https://www.agroecology-europe.org/

[3] https://www.eurovia.org/

[4] https://urgenci.net/

[5] https://agroecologyresearchaction.org/

using/linking to existing support structures at EU level such as thematic groups of EIP-Agri.

5. Agroecology principles not only need to inform visions, but also need to guide the very processes of defining visions, pathways, i.e. how this is done, who is involved, etc.. This also means that the structure and tasks of the overarching network will be developed together with stakeholders and specific farmer representatives and not more or less fixed beforehand by researchers. It also means an appropriate focus on scaling the application of agroecology principles, not on scaling the applications of standard agroecology practices (so-called 'solutions'). E.g. intercropping is a great practice, but it is most of all the principles underpinning the practices of intercropping that need to be applied more widely, not necessarily intercropping as such. Also see point seven about contextualisation.

6. The network will be tuned to supporting the full range of farmers from agroecology afficionados to conventional farmers taking first/small steps in relation to agroecology. In other words, anyone who wants to take steps in the expressing agroecology principles more in their practices. The network will not only be about supporting farmers though. Many other actors (e.g. in value chain, policy, etc.) have a role to play as well in making agroecology-based agriculture and food systems possible. The network needs to connect to them as well.

7. Appropriately cater for needs to contextualise (e.g. in different countries/regions, different types of actors), shying away from scaling silver bullets and one-size-fits-all approaches, but also thinking in terms of scaling diversity. In other words, scaling the application of agroecology principles and not of agroecological (standard) 'solutions'.

2.3. Specific positioning of the 'network of networks'

An agroecological transformation of agriculture and the wider food system in Europe will require more than just having a NofN in place. We acknowledge that a lot of good work is going on already, providing many opportunities for agroecological transitions in Europe, both at Europe level and at country and local levels. NofN is not trying to do something better, but rather seeks to give a boost to that potential by enhancing connectivity, collaboration, coordination, coherence, and inclusiveness. All of this is first of all about relationships, which are key in an ecological perspective on food systems. Good relationships are the basis for being able to benefit from shared learning, shared knowledge and information, shared resources, shared responsibility, and wider solidarity. Figure 6 illustrates this perspective.
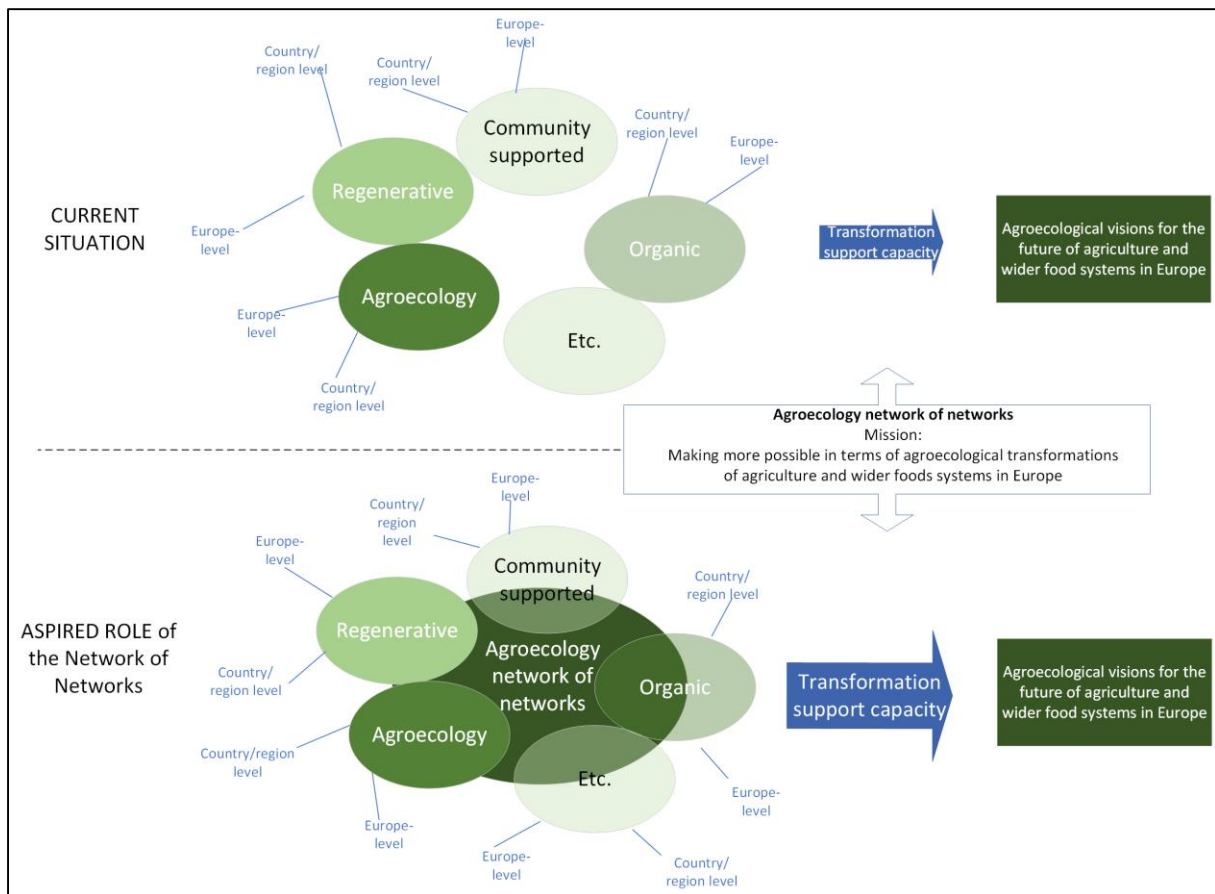
Figure 6: Locating the tentative mission of the network of networks

