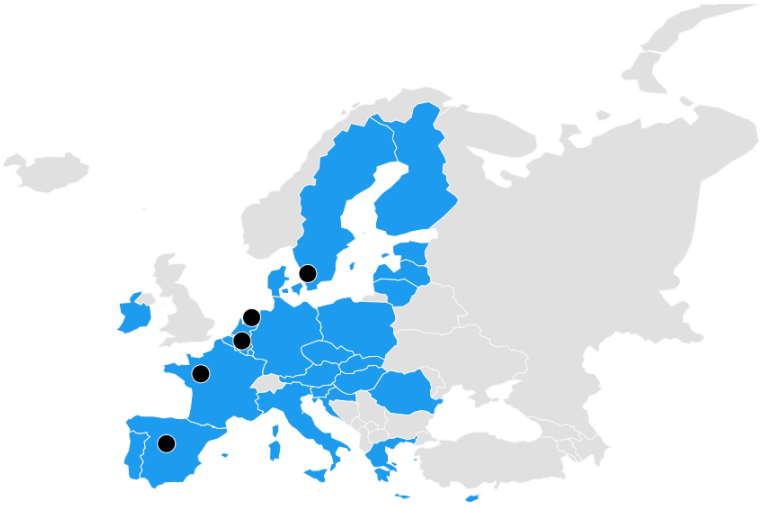
Lessons learned and recommendations for scalable solutions



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ELO
European Landowners' Organization

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1. Introduction

This A4 report is part of the Life project "Land Is For Ever" which aims to adopt new conservation tools to engage private landowners in national and regional conservation efforts. New policy and/or legislation to advance private lands conservation can in most cases only be adopted in accordance with the legal frameworks established on a country-by-country basis and in furtherance of the perceived needs of the stakeholders in that particular jurisdiction.

Given the policy frameworks that exist, the objective of this A4 sub-action is to demonstrate the implementation of certain conservation solutions using instruments and tools that fit the stakeholder needs. To fine-tune implementation possibilities in a real-world environment, it is important to learn from in-field situations.

Seven cases of different instruments for private land management and conservation were therefore selected. For each case we want to agree on:

1) The most appropriate ways to conserve the species and habitats whilst respecting the local socio-economic and cultural context

2) A framework to assess the applicability of the instrument in other regions and EU Member States

To formulate an answer on the two issues, a needs and opportunity assessment was most suitable. The outcomes of the assessment will inform European, National and Regional decision makers as well as stakeholders of conservation initiatives.

Needs and Opportunity Assessment: SWOT and PESTEL Analysis

"Understanding the external and internal context for better planning and decision-making"

- SWOT and PESTEL are analytic tools that help identify key external and internal factors of a project or initiative which, if not identified and addressed, could critically affect the chances of success. They offer the benefit of framing the key issues in a way that is easy for participants to understand and discuss. SWOT and PESTEL can create, or help create a strategic plan or an action plan for a project or initiative, review an initiative or weigh the pros and cons of major decisions such as how to improve operational efficiency.

PESTEL is a complementary tool to SWOT. It expands on the analysis of the external environment by looking at specific types of issues that frequently have an impact on a project or initiatives. The term 'PESTEL' refers to the domains it considers: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal. PESTEL involves identifying factors in each of these

six domains if relevant that are (1) outside the control of the organization and (2) have some level of impact on it.

SWOT and Pestel are usually used together. The more complex the context or operating environment is, the more value PESTEL can offer by identifying factors that would be missed by SWOT alone.

Applying PESTEL and SWOT together results in a stronger analysis, a better understanding of the current situation, and the potential for improved decision-making. Adding a PESTEL to a SWOT analysis makes participants think more proactively and anticipate change.

Expected results

The analysis aims to provide a framework to investigate the internal and external environment of the private nature conservation instruments studied and to come up with conservation optimizations respecting the local socio-economic and cultural context. The outcomes will be evaluated and the potential for scalable and replicable solutions has been analysed for each instrument.

We report on the lessons learned and include recommendations for possible scalable solutions in Europe.

We worked closely together with local landowner and stakeholder groups in and around the selected sites. Bringing together stakeholders in real life for the analysis, instead of a desk study will optimize the quality of the outcomes by:

- The breadth of perspectives in the group made the analysis broader and deeper than what an individual could produce at the same time, and helped overcome individual bias and limited viewpoints.

- The process can get a group of stakeholders onto the same page by creating a shared understanding of the whole context and key external and internal factors. It can make them aware of each other's priorities and difficulties.

- The process started key conversations for corporations that were needed to achieve project success. The connections and conversation topics can continue as needed after the analysis concludes throughout the implementation of the strategy outcomes or new projects

1. Methodology

Preparation

1) Clear, brief statement of each case

The paragraph includes only the essence of the instrument. A draft statement per case was prepared by ELO and sent to the owner/manager in advance of the meetings.

2) Identify most relevant categories of factors

Two lists of factors to consider in SWOT and PESTEL were prepared based on [1], [2] and [3] and shared with the stakeholders in advance to add to. The lists were intended to help inspire and guide the discussion.

Participants

All participants were closely involved in the project/ estate management / funding source… They were able to represent the majority of important stakeholders. The discussion took place in a small group of max. 10 persons.

The list of participants was discussed case by case by the organising person together with the project staff.

Follow-up

A written summary of the session was prepared including the main outcomes, lessons learned, recommendations, ... From all session summaries, this general report has been developed presenting a framework for the instrument and tools that could offer a solution for the threats and weaknesses or optimization of the strengths and opportunities.

Both deliverables will be distributed to the participants, decision-makers and other relevant recipients.

Presentation of the cases

The written summary of the session was used as a basis to share the message. With the agreement of the owner, an informative 2-min video has been created per case. ELO owns the rights of the video but shared it with the partners for further distribution. Cases will be presented during regional, national and international conferences. Noticeboards, also known as on-site panels or interpretation boards, describing the project and the pilot case were displayed in strategic places accessible to the public. These boards were provided by ELO.

All the videos are accessible in the Land Is For Ever Website, on the case studies dedicated page: http://landisforever.eu/map/

Workshop Part 1

1. Confirm the group's **understanding of the objectives and outcomes** to be analysed in the assessment, and what will happen with the results

2. Present the general **list of possible factors** to the participants. This will inspire brainstorming and discussion.

3. **Brainstorm** on key issues that have an impact on the organization, but are outside its control. Identify specific relevant examples in the operational context of the project or initiative (by using the general list of factors).

List all issues and identify for each one:

i) **Relative importance**: *Critical, Extensive, Important, significant, Moderate, Insignificant*
ii) **Likelihood of occurrence**: *Certain, Extremely Likely, Likely, Potential, Remote possibility, Not transpire*
iii) **Implications if the issue occurs**

When done, present the outcomes to the participants and ask for any further suggestions of additional factors.

4. For each issue of the created list, **brainstorm** as to what **Opportunities it offers and what Threats it carries.** Participants are also asked to identify any additional threats and opportunities which are not directly linked with one of the issues from the list.

E.g. Where are environmental challenges creating broad threats to future business values?

E.g. Where is there a growing gap where we and others can create new solutions for (environmental) challenges?

Look at direct threats as well as indirect threats. Consider where trends may result in costs, changes in customer or stakeholder preferences,... If possible look for evidence that multiple stakeholders, initiatives, partners,... are addressing the same (environmental) challenges.

5. **Rank** the factors (O, T) by importance.

Remind participants that the importance is linked to the potential impact of the factor on the objectives and outcomes of the project.

Workshop Part 2

6. **Brainstorm** the internal categories: **Weaknesses and Strengths.** A list of example questions from [1] and [3] will be used to guide the discussion.

7. **Rank the factors** (S and W) by importance. Remind participants that the importance is linked to the potential impact of the factor on the objectives and outcomes of the project. The ranking should include the overall group's opinion and can be done informally by for example raising hands.

8. **Discuss.** Which are the most important insights that could influence decision makers? How do the highly rated items in the categories relate to each other?

For example, a certain strength may relate to a certain opportunity, or a certain threat may be made more significant because of a certain weakness.

9. **Identify three or four important insights.** These insights are most likely to be linked to opportunities or risks.

10. **Explore actions/recommendations** that can limit the threats or can help to exploit any opportunities. Use the tools matrix developed in action A1 to propose and discuss potentially interesting tools that can offer a solution for the threats and weaknesses or an optimization for the strengths and opportunities. What can we (and our partners) do in the near-, mid-, or long-term? The action plan/ recommendation should:

- pursue opportunities
- overcome, prevent or avoid threats
- use or capitalize on strengths
- overcome, minimize or compensate for weaknesses.

10. **Closing**

2. SWOT analysis of private land conservation tools

After research, selecting the pilot sites, arranging the meeting, gathering the stakeholders, and running the workshops, the learnings and key information gathered were recorded and sent to each case studies' representatives. The objective was to spread those useful discussions and learnings to all the networks and gather input for our policy recommendations.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis in 2020-2021, a day of face-to-face meeting and discussion combined with a field visit was cancelled and replaced by an individual preparation and virtual discussions. For two hours, we discussed the strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses of cooperation and the management structure of the 7 case studies.
The results of the individual preparation of the participants were used as the basis for the virtual group discussion.

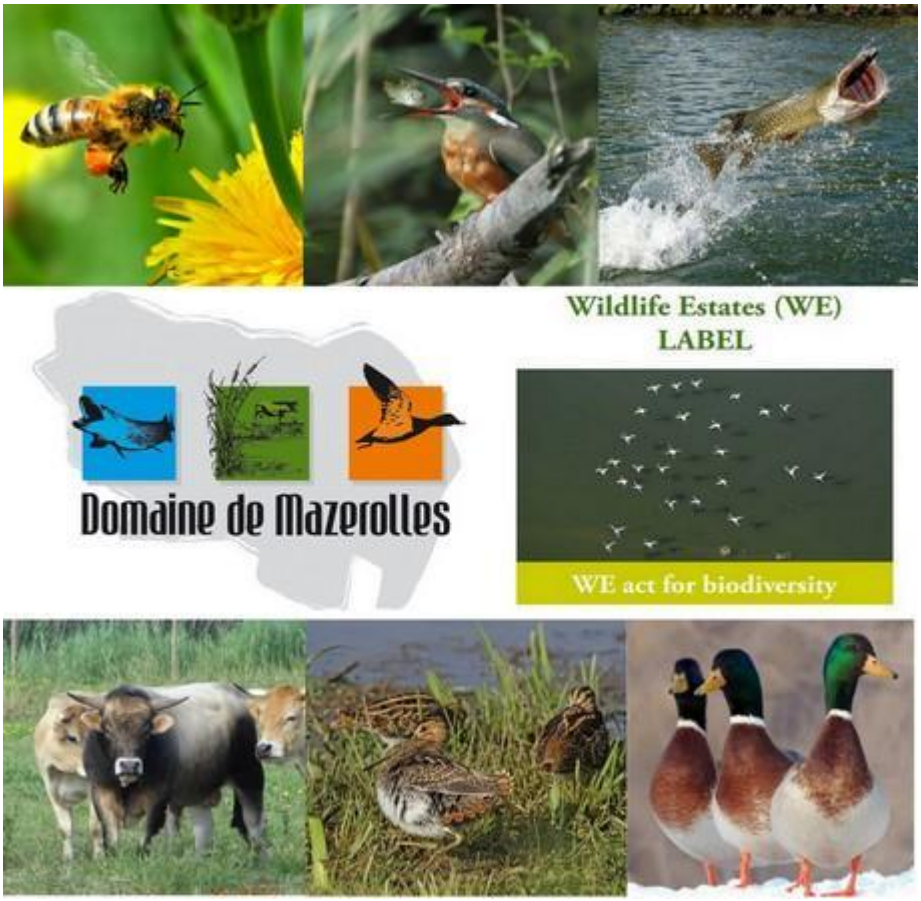
The full transcription of the discussion are presented in ANNEX to this report. The participants taught us a lot of things, and we thank them for their contribution which we hope will allow other owners to find inspiration, the strength to evolve and innovate to preserve biodiversity in Europe.
We thank them for the example they represent and the lessons they were able to share. Following these 7 workshops, the consortium prepared policy recommendations for the European Commission in order to achieve the 2030 biodiversity objectives and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

We are delighted as members of LIFE's project to support inspiring projects such as those case studies and we do our best to provide precise and relevant tools to as many people as possible.

3. Description of 7 pilot sites

During the months of May and June 2020, online meetings with the project pilot sites in France, Sweden and Spain replaced the physical workshops scheduled. During each online (SWOT & PESTEL) workshop, we gathered various stakeholders such as the landowner, manager and administrative representative, long time partners, project members, etc. Each online meeting took 2 hours.

These online meetings were followed by a recording session to collect photos, interviews and video materials for informative videos, one video was made per pilot site. We needed to adapt ourselves and our planning to the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. The physical visits were made in August 2020 and we made the workshops in Belgium and Netherlands at that time, in person.



Marais de Mazerolles, France

The association Syndicale des Plaines de Mazerolles (ASPM) brings together the owners of the 750 ha of the dammed marsh of Mazerolles. 70 owners and users agreed to join forces to establish a water level management protocol to allow agricultural activities necessary for the maintenance of the marsh, ensure professional fishing, recreation and hunting activities.

Location and current nature value of the land

The Mazerolles marsh is located in the North Nantes, France. It borders the banks of the Erdre valley between the agricultural plateaus and the tributary of the Loire.

Nestled between land and sea, on the left bank of the Erdre north of Nantes, the Marais de Mazerolles cover over 1,200 ha.

Shaped by man, the Mazerolles marsh contains an exceptional natural heritage. With its subsoil rich in peat, sand and water, it is a true paradise for fauna and flora. There are 169 bird species, as well as rare and protected plants. The marsh is also a resting or wintering area for migratory birds coming from northern countries: hoopoe, curlew, snipe, tundra duck, northern shoveler duck...

This NATURA2000-listed site was awarded the Wildlife Estates Label in 2013.

The hydraulic management of the Mazerolles marshes is essential for the conservation of nature and biodiversity in this area.

History

In 1960, in order to preserve the city of Nantes from the floods of the Erdre and regain agricultural land, a 6.5 km dike was built to surround 750 ha of marshes and create the expansion vessel "the dyked marsh of Mazerolles".

Its hydraulic tools, dike, network of moats and canals, pumping station and lock allow it to manage its levels; the area is permanently dry to allow for conventional agriculture such as maize farming, etc., which is difficult in this peaty environment. This was stopped in the late 1970s.

Then in the 1980s, an industrial exploitation was set up: the exploitation of peat for sale as an agricultural amendment, with a 30-year mortgage contract. The result was 250 hectares of extracted peat and the creation of water bodies.

To facilitate this operation, differentiated hydraulic management was put in place, in which the marshes were flooded in the winter and were drained in summer.

Poor hydraulic management, when the marshes were flooded too early and for too long from 1999 to 2006, led to water primrose/aquatic jussie taking over the marsh and covering the entire hydraulic network. It then mutated into terrestrial form to cover the 350 hectares of permanent grassland.

Since 2006, we have rehabilitated the hydraulic tools and applied the hydraulic management that had been planned in the DOCOB NATURA2000, where the marsh is flooded in winter and drained from spring to autumn.

This management has made it possible to limit the amount of primrose and to regain the 350 hectares of permanent grassland.

In 2013, having returned to quality grassland production we were able to set up extensive Wagyu breeding. We currently have over 200 animals in our livestock, and our target of 400 will be reached in 2023.

Mowed and grazed permanent grasslands are the spawning grounds necessary for fish to lay their eggs during the January to April flood period. They also naturally filter the Mazerolles water table used for drinking water.

Purpose of the ASPM

The role of the ASPM, as provided in its statutes, consists in the development, management and maintenance of the Mazerolles marshes' hydraulic network. More precisely, its purpose is the construction, maintenance, and management of works for:

1. The development and maintenance of the hydraulic network located on its perimeter in view of the good exploitation, sanitation and development of its heritage, the construction, restoration, maintenance and management of existing structures as well as the eventual construction works necessary for the proper functioning of the hydraulic network
2. The management and the monitoring of how well the hydraulic network is functioning, with a view to the enhancement of its heritage
3. The fight against invasive species
4. The management of water levels using existing structures

Over 60 years, the ASPM has developed a strong expertise in water management, experience in habitats and species management rankings, as well as on invasive species control (Primrose Willow).

Management Structure and Stakeholders.

The association consists of 70 owners and users. They all benefit from a cooperative water level management protocol.

Other important stakeholders of the ASPM are:

- The Departmental Council, in charge of managing the Erdre River
- The 3 communes of the perimeter of the marsh: Sucé/erdre, Petit Mars and St Mars du Désert
- The operator NATURA2000,
- EDENN trade union committee composed of the urban community of Nantes, Erdre and Gesvres, Pays d'Ancenis, Anjou Bleu and Vallée du haut Anjou
- Ligue Protection des Oiseaux
- Drinking Water Union

The ASPM is primarily coordinated/managed by:

A trade union association under public law, under the supervision of the prefecture and its accounting is ensured by the accountant of the Treasury who prepares the administrative account and budget, puts in payment the mandates and recovers the titles. It is composed of the owners of its geographical scope (750ha), who elect an office of 9 members with a president, vice-president and secretary, this office is renewable by Tiers every two years.

The competences are specified in the statutes validated by the prefecture.

There are 6 scheduled bi-weekly office meetings, open to members of the association. Decisions are taken by a majority of the elected members of the board, a report is made at each meeting and sent to the members of the board and consultable for the members of the association.

A General Assembly for presentation of the activities and accounts validated by the accountant of the treasury and the prefecture.

The European NATURA2000 directives, the Water Act, ecological continuity, have a strong impact on the management of wetlands.

National, regional or departmental interpretation by administrations does not have a facilitating role.

The Mazerolles project, “Restoration of ecosystem services through hydraulic management” can perfectly be duplicated in wetlands, where the problem of wetlands is similar.

Extra Info

https://www.domaine-de-mazerolles.fr/

Het Vrijselhof, Belgium

The management of the Vrijselhof is a long-term project of organic, land-based and circular agriculture. This family farm begins with the principles of the circular economy. Setting up closed cycles is the most important objective. In order to achieve this within an agricultural story, they work together with public services, policy makers and scientists, and built a system of combining agricultural activities with nature management. This holistic approach forms the framework in which all activities take place.

The Vrijselhof is located against the backdrop of the hiking and nature reserve "De Vuile Plas" in Kontich. On the land and in the buildings, the family tries to work out a permaculture project in harmony with their environment, complemented by principles from the circular economy and in compliance with the legislation for organic production. The principles of circular production are possible because of the management combination of agriculture, nature and forest land.

The family was able to come to an agreement with the competent authority to use parts of public land in their system. They restore the biodiversity values of the land while using the land's outcomes for free:

Nature and forest: The Vrijselhof is free to use the land and the products but has to develop an approved conservation plan within a 2 year time period and manage the land according to this. They must (if possible) use all outputs of the forest management in their circular business.

Agriculture: Own land plus public land which was used for intensive agriculture before. The Vrijselhof has an agreement with the government to restore the land quality (regenerative agriculture). This implies certain costs which are all covered by the farm in return for the use of the land. This agreement lasts for at least 5 years until the soil has been restored. After this the agreement will be re-evaluated.

The farm's vision is to do everything themselves as much as possible: they make their own compost to feed the soil, they harvest the seeds of their plants to sow them the next season and they work with animals that play a role in the system, without manure surpluses, to become as self-sufficient as possible. Moreover, they work circularly: they don't produce waste, but reuse everything or process it into raw materials. To be able to follow this vision, the combination of agricultural and nature/forest land are necessary to achieve far-reaching sustainability both in the construction of the domain and in its daily operation. In the long term, they want to be able to supply 300 families with fresh food products: fruit and vegetables, but also fish, algae, mushrooms, herbs, honey and meat, to support and promote the 'short-chain production'.

The holistic management vision of the Vrijselhof is unique in its circular and artisanal way. Moreover, the combination of agriculture and nature conservation offers the unique opportunity of a well divided yearly workload. They sell their products directly to consumers on the farm (60-80%) and through the network of 'Buurderijen' (local farm products) so that they know their customers and can build a community of people who support them in their business and agree with the principles of their farm.

The Vrijselhof is becoming a meeting place for scientists. Given the innovative nature of the company, the results obtained from the practice-based research can be considered as an important product of the company, just like the storage of carbon in the soil through the management measures.