## 2.4. Potential differentiation in terms of spheres of influence

It may be appropriate to differentiate between different 'audiences' and participants in orientating the NofN. The core of the network could consist of the initiators, who are the grassroots/farmer (representative) networks at European and country level who are already

involved (see Deliverable 5.3 for a brief indication of who they are). They would form the momentum that provides the continuing energy and motivation for agroecological transformations. The NofN would then first of all cater to their needs, or, rather, enhance their capacities (including connections) to be able to play a pivotal role in European transformations to agroecology.

The second sphere would be stakeholders interested in agroecology principles and practices, but with some reservations as regards some parts of it. Living labs and collaborative research efforts could be a key way of harnessing the potential for agroecological transformations emerging in that group of stakeholders.

Thirdly, there is the sphere of some stakeholders of conventional agriculture which is largely resistant to seriously transforming its practices. Rather than giving up on them, it will be critical to entice them to consider, at an appropriate scale, the application of some of the agroecology principles. This may work best by offering them opportunities to see how this works out in practice. It will require appropriate communication which is not judgemental, but rather inviting and attractive to their needs and challenges. This perspective is illustrated in Figure 7.
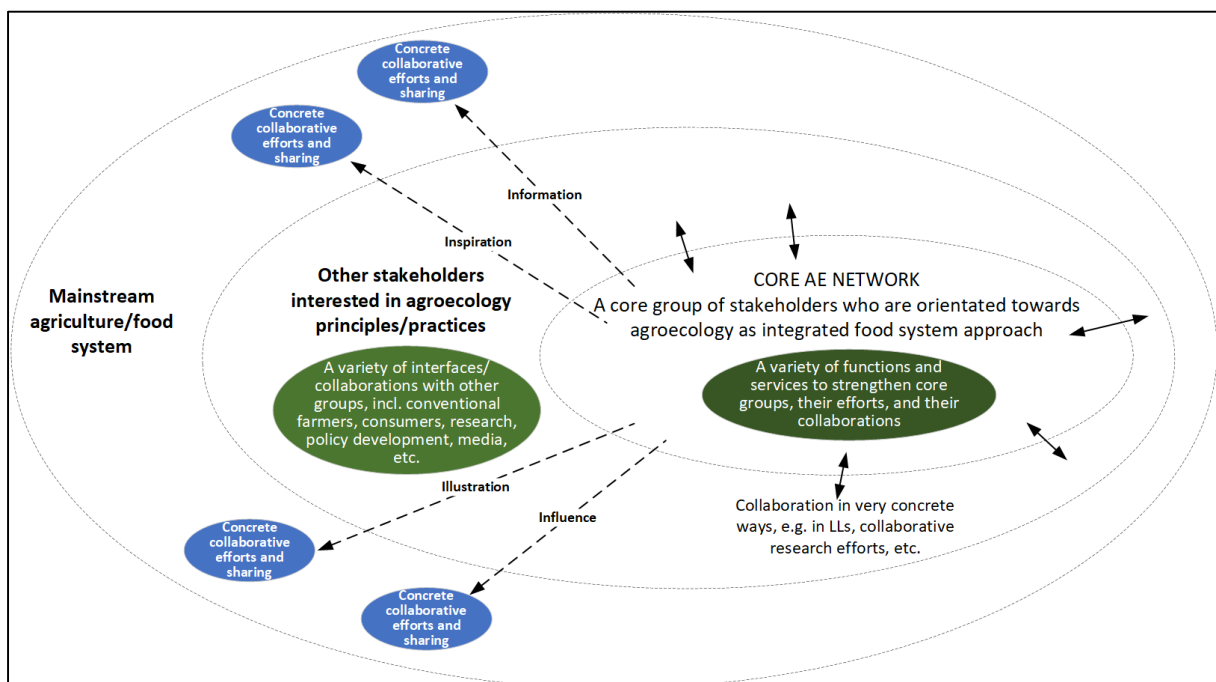
Figure 7: Differentiated potential roles of the network of networks