The generation of monetary profits is not an end in itself but a by-product of the various activities. Profit is however necessary to make the company liveable and to maintain the sustainable management of the whole ecosystem.

Tullstorp Stream Project, Sweden

The Tullstorp Stream Project is unique in that it is operated by an association of all landowners along a stream – The Tullstorp Stream. The project was able to gather landowners and managers along the stream to work together on their mutual challenges and goals and in the meantime to restore the stream and wetlands in the areas where possible.

The primary aim of the Tullstorp restoration project is to reduce nutrient leaching to the Baltic Sea, solve the flooding problems of the farmers, create a good ecological status in the stream and to facilitate the management of the stream for the landowners' part. Secondary positive effects are an increase in biodiversity, better possibilities for recreation and wildlife management.

The project is unique in that the farmers themselves are in control of the project. Each farmer has their own goals and benefits. On a farm level the goals are to prevent flooding, reduce maintenance of the stream and continue high production on arable land. By gathering the farmers in an association, they are able to take a holistic view on the management of the stream and the whole catchment area.

The project has been active since 2009 and in that time, over 40 wetlands and 15 km of the stream have already been restored.

Location and current nature value of the land

The Tullstorp Stream is located in the southernmost part of Sweden. It is located in one of Sweden's most intensive agricultural areas, where 85 percent of the land is arable and in a nitrate vulnerable zone The length of the stream is 30 km and the catchment area is 63 km².

The project has increased in size over time. The actual stream and its close surroundings are still in focus but the geographical area for activities has grown to include all of the catchment area. Apart from this it seems that the initiative has changed people's mentality by raising knowledge about the area, the environment and each other. Several spins off initiatives have evolved during the course of the project and they are proceeding in their own directions.

Purpose and History

The initial idea for the project was a result of many years' discussions in the area about initiatives such as the Water Framework Directive, the national environmental objectives, about creation of wetlands and the state of the Baltic Sea.

The landowners along the stream also knew of each other and had had some experience of working together in different constellations and on different occasions. The discussions and advisory services led to an interest in creating wetlands from individual landowners. The reasons varied, from childhood memories, improvement of hunting and fishing, to creating a more visually attractive landscape. At the time there were problems with erosion and maintenance of the steep slopes of the ditches. Occasional flooding had negative effects on the stream and on adjacent fields. There was also an uncertainty as to how legislation (WFD etc.) would affect farmers. All this, together with a polluted Baltic Sea around the corner, stated that it was high time for action.

The mindset was to be ahead of legislation and therefore the idea came that they would try to coordinate the measures and look at the whole watercourse instead of each single farm. No agency was involved at the start but the project still had to consider legislation, policies and agreements saying that actions for reducing the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea are needed. There was and still are possibilities to get funding for measures going beyond legislation. So the idea was roughly put on paper and presented to the local and regional agencies in order to find appropriate funding to start a project.

Early in 2009, the Tullstorp Stream Economic Association (TESA) was funded and this was also the start of the TSP. In autumn the same year the demonstration zone, 2 kilometers long, was constructed.

Management Structure and Stakeholders

In order to restore the whole stream, a landowner driven cooperation, the Tullstorp Stream Economic Association was created, and became responsible for running the project. The association members consisted of the stakeholders in the catchment area and the Board of representatives of landowners and stakeholders related to the stream. The TSP is operated by an association of all landowners along the stream. There are around 150 private properties along the stream.

The association board today has 7 members with Otto von Arnold as the chairman and Johnny Carlsson and Christoffer Bonthron employed by the association as project managers. The project managers are responsible for the administrative work and thereby decrease the workload for the landowners who participate in the project. They do not have to spend time

on applications, reports and documentation and can choose how much they want to be involved.

A simplified sketch of the organization and funding of the project is shown below. Both a representative from the local government and from the CAB are invited to some of the board meetings. Some board members have a double role, for example both landowner and representative for Farmers Association or Drainage association.
All of the landowners along the stream, of whom there are approximately 45, have signed an agreement saying that the TSA have the right to dispose of a stretch of adjacent land along the stream. The landowner still owns the land and can use it as long as it is not contrary to the signed agreement or the intention and statutes of the TSA. The agreement is individual and was created and signed by the landowner and the TSA in accordance with the grand plan for the area.

The measures have been and are designed after discussions and proposals from experts. The board of the TSA or the individual landowner then sends a funding application with proposed actions and costs for them that the CAB (or LEADER, SwAM) has to approve before anything can be done. In some cases, a permit from the Land and Environmental Court is needed before any actions can be carried out. Finally, contractors implement the actions, for example the digging of wetlands.
The initial funding came from a recycling project in the Municipality of Trelleborg which in turn was funded by the Marine Environment Grant. This funding made it possible to employ a project manager and to develop the idea further. The main funding for the project since then comes from the Marine Environment Grant, including Local Water Management Projects (LOVA) and the RDP. The municipality is not financially involved.

Sources of this content and more information

https://www.tullstorpsan.se/english
https://tullstorpsan.se/rapporter/CasestudyforBalticCompact141223.pdf

El Castañar, Spain

Just one hour from Madrid El Castañar are the Montes de Toledoin the first solid dede. They consist of high and rugged mountains combined with broad pastures with a mosaic landscape of farmland and centuries-old oaks and low mountains dotted with several streams.
Besides the remarkable fauna and flora of the farm, The Castañar also manages a cattle ranch called "Count of Mayalde". Founded in the 30s and open for visitors, it is home to an Iberian pig and sheep farm, olive groves, vineyards etc. Marketed under the El Atillo brand, hams, shoulders and sausages are made in El Castañar following traditional methods.Together with feeding Iberian pigs acorns from the farm itself, the climate and the degree of environmental humidity, this gives the products the brand's unique quality.
The topographic variety offers different hunting grounds, from wider and more pleasant areas to more rugged and hard spots, offering a challenge for every hunter, whilst always surrounded by the unique beauty of the orography, fauna and flora, accompanied by an exquisite gambling management. Hunting programs are offered annually whilst respecting the habitats, quotas, seats and dates; Deer, wild boar, mouflon, fallow deer as well as torcaz pigeon, large pigeon and turtle dove hunts are organized.
The Castañar welcomes visitors with a complete program of activities to enjoy the knowledge of the landscapes in the company of expert guides (Visits Sierra and Livestock, Tastings, Meals and Snacks, Accommodation). Castañar also manages custom events.

Activities

- Agriculture: Cereals, olive trees for oil, legumes.
- Animals: Toro Bravo: (Spanish fighting cattle), manchega sheep: for milk production, that is used for the production of the manchego
- cheese. (Queso manchego D:O.), Iberian pigs
- Hunting: Big game: We organize the traditional monterias with dogs, and also stalk, Partridge drives and pigeon hunting.
- Tourism: tour and lunch, lodge

The area received the Wildlife Estate label as an award for their successful conservation practices. The Estate has also been engaged in a few life projects in the past. The last was "Iberlynx", the first Iberian lynxes in the region of Montes de Toledo were reintroduced in El Castañar. The estate was also one of the last places where imperial eagles bred some years ago, and it participated in the Life´s projects for its recuperation alongside that of the black vulture and black stork. The Estate is a 'Good Practice' example of how to make private land conservation durable over the long term.

© National Park Hoge Veluwe

De Hoge Veluwe National Park, Netherlands

The Hoge Veluwe National Park is the largest interconnected, actively managed, privately owned nature reserve in the Netherlands.
The National Park De Hoge Veluwe is managed by an independent foundation that only makes limited use of government subsidies. The Park thus privately owned and almost entirely dependent on paying visitors for its survival.

The aims of the management strategy are environmental sustainability, public opening of the Park and provision and organisation of a wide variety of contemporary activities and facilities of the following triptych; Nature & landscape; Art & architecture; Historical stories. All this under one condition: the management takes place in decision and financial independence.
The Hoge Veluwe applies an active management policy. Active management means intervening in the landscape with the intention to preserve and, where possible, further develop the characteristic Veluwe landscapes. Examples include heathland, drifting sands and various types of forest.

The management targets a sustainable Nature management with public access with keeping decision making and financial independence.
Every year the Park attracts between 500,000 and 600,000 paying visitors. Together with the Kröller-Müller Museum, located within the fence, the Park is a unique combination of nature, art and architecture in many ways. Park and Museum together form an important engine for

the regional economy. Within the Natura 2000 area of the Veluwe, the Park is an important source of biodiversity.
The Park wants to play a (international) pioneering role in many areas. In addition to setting an example in active nature management, the Park also focuses on issues of sustainability, safety and the balance between ecology and economy.

Description and history

The Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation was established in 1935 to preserve the life's work of the Kröller-Müller couple on their own and to allow as many visitors as possible to enjoy it. The foundation works on a not-for-profit basis and is virtually independent of subsidies for its operation. Stichting Hoge Veluwe Fonds, formerly Stichting Hoge Veluwe Sociëteit, was established on 4 December 2007 and is based in Hoenderloo. The aim of the Foundation is to support organisations that are engaged in acquiring, managing, maintaining, documenting and opening up the Hoge Veluwe National Park. The Foundation is not for profit, as evidenced by its statutes and actual activities. The Foundation does not strive for profit for the sake of profit itself. The Foundation will use the proceeds from its activities to benefit its objective.
The Park has over one hundred years of knowledge and experience in the field of nature management through continuity of active management of Veluwe landscapes from the beginning of the 20th century (1909: first land purchase by the Kröller-Müller couple).
The sustainable preservation of a varied landscape with a high ecological level and a rich cultural-historical stratification requires precise and consistent active management with balanced, thorough visitor management.
The park's core business is nature. The park's high biodiversity combined with culture distinguishes it from other national parks, nature reserves and day attractions. The fenced off Park offers security; the landscape is undisturbed and the landscape history clearly visible; it is safe and easily accessible for visitors.

Goal and activities

The Park distinguishes itself from other national parks with its strong cohesion and balance between ecology and economy. The aim of the Park is to preserve its heritage and preserve and strengthen biodiversity. On the other hand, the Park must continue to develop on the basis of its financial independence in order to (continue to) attract (paying) visitors.
The Park's mission (what it stands for) is as follows:

I. **Sustainable management and opening of the Park**. The Park is a biodiversity hotspot in the Veluwe and aims to maintain and strengthen its high biodiversity.

II. **Inspiring as many Park visitors as possible** and let them enjoy the simplicity and authenticity of the unique triptych: nature & landscape, art & architecture, historical stories. The Park seems natural, but paradoxically, in reality it is actively managed. The task is: to enhance the experience of the idyll.

III. **Sustainable investment** in conservation, strengthening and renewal

In order to achieve the following goal: To maintain and strengthen the Park as a cultural heritage with the highest possible biodiversity and to allow as many visitors as possible to enjoy it. The quality of the Park's experience is supported by the existing landscapes and nature. Conversely, the special nature can be preserved with the income from the visit.

Management Structure and Stakeholders.

Based on visitors. Because the Park is a private foundation that receives virtually no operating subsidies, it has an entrance. The income from visits benefits the exploitation of the Park (profit principle). The starting point is to remain financially healthy and independent. A precondition for healthy exploitation is the receipt of sufficient paying visitors each year and a responsible investment policy. Instead of attracting more visitors to the Park, the Park wants to earn more from visitors. The Park aims for a minimum of 600,000 (paying) visitors per year for the purpose of its operation. Based on the calculation of the nitrogen load under the Nature Conservation Act for areas, the Park has room to grow to 800,000 visitors in peak years. The focus of the Park is on the target group 45+ and children from the Netherlands and neighbouring countries, supplemented by the business market. Receiving visitors in a nature reserve requires thorough visitor management. The developed zoning guarantees, on the one hand, an optimal park experience for visitors and, on the other hand, the protection of the vulnerable flora and fauna. The Park differs from other national parks due to the central location of the public facilities. In Dutch national parks, the public facilities are usually located at the edges.

Vision

Thinking and acting sustainably is in the Park's genes and is part of its daily operations. The Park wants to focus on energy transition. Corporate social responsibility is a matter of course for the Park. Strengthening the Park's social significance (including its welfare function) for the region is a point for attention. The focus in terms of legislation and policy is on the province and Europe. Integral work is important in the Park's policy, with a long-term vision and a clear consistency and continuity of activities and active management.
Five themes are central to this:

- Ecology: as much biodiversity as possible, through active management and strengthening of the ecosystem through restoration on a landscape scale
- Heritage: preservation and development of cultural heritage in the tradition of the Kröller-Müller couple
- Economy: the survival of the Park (exploitation) depends on economic carriers
- Research: Conducting research and monitoring in the Park contributes to the effectiveness of policy, management and hospitality.
- Education: Enhancing the park experience and inspiring visitors (and consumers)

The Park is constantly looking for a good balance between nature and culture; between active intervention and natural development and between recreation and the carrying capacity of

nature. The resulting active management has resulted in high biodiversity in recent decades, with the presence of many special species. Important points for attention in this respect:

- (Spatial) zoning of recreational use is important to limit the pressure on the area.
- Balance between practice and science
- The Park wants to actively share its knowledge and experience in the field of nature and landscape management with science, politics, national parks and fellow organisations.
- The Park must keep up with the times in order to maintain its appeal. These are the places where most visitors congregate. In the interest of this appeal, renewal and improvement of the quality of the facilities and of the image of the crowd-pullers is necessary.

The Park wants to contribute collectively to the search of others (fellow organisations and national parks) for the balance between ecology and economy. It wants to show that its (continuity in) policy and management leads to a good balance between ecology and economy and results in a high level of biodiversity.

Organisation

The relatively small organisation is characterised by consistent policy and management, idiosyncrasy and modern entrepreneurship. The director is assisted by the advisory committee on
recreation and the nature management committee. The supervisory board supervises the management.
The Foundation is financially and administratively independent. The Park is known as a good employer, is a recognised training company and has a very extensive network: European, national and regional.
The high ecological level maintained over the past decades is directly related to the financial policy aimed at independence. Each year, the Park manages to raise 80% of the funds required for its operation by receiving paying visitors.

More information

https://www.hogeveluwe.nl/

The NATO airfield in Malle, Belgium

Private landowners and Flanders' largest nature NGO Natuurpunt join forces to protect the area's biodiversity.

Description and history

For more than a half century the airfield has been used by NATO for military activities. Today its use is multifunctional including a private flying club, sport manifestations, scouting, air shows, vehicle testing, photo shoots, walking and nature conservation. The area was part of the DANAH LIFE project restoring part of the area's original nature.

Organisation

The Land Is For Ever LIFE+ project was able to bring together the surrounding five private owners who were expropriated for the creation of the airport together with Natuurpunt, Flanders' largest nature organization and PIDPA, a drinking water company that pumps water in the area for the drinking water supply of parts in Flanders. Under the mediation of the LIFE + project, a first cooperation agreement has been signed and the partners are jointly working towards a common vision on and management of the area's nature. This will be done in the frame of an integrated management plan as foreseen in the Flemish Nature Decree.

Goal and activities

The aim of the individual private landowners and Natuurpunt is to restore a large part of the area into nature of the highest quality as part of the Natura 2000 network. At the same time the authorities have foreseen that some of the economic activities should remain. It will be a challenge to combine the ecologic and economic objectives in the area.

Slangebeekbron nature reserve

SBNL is a nature conservation NGO supporting individual private landowners in realising high quality nature. It also organises the Belgian Tree of the Year and a yearly environmental prize for individual private landowners realising prestigious nature management projects. Due to the new nature legislation in Flanders (2017) private landowners are able to purchase land for nature conservation. They only can do so when they are already having a type 4 nature reserve (highest quality of nature). By transforming itself to a landtrust SBNL is able to support private landowners in buying land for nature conservation making use of the acquisition subsidies.

Description and history

Slangebeekbron, a nature reserve area formerly owned by the Sagehomme-Leynen family, was purchased by Stichting Behoud Natuur en Leefmilieu Vlaanderen (SBNL), a non-profit organization supporting private landowners in the management of nature reserves, with the financial support of the Baillet Latour Fund.

Organisation

Under the guidance of the Land Is For Ever LIFE+ project, SBNL has been transformed into the first land trust in Flanders, a new instrument to be used for private land conservation. Slangebeekbron, a Nature 2000 site, will be managed as a ‘type 4’ nature reserve whose name will refer to its original owners, the Sagehomme-Leynen family, and will be part of a larger network of nature reserves: the Baillet Latour nature reserve network.

The land trust will support private land conservation by supporting private landowners in the purchase and management of nature on private land.

4. Evaluation report of the implemented tools

The Swedish, Dutch, French and Spanish case studies were illustrative examples of different tools and instruments described by the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever. The outcomes of the analysis of these cases is evaluated under part 5: 'Recommendations for scalable solutions'. The Belgian case studies were developed under the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever. Below we evaluate the different tools studied on these three sites.

Het Vrijselhof, Kontich

TOOLS USED: SUBSIDIES, PRIVATE (RESTORATION) MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

This project brings circular agriculture and nature conservation together in a single business plan. This is a necessity to close the carbon cycle within the farm. Part of the additional carbon quantities produced by the natural area can be brought into the soil resulting in a closed carbon cycle where inflow and outflow of carbon are compensated.
Several nature related interventions can have positive effects on the farming aspects and vice versa. Some examples of this are:

- constructing a verge along the highway gives additional possibilities to grow short rotation woody crops. At the same time, it can keep humidity at a higher level in the area having a positive effect on as well nature as on the agricultural crops
- hydrological interventions can benefit biodiversity as well as agricultural crops as storage a large portion of water in the area (could act as a buffer in periods of heavy rainfall)
- creating high quality biodiversity will result in the presence of higher numbers of pollinators having a positive effect on the yields of the crops.
-

The Flemish nature regulation allows, within a type 2 nature management plan, to manage part of the territory (25%) as nature while maintaining other activities on the remaining parts. By offering annual subsidies for management tasks on the part of the land further developed with the aim to reach biodiversity goals the farmer is getting additional (stable) income. The combination of farming and nature management carried out by the farmer leads to a more stable income on a yearly basis. In a certain way the subsidies given can be seen as a payment for ecosystem services. In several of the case studies owners indicated a preference for annual payments for ecosystem services compared with one time payments.
In this case study the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever was able to negotiate between the farmer and the Flemish Authority to give the farmer management rights to manage public land within the framework of a nature management plan. By combining nature management and farming practices the total cost of nature management in the area is reduced enabling the Flemish Authority to spend additional budget in other areas.
The combination of farming practices and nature conservation can be beneficial for both. There should be a clear framework within which the farmer is working so benefits for agriculture and nature management can be maximized.

The NATO airfield in Malle

TOOLS USED: SUBSIDIES (LAND ACQUISITION NATURE MANAGEMENT), CONSERVATION EASEMENT, LAND STEWARDSHIP, PRIVATE RESERVES DESIGNATION, CONSERVATION CONTRACT

The NATO airfield is a case study which clearly indicates how a combination of instruments for private land conservation can lead to successful cooperation between private landowners, nature NGOs and governmental agencies.
The preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever took the initiative to bring all partners around the table. It got the full support of the Governor of the Province of Antwerp in achieving this. By carefully mapping the needs and wishes of all parties involved we have been able to build the necessary thrust among all of the partners involved. As the return on investment of the land is economically very low the use of subsidies to acquire the land (80% of buying price) is very important.

An agreement was reached among the nature NGO and the private landowners owning the neighbouring land to start up a small NGO with the main objective to manage the airfield. This NGO would become the final landowner with equal participation of all stakeholders involved.

All stakeholders agreed to develop a nature management plan taking into account as well the ecologic (Natura 2000) as the economic and social components of the airfield. Part of the airfield would become a nature reserve (type 4) accessible to the public. Other parts would remain closed for the public (in order to respect the privacy of the privately owned land). As some of the activities are economically important for the region (aeroclub, brake testing for touring cars, …) they will be enabled but on a limited part of the original airfield.
The newly established NGO, acting as a land trust, will sign a conservation contract with the nature NGO for part of the land (type 2) and a conservation easement for another part of the land (type 4). All actions will be based on a nature management plan commonly developed with the input of all stakeholders.

The cooperation described above is only possible when different instruments are combined. The conservation contract and the conservation easement were necessary tools for the nature conservation NGO to take an engagement. A commonly owned nature trust with a certain level of control towards the nature objectives was a necessity for the private landowners. Buying the land was for all parties involved only possible with the active contribution of the government (subsidies for acquiring the land, subsidies for managing the land).