2.5. A quick outline of key aspects of the framework

Tentatively, the following aspects of the framework for the European agroecology network of networks were identified (Table 1). These are currently (mid 2022) further discussed and elaborated on in working groups[6] of participants in the co-creation process.

Table 1: Outlining key aspects of the network of net work

Aspects of the network of networks	Key questions
Ownership and participation	Who are meant to be (primary, secondary, etc.) owners?
Scope, purpose, and niche	What is it meant to cover (and what not), and who is it meant to support?
Nature/organisational setup and governance	What kind of 'thing' should it be, how organised/set up?
Functions and services	What specific type of functions does it need to have, and what services does it need to be able to offer to whom.
Relationships	to which other (agroecology relevant) organisations, initiatives, networks, movements does it need to relate and in what way?
Funding and continuity	how are the functions and services and the organisational setup in general going to be financed?
Diversity and demand-driven orientation	how is it going to enable connecting to a variety of needs and interests?
Monitoring and evaluation	How its efficacy needs to be monitored and evaluated periodically – what monitoring and evaluation approach fits the purpose of network of networks?

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[6] Initially, five working groups were identified, but in the first meeting it was decided that this was not practical since three working groups overlapped too much. Currently three working groups are operational on the following subjects:
- NofN networking and connectivity to EU partnership development processes
- NofN governance, organizational setup, mission and focus, and roles & functions
- NofN positioning in relation to topical issues and developments in Europe

3. Co-creating the framework

In the process of interacting with participants in the co-creation process of the network of networks, we refined a number of key considerations which we describe in the following.

3.1. Stakeholder engagement strategy

The stakeholder engagement strategy of NofN involved three steps.

Step 1 December 2021-January 2022: Exploration as AE4EU partners what type of stakeholders would be appropriate to test the general idea of the NofN with, and based on that decide who to invite for a first 'testing the waters' meeting to receive feedback on whether or not to proceed with this idea. The general idea is to 'cast the net wide', but clearly link, at least in the first stages, to representatives of networks who embrace the range of agroecological principles at a practical level and in particular link to grassroots/farmer organisation representatives.

Step 2 (February-March 2022): Contact selected stakeholders, get their feedback through individual and informal talks, and have the first 'testing the waters' meeting. To include meeting with ALL-Ready to check how they feel about the idea and how they view complementarity between what they do and what AE4EU is doing.

Step 3 (April 2022): Seeing NofN grow organically, inviting initial participants to suggest who else to invite, and keep doing so to ensure that – although NofN will have a particular orientation and nature of interaction – it remains sufficiently open to gradually also include participants from different countries and different sectors (notably to include value chain actors). As NofN contours become clearer in terms of descriptions regarding how it will function, who is to be part of it, etc., the initial stakeholder engagement approach will be revisited in discussion with initial participants.