Slangebeekbron nature reserve

TOOLS USED: SUBSIDIES (LAND ACQUISITION NATURE MANAGEMENT), CONSERVATION EASEMENT, LAND STEWARDSHIP, PRIVATE RESERVES DESIGNATION, CONSERVATION CONTRACT

The transformation of SBNL into a land trust enables private landowners all over Flanders to become actively involved in nature conservation. It enables them to manage land neighbouring their estates with a limited financial contribution to buy the land but with a maximal integration of the nature conservation management in the business model of their estate.

The land trust described is a variation on the general definition of a land trust. While SBNL is getting the final responsibility on the management of the land is redistributing the management tasks to private landowners neighbouring the land bought in function of biodiversity goals.

Private landowners in Flanders have indicated they are willing to participate in this model as SBNL is seen as a trustworthy partner already cooperating with private landowners for many years. For private landowners this is a very important element in the decision to participate in the land trust's activities.

The creation of the land trust and the way it is interacting was only possible because of the new nature legislation in Flanders giving the same rights to private landowners and nature conservation NGOs. While the initial conditions for private landowners to buy and manage land for nature conservation were difficult to overcome, the newly created land trust is offering a tool to get involved without the need to own and manage a type 4 nature reserve for each of the individual landowners. In a relatively short term the newly created land trust got several opportunities to buy additional land indicating this instrument is getting fast recognition among individual private landowners.

5. Recommendations for scalable solutions

Throughout the project and especially during the development of the case studies we have identified a number of key actions to be taken by either the landowner or the policy makers (or both) and which are absolutely necessary to build successful cases. Those key actions should be seen as essential to contribute to the success of nature conservation on private land.

5.1 Key actions

Inform

- The case studies identified in the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever should be promoted as successful examples to inspire and motivate others to take similar actions / approaches
- Develop annual (scientific) cost and time effective reports on the measurable outcomes of the nature conservation practices (biodiversity monitoring reports) and publish them.
- While it is a challenge to collect data from private landowners it is a necessity to make the right management choices
- Be transparent about goals, instruments, actions taken and results
- Create awareness campaigns focusing on the contribution of private landowners to nature conservation outcomes
- Increase, where appropriate, the visibility of the Natura 2000 label among individual private landowners and the broader public

Educate

- Interpret scientific results (nature conservation outcomes) into layman terms, for the consumption of the general public, to show how the particular property has multiple benefits (for people and nature).
- Educate farmers and individual private landowners on the benefits of biodiversity towards farming practices and rural business models, as well as how biodiversity underpins livelihood
- Offer a toolbox with practical tools to improve biodiversity management for farmers
- Invest in technical improvements and machinery for biodiversity friendly harvesting
- Invest in technical improvements to better control the hydrology
- Capacity building: nature management and restoring ecosystems requires specific skills and knowledge. A good (certified) training programme might be of added value and also helps bringing private landowners and nature conservation NGOs closer together by speaking a similar language and using the same facts & figures (finding common grounds).

Resource mobilisation

- Create an annual payment for ecosystem services, including the creation of a market for ecosystem services. Most private landowners prefer an annual payment compared with a one-off payment.
- Communicate on innovative funding
- Identify funding mechanisms from local / regional / national / EU / international sources which are available for private landowners who are interested to change practices for nature conservation benefits
- Private landowners should invest time in dialogue with municipalities and other governmental agencies to secure funding possibilities
- Develop new partnerships between private landowners, nature conservation organisations and public authorities
- Entrance fee for visitors can be a solution on certain estates
- Visitors pay-back systems in which private landowners are paid to maintain nature based on the benefits they create, e.g., increase in tourism (local economy: lodging and restaurants). If well monitored / assessed, nature areas could ask for a return or ask municipalities to co-invest in nature areas (e.g. observation hides, walking trail; etc.)
- Good project management is essential

Innovate

- Share innovative solutions with other stakeholders including nature conservation organisations and scientific organisation
- Further develop technological improvements for automated nature monitoring and data collection

5.2 Key messages

We have formulated key messages per case study. In this part of the report, we list key messages which are valid for each of the case studies (as indicated by each of the projects).

Private landowners' role in nature conservation

- Important to discuss landowners' roles with the wider public and to show what they can do with regards to nature conservation.and biodiversity.
- Involve private landowners in nature conservation by working with trusted organisations or:
- Build a system of Land Trusts or other credible organisations with the primary aim to advise and assist landowners who are interested to shift management practices towards measurable conservation outcomes. This way a support network could be created as examples show globally, which can further empower landowners for nature conservation. However, this trust can only be earned and not proclaimed, thus it

needs to start from bottom up and grow gradually. In this respect, good relationships or partnerships should be built with competent authorities and (local) nature conservation organisations.

Recognition

- Recognising private landowners' efforts for nature conservation is critical. This could be done through various communication channels, information materials, site visits, reports, etc. However, in any case it needs to be built on facts and should not be a "one-off".
- Make sure the neighbourhood and society understand the efforts farmers take to conserve nature and manage biodiversity
- Recognise that private landowners can significantly contribute to biodiversity (habitat) recovery and protection. These activities could and should be accounted for both nationally as well as internationally (reporting to UN-WCMC, art12/17 reporting of EU's Nature directives, CBD), as contribution through "Other Effective Conservation Measures) to the EU's and thus national 30X30 targets.

Understanding

- The wider public should better understand the conditions in which the landowner is managing his/her land.
- One needs to take note and acknowledge that natural processes are slow and the results of conservation measures could take time following vegetation and reproductive cycles as well as natural succession. Thus, it is important to monitor processes towards well-defined conservation outcomes, which could take a long time.
- Setting up partnerships takes time as well.

Business models

- Combination of nature-forest-agriculture on one farm offers a unique possibility to develop a circular business model, creating a micro-climate on the farm and responding to the durable long-term management vision.
- Dare to go for an alternative management; balance between nature, landscape, cultural and heritage management to make the overall park durable
- A well designed nature conservation project must include economic and social factors to enable the private landowner to take an engagement on the long term. Payment for ecosystem services is a promising business model for private landowners: it is delivering services towards society (clean air, water, mental health besides direct revenues like wood and livestock) with an economic return towards the private landowner
- Integration of nature management in the overall estate management is key to guarantee the long-term engagement of the private landowner
- Worldwide tourism has shown to be able to contribute to sustainable business models for private landowners

Communication

- Necessary to bring the topic of private conservation to the EU level.
  It is important to communicate the vital role private landowners could or should play in nature conservation. This must be recognised from local up to the EU level, by clearly communicating the opportunities as well as challenges with the view of offering options on what decision makers can do to empower landowners for nature conservation measures beyond their usual practices.
- Many private landowners are aware of their responsibility to safeguard biodiversity and are willing to take their role and would like to be recognised as important stakeholders besides nature conservation NGOs and public bodies. Their commitment should be more widely communicated/disseminated to be widely acknowledged.

Cooperation

- Landowners should show positive examples and to identify opportunities for cooperation with different stakeholders (nature conservation organisations, governments, …)
- A cooperation between private landowners and nature conservation NGOs is based on trust. It always takes time to build trust, and should be done by all parties, identifying common issues, interest and opportunities of cooperation in order to build on them together. Finding common grounds is an essential step in this process
- Cooperation between private landowners and nature conservation NGOs leads to win-win situations

Trust

- Act consistently to become a trusted example for others

Challenges

- Think and act on solutions
- Accept challenges and use them as an opportunity

Support to private landowners

- Offer private landowners a broad menu of private land conservation tools. The broader the menu the more likely a landowner will find an instrument fitting its individual need.
- In addition to the above recommendation: private landowners are encouraged to set up land trusts or to get involved in existing ones. This way there will be a level field play ongoing between land trusts and nature conservation NGOs.
- Give equal opportunities to private landowners and nature conservation NGO

5.3 Scalable solutions

Each of the case studies is based on a combination of tools and instruments for private land conservation. Most of those tools already exist in most of the EU Member States. Other instruments have lookalikes or can be imitated combining some of the available instruments. When formulating the case studies, we were not looking for scalable solutions at the level of the individual cases but more for the conditions EU Member States have to create to enable individual private landowners to create, initiate and manage similar initiatives. Throughout the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever we have gathered opinions, facts, results on the basic needs to develop successful private land conservation. Four elements systematically popped up during discussions, SWOT analysis, documents, and case studies. Four elements that are essential to develop successful solutions to enable private land conservation to take place:

1. Offer a menu of different tools and instruments enabling the private landowner to make a choice in such a way that the tools are best fitting his/her individual situation;
2. Develop (or modify) legislation and tools which are equal for private landowners and nature conservation NGOs;
3. Stimulate cooperation between private landowners and nature conservation NGOs;
4. Enable private landowners to develop a sustainable business model at the level of their estate or at the level of the totality of their land.

ANNEX: Transcription and outcomes Workshops

Marais de Mazerolles

Participants

All participants are closely involved in the project and are important actors in it. They have a thorough knowledge of the project and of the legal and financial framework in which the company operates.

Participants, stakeholders for the Mazerolles marshes:

Elsa BORUJERDI: assistant to the land department of the Loire-Atlantique departmental council, head of the land management and protection unit, land development department.

Romain GUINAND: apprentice at the Mazerolles estate.

Pierre HOFLACK: Manager of the Mazerolles estate and President of Mazerolles Plains Trade Association (French: Association Syndicale des Plaines de Mazerolles - ASPM).

Jean-Luc MAISONNEUVE: in charge of Natura 2000 at the EDENN mixed syndicate. The Mazerolles marshes are part of the Natura 2000 site.

Louis MENARD: has been a member of the ASPM for many years and knows the Mazerolles marshes well.

European Landowners' Organization team: Eugénie MAILLEBIAU, ELO trainee, studying the European Degree of Communication and Information.

Anne-Sophie MULIER, Project Assistant (Land Is For Ever, CarbonConnects) managing the preparations for Life and its files, as well as workshops within ELO.

Marie ORBAN, Project Manager, works in the ELO communication department and supports the team on Life projects and workshops. She moderates the virtual workshop in Mazerolles.

Jurgen TACK, Scientific Director of ELO. Jurgen is in charge of the Life projects within the ELO.

Introduction

The Mazerolles marshes are located north of Nantes, France, bordering the banks of the Erdre valley between the agricultural plateaus and the tributary of the Loire, and cover more than 1200 hectares. The Association Syndicale des Plaines de Mazerolles (ASPM) brings together the owners of 750 ha of the Mazerolles dyked marsh, located in the communes of Petit Mars, Saint Mars du Désert and Sucé sur Erdre. These 70 owners and managers have agreed to join forces to establish a protocol for managing water levels in order to allow for the agricultural activities necessary to maintain the marsh, including professional fishing, leisure and hunting activities.

In 1960, in order to protect the city of Nantes from the Erdre flooding and to regain agricultural land a 6.5km dam was built to enclose 750 hectares of marshland and create the "Mazerolles marsh dam".

Hydraulic tools: a dam, moat and canal system. A pumping station and lock allow the owners to manage water levels. To facilitate the exploitation of the marshes, a differentiated hydraulic management system was introduced at the end of the 1990s, with the marshes flooded in winter and drained in summer.

Poor hydraulic management, when the marshes were flooded too early and for too long from 1999 to 2006, led to water primroses taking over the marsh and covering the entire hydraulic network. It then mutated into terrestrial form to cover the 350 hectares of permanent grassland.

Since 2006, the ASPM has restored the hydraulic tools and applied the hydraulic management that had been planned in the Natura 2000 DOCOB: marshes flooded in winter and drained from spring to autumn.

This management has made it possible to limit the amount of primrose and to regain the 350 hectares of permanent grassland.

In 2013, having regained quality grassland production, the Domaine de Mazerolles -600 hectares of the Mazerolles marsh in the dam area - was able to set up extensive breeding of Wagyu.They currently have a herd of over 200 animals. Their goal is to reach 400 by 2023.

The permanent mown and grazed meadows are the spawning grounds necessary for the life cycle of fish that lay their eggs during the flooding period from January to April. These fish eggs hatch in April-May when the water temperature rises due to the drop in water levels, the little fish feed on the phyto and zooplankton developed by the animal droppings from the extensive Wagyu farm a few weeks or months before.

They are also the natural filter for the Mazerolles water table, which is used for drinking water.

The Mazerolles marshes, although man-made, contain an exceptional natural heritage. With its subsoil rich in peat, sand and water, it's a real paradise for fauna and flora. There are 169 species of birds, as well as rare and protected plants. The marsh is also a resting or wintering area for migratory birds from northern countries: lapwing, curlew, snipe, wigeon, shoveler, etc.

It's a Natura 2000 site and was awarded the Wildlife Estates Label in 2013.

External Influence (PESTEL)

The individual preparation allowed for the gathering of key elements that constitute the project's context and environment. These elements are structured by category: political, legal, economic, environmental, social and technological.

The key identified elements are the following:

Ecological:

- Obsolete wastewater treatment plant
- Water management, biodiversity impact
- Loss of habitat
- Control of invasive species
- Maintenance of farms
- Environmental impacts of planned or ongoing activities
- Preservation of wetlands and water quality in the catchment area
- Degradation of surface and groundwater quality (AEP)
- Contamination of water reserves
- Urbanisation and agriculture issues

· Climate change (drought, CO2 stock)
· Ecological consequences of production
· Conservation of open areas (agriculture), disturbance (recreation)
· Preservation of wetlands
· Survival of birds and mammals

Economic:

· Size of public budgets
· Grant application and payment files
· Drainage issues
· Many important parameters
· Access to land in catchment areas
· Agricultural measures: the process to apply them is complex
· Agricultural land in the catchment is not prioritised for extensive livestock farming; it's not possible to have animals on it.

Policy:

· Bureaucracy
· Agricultural policy
· Financing of Natura 2000 policies
· Decisions taken at the European, or regional level are not always possible to apply at the local level
· Lobbying

Legal:

· Need simpler rules
· Not allowed to build farm buildings in Natura 2000 area - yet this would be needed to shelter livestock in winter.
· Conservation legislation

Social:

· Potential for knowledge exchange
· Responsibilities of private individuals in meeting regulatory obligations
· Unknown issues to the general public
· Media

Technological:

· Ecological monitoring
· Site discovery/monitoring

Additional information

Here is a summary of the additional information discussed during the workshop.

- 52'00: Political summary

Pierre HOFLACK: "Wetlands need maintenance; extensive livestock farming is the key to keeping the environment open. The guidelines must be on a small scale so as not to lose sight of the objectives as we go along. The State services give directives (favouring livestock farming in wetlands) but they do nothing to help these actions, and the Mazerolles estate is economically dependent on them.

- 55'00: Legal

Pierre HOFLACK: "To raise livestock, we need buildings. And the Natura 2000 zone is not buildable. There's no possibility to build farm buildings, no derogation is accepted, whereas opening buildings in these zones seems indispensable because without them there are no animals and therefore no maintenance of the wetland."

"The marsh is deprived of one of its riches: fishing."

- 1'03: Survival wetlands.

Pierre HOFLACK "Wetlands function thanks to the economy. Without the economy, they would no longer exist. We must therefore promote their products and this difficulty is shared by all wetlands.

- 1'05: The importance of ecology and water.

Pierre HOFLACK: "The problem we have with water is urbanisation and a form of agriculture. If we favour market gardening and conventional agriculture in the catchment areas, we bring in conventional agriculture in the catchment areas, we bring in new entrants. The municipalities are also a problem with their obsolete wastewater treatment plants.

SWOT

Presentation of challenges

Many of the elements presented here have already been discussed or explained in the background paper. We will therefore focus on the new elements and offer a more global view.

The key challenges identified are as follows:

Economic:

- Change in business model
- Difficulty in achieving financial balance
- Insufficient human/financial resources
- Dam requires maintenance and resources
- Agricultural constraints without compensation
- Disappearance of the Mazerolles marsh within the dam area if there is no sustainable financial system

Political:

- Little local political support

Legal:

- Change in management model
- Lack of local knowledge of legislation
- River management by the administration
- Cost, time to comply with regulations on the site
- No construction of livestock buildings on Natura 2000 site
- Lack of sanctions and restoration of the site
- Infringement of environmental codes poorly managed

Ecological:

- Urbanisation pressure
- Population growth, which impacts on water quality
- Loss of biodiversity

· Water catchment protection perimeter, at the request of the water usage syndicate, a prefectural decree delimited a protection perimeter of the water table by reducing the activities on the ground of private properties without any financial compensation.
· Climate change
· The ecological consequences of production

Social:

· Issues unknown to the general public
· Lack of communication at the level of the population and city dwellers

Additional information

1'15 - the challenges were read out and the participants were asked to complete and comment on the points they felt needed to be substantiated.

Pierre HOFLACK: "We are currently depriving ourselves of the wealth of these wetlands… It's important to give all the stakeholders a seat at the table. And this role is political again."

1'29: Climate change.

Jean-Luc MAISONNEUVE: "Droughts have been getting worse for the last 5 to 10 years. It is difficult to concretely observe because we need monitoring and indicators to link droughts to a higher level. The direct impact that we can see is that we are in a peat valley which can have effects. Such as carbon release, with significant consequences."

1'31: Issues that are not well known to the general public

Pierre HOFLACK: "We don't have the framework and the stature to communicate on a large scale. We are not a nature park. We don't have enough awareness to make ourselves well known.

1'33: Activities

Pierre HOFLACK: "We could welcome more people, but we have to manage to open up while remaining harmonious and respectful of the place. And this requires careful thought. This is why we have invested in drones and the possibility of visiting the park digitally.

1'37: the dam and its renovation

Elsa BORUJERDI, Pierre HOFLACK, Jean-Luc MAISONNEUVE: "The dam needs to be renovated, which will be expensive. The dam was built in 1960, so it needs maintenance. We need to think about maintaining it in an organised and sustainable way, to put in place hydraulic tools to allow the survival of the Mazerolles marsh in the dam area. Work will be done this year to prevent the dam from collapsing. The estate is looking for funding. There is a whole process with an important file to be made, so we need administrative engineering. We need administrative engineering, so we need support in terms of personnel and skills to put the file together.

The threat of the dam's renovation seems to be the one that weighs most heavily on the project at the moment. It calls into question its viability and sustainability.

Presentation of opportunities

The key opportunities identified are as follows:

Economic:

· Facilitating the receipt of grants
· Ensuring the safeguarding of the marsh
· Adapting economic activities
· Developing EEDD and new resources
· Experimentation with new concepts: aquaponics, etc.
· Development of organic and local production

· Enhancement in terms of production and notoriety

Legal:
· Conservation legislation
· Natura 2000 LABEL, a tool for enhancing the value of Natura 2000 products
· Control of the impact of projects on the site
· New tools, new regulations
· Partnership opportunities

Ecological:
· Preservation of natural habitats and fauna/flora species
· Ecological richness of the site - role to play in terms of biodiversity preservation
· Improvement of the ecological carrying capacity and quality of the natural environment and watercourses
· Increase in the capacity of the site to accommodate wildlife
· Preservation of the quality of wetlands and water quality

Social:
· Increase the visibility of the Natura 2000 programme
· Network to be developed
· Gastronomy
· Strengthen links and exchanges marshes: catchment area
· Site of passage/lag of migratory fauna
· Exchange on practices, heritage, historical and technical knowledge with local actors
· Valuation of local actors
· Purchase of infrastructure to welcome visitors

Policy:
· Possibility of public acquisition of the site
· Search for sponsors and private partners/projects
· Public acquisition (ENS) by the CD 44 which could eventually support the financing of heavy works

Technological:
· Innovation with digital tools

Additional information

1'44 - participants are asked to complete and comment on the points that they feel need to be supported.

"European policy aims to bring agriculture back into contact with consumers. In order to bring this link back to the fore, we need tools, people who can mobilise (such as restaurant owners). There is a sales point in the Nantes covered market where the products are promoted. This initiative could grow."

"Birdwatching should be developed with the LPO. This must be done without disturbing the birds to prevent them from leaving. Drones with video headsets have been set up to visit the marsh without disturbing the birds. We need to open up to the public but in a reasoned way."