Related to all steps there are three points of departure:

- It will accept workable difference in specific approaches to agroecology so as not to be kept busy by, e.g., definition matters. This will allow for engaging with a broader set of stakeholders.

- This is about a NofN, in other words, not a network of organisations in general so as to prevent competing with existing networks but rather enhance their capacity by forging connections and exchange, and future collaboration.

- NofN will develop an appropriate outward connectivity with relevant actors at European level to position it appropriately in relation to initiatives such as the EU agroecology partnership development processes, the EU partnership on sustainable food systems, and other relevant EU initiatives (e.g. the Soil Mission). This is to seek to contribute appropriately to these EU programmes, in particular the one on agroecology. Also, and specifically, it will fine-tune developments with ALL-Ready, ideally involving them throughout the NofN co-creation process (they already participated in different meetings). At the same time, NofN will not limit itself to these connections, but will also develop appropriate further connectivity with agroecology related initiatives and actors.

3.2. Fine-tuning initial outlines of the framework with participants

Key points of departure for the network were:

- The NofN will support the collaboration and coordination of efforts aimed at transitioning to agroecology;
- We want to connect the ideas, needs, interests, etc. of farmer groups and grassroots movements, and co-create the NofN with them (that is where we think AE4EU can in particular be complementary/contributing);
- We seek to be complementary with existing projects and networks and connect to what is going on in e.g. the agroecology partnership process and ALL-Ready;
- We want to support agroecological transformations of European agriculture as well as of wider food systems through
  - expanding agroecology as a practice, as well as
  - influencing, inspiring, informing mainstream agriculture and food systems.

First ideas on the potential value/role of network of networks, considering that it should add value to capacity that is already there:

- Coordination: connecting networks and tuning of activities
- Knowledge exchange – Inspiration
- Connecting farmers, research, NGO's, youth and citizens, education and training
- Enhance visibility of agroecology practices
- Lobbying
- Research based on farmers' needs
- Benefit from increased interest in and funding for agroecology e.g. Partnerships
- Connecting agroecology and food system (in programs-partnerships and concrete activities)

3.3. <u>Further elaborating on framework dimensions</u>

In exploring framework dimensions, we came to a first focus on the following key aspects of the network of networks:

Appropriately connecting to the EU partnership(s):

- How do we collaborate and connect with the Agroecology and the Sustainable Food partnerships?

Appropriate mission and objectives:

- What is the core mission and objective? Tentatively: Strengthening, expanding agroecology, and influencing mainstream agriculture/food systems.

Appropriate governance and organisational setup:

- What are criteria? How organised? Who decides?

Appropriate key roles/functions and focus (priorities):

- What is the role of the network? Tentatively: connecting, inspiring, support bottom up, farmer research, lobbying.

Appropriately positioning in current developments:

- How to ensure that agroecology remains high on the agenda within Farm-to-Fork also with social and ecological challenges such as the war in Ukraine?

Through an interactive workshop with participants in the co-creation process these aspects of the framework were further explored. The following describes initial thoughts expressed (Table 2). During the second half of 2022, these initial thoughts will be further refined with a broader group of participants.

Table 2: Tentative thoughts shared by participants in relation to key aspects of the network of networks (largely unedited)

1. Appropriately connecting to EU partnerships

Background information

- Partnership is in the preparation phase.
- EU agroecology partnership focuses on first 3 "Gliessman" levels of agroecology.
- Food partnership explicitly mentions to focus on levels 4 and 5 of agroecology. Citizen engagement in re-oriented food systems is one of the themes.

First thoughts

- The focus is research and innovation. There will be research calls focusing on research infrastructures and Living Labs.
- Research infrastructures are more research oriented focusing on datasets, long term experiments etc. Living labs seem to be the best and easiest entry point to connect to.
- From the mapping exercise in WP1 of AE4EU, we see that it is difficult to find and identify LLs especially self-defined LLs.
- We have the impression that many existing LL are not visible yet
- All Ready provided an overview of LL

Proposal for concrete actions

- Connect to both EU Partnerships (agroecology and sustainable food systems); indicate that AGROECOLOGY is the linkage between both partnerships and we identify innovative approaches integrating all 5 levels of agroecology.
- Identify LLs; describe network of LLs and show case them and connect them to the Partnerships
- Ask NGO's to identify interesting LLs and share knowledge
- Put on the agenda: Inclusiveness of agroecology practices: that agroecology is not only for the rich
- Put on the agenda: Representation of agroecology farmers: that agroecology farmers should have a position in future actions

2. Appropriate mission, ambition and objectives

Challenges for agroecology adoption

To identify potential objectives for the NofN we first discussed a number of challenges for stimulating the wider adoption of agroecology principles. These included:

• Assessment: How to assess and identify good and well-functioning agroecology practices, i.e. practices that are ecologically sound, effectively produce food and provide a good livelihood for the farmer.

• Linking 'agroecology frontrunners' and 'mainstream farmers':

• Knowledge transfer: transfer knowledge on good agroecology practices from frontrunner farmers to mainstream farmers.

• Promotion and demonstration: create (better) visibility of good agroecology practices for the wider farming community

• Ambition: Agroecology has the ambition of a 'holistic' approach, addressing both the production and consumption side of food. Widespread use of agroecology principles therefore not only requires farmers to do things differently but requires wider societal change.

• Ambivalent role of policy: policies certainly play a role, both in stimulating or impeding agroecology uptake, but that role is not always clear and varies across EU member states.

Challenges for agroecology movements and networks

Given the challenges above, we identified several challenges that agroecology-oriented organisations face, including:

• The overall ambition is enormous, including overall societal change. Specific organisations can only address a small subset of the issues at stake.

• This is a challenge in terms of 'knowledge' (groups have only limited overview of what's at stake) and 'capacity' (groups can only target a limited set of activities).

• The dynamic of change is not always well understood and it is not always clear what the levers are that make farmers change. Neither is it always clear how to assess the outcomes of change, i.e. how we can measure what constitute good agroecology practices. We are in need of an 'operational toolbox' that helps to assess this.

• Many organisations and networks have complimentary objectives and work on comparable things. This is useful since many developments have a local basis but also represents duplication of (parts of) activities. This in part represents a loss of efforts which is a shame given limited capacities of most groups.

• Groups across Europe can certainly learn more from each other but there are also limits to that due to differences in local circumstances. It is not always clear what is 'general' and what is 'local' in the dynamic and what groups can learn from each other.

Ambitions and objectives for the NofN

Given the two types of challenges above, the NofN could seek to address the following objectives:

• Address overarching knowledge issues that are relevant to various agroecology networks;

• Provide a platform to coordinate activities between various individual networks

• Provide a platform to coordinate interaction with policy-makers at the EU level (lobbying?)

• Combine efforts from various networks to develop an 'operational toolbox to assess good agroecology practices' as mentioned above.

• Provide a platform to coordinate linking with the EC partnerships for agroecology and sustainable food systems that are currently in the making. A strong NofN could provide a better basis to interact with those responsible for programs and funding within the framework of those platforms. One concrete activity, that would also be in the interest to these platforms, would be to develop an 'operational toolbox' as mentioned above.

3. Organisational setup and governance questions

One of the things shared from this group was that it is important that if NofN is about connecting networks, it is not about connecting individual organisations, and that further mapping of agroecology networks may be needed. And that it would be good to see how the different participants in NofN are connected with each other through various networks.

There was also the thought that NofN should not try to move to a strongly institutionalized form that would require all kinds of governance arrangements, but rather (at least initially) focus on strengthening social relationships, trust, synergies, etc.

4. Appropriate key roles and functions

It was difficult to think about roles and functions without also considering things like appropriate mission and governance. Because they are interdependent topics.

A variety of roles and functions can be considered but at least it should support country-level agroecology networks in e.g. the following ways:
- Provide access to knowledge, information, experiences, research outputs, which, amongst others, can help networks in their lobby/advocacy efforts at country level, but also to provide new ideas and concrete examples of opportunities.
- Pull together research ideas from farmers across Europe and bundle this towards relevant research topics to be followed up at European level (e.g. in project that link to the new EU partnerships).
- Organise exchange opportunities between country networks. In this way, they can learn from each other, also in very practical ways. E.g. UK experiences with farm fairs may provide useful ideas for organizing similar (adjusted to Polish context) events in Poland.