Presentations of strengths

The question "What are my strengths?" is crucial to capitalise on your assets and make the most of them. Strengths link the project's values and mission, relationships or networks, partnerships, etc. Think of creative ways to address this factor and consider developing a list of potential partners. No one is perfect, but strong added value, a unique service proposition, and innovative management can outweigh many of the flaws. So despite the pitfalls, the constraints, or a sometimes complex context, draw inspiration from your strengths and use them wisely. What are the (unexpected) strengths and means we can use to counteract our challenges? to counteract our challenges? This starts with a correct identification of one's qualities. In the case of Mazerolles, the strengths identified beforehand are:

Economic:

· Commercial skills
· Existing infrastructure/equipment
· Shared, flexible and operational governance
· Partnership to promote Natura 2000 products with the French Culinary Academy of France

Social:

· Diversity of actors
· Committed and motivated project leaders
· Local population mobilised around the Mazerolles project with a lot of skills, experience and experience and dedication to the territory

Political:

· Knowledge of the issues and the territory
· Strong image and reputation with partnerships and connections with communities, NGOs, ELOs, federations, associations

Ecological:

· Valuation of the preservation of the surrounding wetlands and the quality of the water quality of the catchment area
· Valuation of the site (RAMSAR, ...)
· Protection of the site
· Adaptation to new measures to come

Technological:

· Drones to create videos to promote the area

During the discussion, we were able to provide the following additional information:

· The team is passionate and motivated, ASPM members have a very high level of knowledge and expertise of the context, challenges and opportunities that exist and have an impact on the Mazerolles marsh project.
· The diversity of the actors is well highlighted with the description provided by Mazerolles and the different participants and actors are varied and important for the project, with many stakeholders involved and willing to find solutions.

Pierre HOFLACK: "The local population is very involved in the project. They are currently busy filling in the dam manually, due to a lack of resources. The problem remains financing, it is necessary to restore the hydraulic tools and ensure the dam’s durability. This can only be done by ensuring economic

stability and an enhancement of the activities of the marsh, by opening the site more to the public, and bringing various activities to life."

Presentation of weaknesses

The question "What are my weaknesses?" is crucial to identifying weaknesses, learning from them and correcting them. Weaknesses can hinder the smooth running of the project, so it's vital that actors identify them in order to counteract them as best as possible. Think of creative ways to address this factor and be inspired by other actors facing the same issues. How did they react? What was put in place? In the case of Mazerolles, the weaknesses identified beforehand are

Economic:

- Significant financial need
- High cost of work to be carried out on the site plus many ancillary costs
- Lack of human resources
- High turnover of the project's actors
- Uncertainty about the future of the land
- No support or funding for the fight against invasive species
- Lack of promotion of the territory's resources

Social:

- Lack of awareness of the site
- Conflict between local stakeholders
- Weakness of exchanges between stakeholders in this area
- Lack of mobilisation of the beneficiaries of the wetland's ecosystem services

Legal:

- Administrative constraints: status and classification of waters, regulations

Ecological:

- Agricultural land in the catchment is not reserved for extensive livestock farming

Political:

- Maintaining the good ecological status of habitats and species of community interest requires maintaining the dam

Key messages

During the workshop we have discussed, analysed and presented the current situation in order to learn from it. Concrete actions should result from this exchange and analysis. A number of solutions have already been discussed, which we will now collect and develop.

The ideal action plan/recommendation should pursue opportunities, overcome, prevent or avoid challenges, use or capitalise on strengths and overcome, minimise or compensate for weaknesses.

Actions

The elements noted as a result of the recommendations discussion are the following. The most important are highlighted in bold.

- Success in making politicians aware of the interest of Mazerolles for the communities (especially the communes)
- The importance of sharing a vision
- This workshop allowed us to clarify things

· Realise the importance of local politics
· Understand that more local awareness is needed on the issues on and around the Mazerolles estate
· Involve local people who have worked in the area for a long time
· Thanks to ELO for their support

The elements noted as a result of the discussion are the following.

· Funding for the dam
· A person in charge of the administration
· Events (restaurants, tourism, etc.)
· Partnership with the gastronomy sector
· Visibility of the Natura 2000 label from an EU perspective
· Increase external communication / visibility
· Political network to be strengthened
· Ecological animal housing in the Natura 2000 area
· Buildings in protected areas
· Find a place on the watershed for the animals
· How to store hay (see discussion for details)
· Neutral facilitators
· Actions on water quality (phosphorus)

Marie ORBAN "During this discussion, we have already identified the following actions:

· Find and solve the financing of the dam,
· Discuss with all the actors to source funding.
· Whether it is with a LIFE project that finances up to 60% of the project
o And / or with actors such as the water syndicate
o And / or with the basin contract which can bring in funds (quite an important step).
· Have a dedicated person for all this administrative engineering, who can support and help with legislative and political points,
· Increase the visibility of the Natura 2000 label and therefore the visibility of projects and products.
· Continue the partnership with the gastronomy sector (see if there are any culinary events, partnerships with restaurants, etc.), to be developed further.
· Open a little more to the public - in a responsible and moderate way.

Jean-Luc MAISONNEUVE "There is a real need to find a site in the watershed so that we can put the animals there in winter. It's essential if you want to have livestock in the marshes, you have to be able to get them out, and you have to be able to have facilities outside the marshes."

Het Vrijselhof

Introduction

The Vrijselhof is located against the hiking and nature reserve "De Vuile Plas", 5 minutes from the exit Kontich of the E19 motorway or 7 minutes from the A12 motorway in Wilrijk.
On the land and in the buildings, the family tries to work out a permaculture project in harmony with their environment, complemented by principles from the circular economy and this in compliance with the legislation for organic production. The Vrijselhof manages a combination of agriculture, nature and forest, on public land under a specific management agreement.
Nature and forest: The Vrijselhof is free to use the land and the products but must develop an approved conservation plan and manage the land according to this. They must (if possible) use all outputs of the forest management in their circular business.
Agriculture: Own land plus public land which was used for intensive agriculture before. The Vrijselhof has an agreement with the government to restore the land quality (regenerative agriculture). This implies certain costs which are all covered by the farm in return for the use of the land. This agreement lasts for at least 5 years until the soil has been restored. After this the agreement will be re-evaluated.
The management of the Vrijselhof is unique in its circular and artisanal way. They make their own compost to feed the soil, they harvest the seeds of their plants to sow them the next season and they work with animals that play a role in the system. Moreover, the combination of agriculture and nature conservation offers the unique opportunity of a well divided yearly workload. They sell their products directly to consumers on the farm (60-80%) and through the network of 'Buurderijen' (local farm products) so that they know their customers and can build a community of people who support them in their business and agree with the principles of their farm.

Conservation tools used:

- Subsidies https://www.natuurenbos.be/subsidies
- Private (restoration) management of public land

External influences [PESTEL]

Political & Legal

- Strict regulations on nature management, N2000 management https://www.natura2000.vlaanderen.be/
- Regulations on food safety, slaughter and small-scale food production for sales
- Long application or approval processes for subsidies, nature plans, agreements
- Private land use and agriculture is very regulated, not adapted to 'alternative' farming
- Hard to compete on the international market as a small producer
- Different visions of nature conservation and management of the different stakeholders (State, conservation NGOs, landowner/farmer,…)

Environmental

- The land is located next to the nature reserve 'De Vuile Plas'
- Effects of Climate change, drought, pollution
- Agricultural land is degraded because of years of intensive agriculture

- Approved the nature management plans required to manage nature area
- Limited impact from pesticides from neighbouring plots when one contiguous area including brooks

Social & Economical

- The forest/nature area is open for public
- Growing awareness of the values of bio-farms, local farming, closed chain production/circular economy
- Growing interest in local products and willingness to pay the extra cost of local/artisanal products
- Gap between farmers and farmers-consumers as well as the society
- Lack of social projects and care and growing interest in social nature/farming project
- Financial support is very welcome for the restauration and maintenance activities
- Often complex regulations and application processes for project and subsidies
- Difficult to enter the market as a small artisanal producer
- Tendency of hiring seasonal workers for bigger farms

Technological

- Business model and vision of this farm are unique in Belgium
- Most technological innovation is adapted to large businesses. Technical improvements are only suitable to this business if adapted to the artisanal way and size of the business.
- Improvements on knowledge and techniques for regenerative agricultural activities
- Improvements in biological pest and quality control (crop diversification and seed selection)

Key messages

- Combination of nature-forest-agriculture on one farm offers a unique possibility to develop a circular business model, creating a microclimate on the farm and responding to the durable long-term management vision.
- Fill the gap between the neighbourhood/society and farms
- Recognize farming for biodiversity, providing effective subsidy systems

Climate change can be an opportunity to act now to solve future challenges, need for flexibility to experiment

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES	BARRIERS
• Public access to show visitors the nature value of the land • Municipalities (financially) support the needs to make the land publicly accessible • Combination of nature and agriculture to manage offers year-round activities (good division of year-round workload) • Good area for social projects • Long-term vision • Because of circular model prepared to respond to climate changes • Creating a microclimate on the farm • Large contiguous area in which the water and soil can be mainly controlled by the farm itself • Changing climate makes people more aware of env-friendly production and willing to pay the extra cost of sustainability (/bio) • Clients willing to pay more for the artisanal way of producing • Open to implement innovative ways of sustainable farm management • Crop diversification protect against external influences • Gaining interest of universities • Participating awards to get recognition • Gaining awareness and recognition by the management model • Support from higher level contacts and associations	• Public access necessary to implement and maintain following the agreed management plan • Complex conservation regulations • Complex food safety regulations • Complex to apply for subsidies • Complex regulation on employing volunteers • Regulations on engaging/inviting clients, the neighbourhood, … • Regulations are often not adapted to small artisanal farms • Complex BIO regulations, focussing on e.g. manure sources. • Social economical regulations mainly adapted to non-profit organisations • High costs to fulfil food (safety) requirements • Public tenders required for provincial investments • Strict requirements to fulfil to use the (public) land • Slaughter on the farm is not allowed • Slaughterhouses prefer to work for bigger farms, not the small artisanal farms • Selection process of finding proper staff • Lack of sources for scientific research/data/results from this unique model • Lack of time/staff to respond to subsidy/project offers • Restoration project on public land. After soil quality is restored the state has all rights to decide on the land-use. • Competition with local NGOs

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Own seed production • Own compost production • Financial support from subsidies • (Financial) Sources available to test innovative techniques • Creating well controlled micro-climate on the farm • Because of the circular economic model able to respond to the changing climate/environment • Flexibility to interfere immediately • Long-term vision • Bio-dynamic model • Small and artisanal business: Crop diversification possible • Added value in product (meat) quality • Attracting clients and interest by the management model and vision • Finding paying clients even without maximum PR campaigns • Clients find their way to the farm mainly by mouth-to-mouth advertising • Products are sold under the label of the farm 'Vrijselhof' and the 'Bio' label. Buyers link the label with their sustainable production methods and vision. • Clients are willing to pay extra for the label • Combination of nature and agriculture to manage offers year-round activities (good division of year-round workload) • Strong ethics on staff employment; year-round and long term	• Dependent on the processing time of municipalities (subsidies, agreements, approval…) • Does not qualify for certain social regulations • Artificial business: limited innovative technologies available fitting within the business vision • Weak competitor in international tenders • Depending on the strict regulations (which can change) of using the public land • Slaughterhouse gives animal stress -> lower meat quality plus extra costs • No fully closed chain because of external slaughter required • (No organized PR campaigns), no website • Lack of time, hard and time consuming to find staff fitting withing the business vision • Lack of time to apply for all available subsidies • No long-term security on the use of the public land after the restoration is succeeded • Accepting new proper staff

Tullstorp Stream Project

Introduction

The Tullstorp Stream Project is unique in that it is operated by an association of all landowners along a stream – The Tullstorp Stream. The project was able to gather landowners and managers along the stream to work together on their mutual challenges and goals and in the meantime to restore the stream and wetlands in the areas where possible.