It also serves to encourage each other and consider how networks can mutually support each other.

- Help connect these networks to Europe-level (funding) opportunities, and/or collaborative efforts at European level.
- Provide a kind of think tank/knowledge hub function to help address concrete questions/challenges from different networks. E.g. in Poland those interested in agroecology often reside in cities. How to connect people on the countryside more? Other countries and/or European organisations could help find ways forward. This can also be about how enhance cooperation between farmers.
- Meeting live once a year as representatives from various networks could be one of the things to be organized.

We only scratched the surface of exploring appropriate roles and functions of NofN, but there appeared to be plenty of scope for adding value to roles and functions that are already performed by existing groups/organisations/platforms.

5. Appropriately positioning in current developments

Food sovereignty and food autonomy gains attraction but with what definition? Worrisome and optimistic. In situation of war, ecology is first put aside.

"It is difficult to import agrochemicals, this is also an opportunity for change. All inputs become more expensive. Price fertilizers very high because of fossil fuels. Also a lot of feed for livestock coming from Ukraine. Now is the chance to promote agroecology, it can reduce dependency on external inputs." It is also important to increase own seed base.

The following thoughts we mentioned in one of the meetings:

"Agroecology is a peacemaking tool. Agroecology doesn't demand resources from elsewhere, breaks with neo-colonialism, extractivism."

"Also explain why food becomes expensive, to include consumer, citizen perspective."

"This requires reconceptualization of what is happening. This is a consequences of the current dominant system."

"Concrete 1st action: input welcome on Paper on behalf of Agroecology Europe about changing situation in relation to war in Ukraine."

3.4.

3.5. Bringing in key insights from across AE4EU Work Packages

Task 6.1 (framework development) may be seen as the synthesis or culmination of the various work streams under AE4EU. WP1 provides key insights on what is happening across Europe in terms of agroecological endeavours, both LLs and RIs, and wider agroecological organisations and initiatives. This is meant to feed directly into the exploration of what the network of networks should encompass. WP2 provides key insights on the topic of living labs and their specific nature in comparison to other initiatives, as well as on research infrastructures. The NofN will need to link appropriately to these, and the insights will therefore inform the way in which activities will be set up. WP3 explores funding schemes and sources for agroecology. This will provide crucial insights for the NofN, especially in terms of opportunities for diversifying funding so that it can develop into truly continuous effort as European agroecology LLs. This is crucial since participants in the co-creation process have already indicated that relationships (building) will need to be at the heart of the network of networks, which means long-term engagement opportunities. WP4 gathers insights from country-level LLs which also deal with questions of developing as an agroecology network, but then at the country level. Such insights will inform e.g. ideas on governance of the network of networks. Furthermore, WP4 works on a European agroecology knowledge and practice exchange hub, which aligns closely to the NofN. This European agroecology exchange hub and the NofN will not be developed as two separate endeavours, but rather as being mutually supportive/complementary. WP5 (T5.1 and T5.2) helps to better understand policy dynamics in relation to agroecology in Europe. Though the NofN is meant to be built from the bottom up, it will be essential to connect appropriately and effectively to policy dynamics at Europe level, notably the development of the partnerships on agroecology and on sustainable food systems. Finally, T5.3 (development of the roadmap) is a stepping stone towards the framework. Deliverable 5.3 explains how this feeds into the work of task 6.1.

4. Further steps in developing the framework

In the second half of 2022 and in 2023, the framework will be developed as it emerges out of the interactive co-creation process with participants. This will include elaborating on the following:

1. Specifying and agreeing on various aspects of the NofN in light of what would be most appropriate and effective for accelerating agroecological transformations of agriculture and wider food systems in Europe.
   a. Appropriate governance and organisational setup
   b. Appropriate focus on core roles and functions
   c. Appropriate connectivity to other initiatives and networks (notably the EU partnership development processes).

2. Identifying funding sources in line with ambitions of the network of networks. This is not just about funding in general, but in line with the its core purpose and principles for operation.

3. Identify a future host for the network of networks and governance structure as a long-term continuing effort.

4. Throughout the above processes, make optimal use of insights gather by the various work packages of AE4EU as well as from the collaboration with ALL-Ready.

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