The project is unique in a way that the farmers themselves are in control of the project. Each farmer has its own goals and benefits. On farm level the goals are to prevent flooding, reducing maintenance of the stream and a continued high production on arable land. By gathering the farmers in an association, they are able to take an holistic view on the management of the stream and the whole catchment area.

A landowner driven cooperation, the Tullstorp Stream Economic Association, was founded, and became responsible for running the project. The association members consisted of the stakeholders in the catchment area and the Board of representatives of landowners and stakeholders related to the stream. The TSP is operated by an association of all landowners along the stream. There are around 150 private properties along the stream.

The association board today has 7 members, with Otto von Arnold as the chairman and Johnny Carlsson and Christoffer Bonthron employed by the association as project managers. The project managers are responsible for the administrative work and thereby decreases the workload for the landowners who participate in the project. They do not have to spend time on applications, reports and documentation and can choose how much they want to be involved.

Structure: Association of farmers managing the catchment area in a holistic way, with a project manager who is responsible for the administration.

Tools used: Subsidies and Grants, Landowners' association

External influences [PESTEL]

Political & Legal

- Governmental regulations and bureaucracy in general are a challenge.
- Private land use is very regulated.
- There is a big interest at national and regional level for environmental questions and initiatives, but at local level it very much depends on the local politicians. There is not a positive political attitude towards private land and private initiatives in the area of this project. The Social interest and involvement are however increasing.
- Lobbying authorities and the conflict between people living in the cities and in the rural areas: The Swedish landowners' Organizations are playing an important role here, but more support is welcome.
- Complex legal system. There are many different systems (national and EU) which must be taken into account and the system is not always adapted to the reality.
    - CAP
    - Landsbygdsprogramme
    - Legislation on drainage associations (dikningsforetag)
    - New water framework directive

    - Biodiversity legislation
    - …
- It is uncertain at the moment if more strict legal instruments are coming up and if these would have an impact on the voluntary methods.
- Green deal: Will it include more emphasis on durable resources management?
- Sweden has a strict land use plan which is not very flexible or adapted to reality.

Environmental

- Effects of climate change: floods, droughts, ...
- The arable countryside is heavily fertilized
- Side problems like water buffer possibilities can now be solved with side projects
- A trend to more consumer goods instead of industrial productions would be a positive trend if it would not cause economic losses
- Most of the land is drained. There are only very few open ditches
- There is a growing population density in the area
- Water scarcity and habitat loss are the main issues
- The demonstration area shows visitors the ecological effects of the project activities

Social & Economical

- The project area covers historical sites
- The project area has an exposition area to inform visitors about the project aims and implementation.
- The project is successfully making the area more accessible and attractive for recreation: Paths for hiking, birdwatching, school visits, ...
- Other catchment areas are showing an interest to follow the example of the TSProject
- **Land access issue**. This is different for all EU Member States. The discussion should be opened on the options for opening land.
- Long-term financing is necessary for this project. If there is no long-term guarantee, this project would be a “waste of money”. The management must be maintained over a long term. The project funds now vary from year to year depending on the State budget.
    - New legislations and instruments can bring new funding possibilities: CAP, Landsbygdsprogramme?
    - Will the (inter)national crises (Brexit, Corona...) have an impact on the financial resources for conservation?
- The long-term is however still uncertain as in Sweden a guarantee is max 10 years. This is too short for a biodiversity project and to engage landowners. To get the funding a long and complex application process is needed.
- In Sweden State money can only go to associations. The budget is raising, but the application process is still complex.
- Alternative funding mechanisms.
    - CAP Pillar 2 financing is possible for wetland management and ditches, ...
    - Payments for ecosystem services: There is increasing demand for ecosystem services due to climate change (flooding, droughts,). It has great potential, but acceptance is still weak
    - The engagement of local companies in nature projects would be a good solution.
- Agricultural land is valuable for farmers. It is difficult to convince them to change their traditional management for biodiversity benefits.

- All owners have to agree on the project activities. This makes it sometimes a difficult and long procedure before an action implementation can start.
- There is a growing population density in the area

Technological

- Improvement is possible via better technologies for more efficient environmental and water monitoring

SWOT

Threats

- The project team feels they are lacking support from authorities. Local authorities do not always understand the idea behind the project which causes this lack of support. Also, there is a big mistrust of private conservation initiatives at the environmental department, based on former negative experiences. This mistrust varies between the local communes. There is an opportunity to learn from communes with positive experiences and cooperation.
- Public financing is currently necessary to maintain the project. However, the complex application process for financing causes a risk of missing funding opportunities if there is no communication with the municipalities.
- Top-down regulations from the new Green Deal. There is a risk of new rules which could contradict what has been done.
- Changing views on land management. It is important to recognize the change of the land. At the moment there is a strict land-use planning, which is not taking into account (natural) land and habitat changes.
- Positive results are only visible in the longer term, but these examples are often necessary to engage landowners and convince policy makers.

Opportunities

- Farmers lack knowledge on the possibilities to raise Biodiversity. Filling this knowledge gap would bring great opportunities in raising biodiversity on agricultural land. Guide farmers on where to grow what. Farmers need (local) guidance on conservation options.
- There is a need for scientific development to combine productivity and biodiversity: The project can help to raise productivity AND bring more biodiversity: Find the driving forces. Important questions to ask; Why is a landowner interested in a project? What should be their benefit? It is wrong to think that for more biodiversity, land should be taken out of production. We need intelligent choices from the ecological point of view for parts of land to take out for conservation. Projects should show the opportunities for conservation even on small plots.
- Education of the visitors, local communities and farmers will engage them in the whole process and ease the local acceptance of ideas and rules. If the community understands the broader aims of the project, they might agree more easily on changes in their environment.
- Better relationship with (local) governments eases the application process for funding, the approval for activity implementation and additional (side)projects.
- New funding sources: Donations, cooperation with companies, investors in new techniques, ...
- The Swedish Landowners' Organizations would be a trustworthy player to take initiative for the farmers.

- Use landowners/farmers with a positive experience as ambassadors to bring the messages to other land managers.

Weaknesses

- Uncertain financing
- It takes time to have positive examples to share
- Materials are missing to communicate on the longer term
- Project members or manager who would quit or step out

Strengths

- Positive examples to show, to other regions, to inspire and motivate people
- Project video and other communication materials to explain the project aims and activities: raising awareness on the project
- Also focussing on recreation activities in the project area to broaden the group of beneficiaries. Integrating local and historical sites and organizations.
- Project website with possibility of donations
- Cooperation with companies that can deliver technical assistance
- Combining the productivity aspect and the conservation aspect. Intelligent choices of where to put what, taking into account the existing land management traditions and benefits
- Engaging the landowners and respecting their decisions: bottom-up.
- Scientific reports available on the impact of the project
- Active communication on the project actions and outcomes
- Good understanding of the land and biodiversity
- Working in close contact with the local communities
- Engaging (local) media
- Creating a better/more positive social status for farmers engaged

Actions

- Raise awareness and inform
- Communication to target possible new funding sources
- Scientific information and results to show as proof
- For each project, a project leader who has the responsibility towers the government and has their trust
- Biodiversity education of farmers (mandatory?)
- Use the TS Project as a successful example to inspire and motivate others for similar engagements
- Explore innovative/alternative management techniques (e.g. for invasive species)
- Toolbox with tools to inform, support and improve management for farmers
- Continue to develop yearly (scientific) reports on the outcomes and activities
- Technical improvements and machinery for harvesting are necessary. Explore and follow new developments on water technologies.
- Continue to show the successful outcomes and inform on what has been done with tax money
- Invest time in dialogue with municipalities to secure funding possibilities
- Develop new partnerships for awareness and funding

Key messages

- Important to discuss landowners' roles and to show what they can do.
- Necessary to bring the topic of private conservation to the EU level.
- Important to understand the conditions in which the landowner is managing his/her land.
- Important to show positive examples and to find out how to cooperate on different levels.
- Food for thought

El Castañar

Participants

Rafael FINAT, Manager/Owner
Juan MAYORA, Cattle Manager
ELO STAFF: Eugénie MAILLEBIAU, Stagiaire chez ELO, Marie ORBAN, Project Officer Land Is For Ever, José Gómez-Acebo, Project Officer Land Is For Ever

Introduction

El Castañar Farm, located in the province of Toledo with an area of 5,500 hectares, develops agricultural, livestock, hunting and tourism activities. It has the Wildlife Estates label that rewards the outstanding management of the farm for the conservation of wildlife. Managed by Rafael Finat for many years, it has been facing a series of problems, many of them caused by circumstances that the manager cannot control, let alone predict. In these proceedings we will see what they are, how they can be solved and what opportunities can be found in them.

External influences [PESTEL]

Political factors influencing the State

- The general attitude of a country towards private property.

The emergence of a movement by the people of the city to take possession away from the owners (not the property). It must be taken into account that the countryside represents a much lower number of votes compared to the cities, so politicians seek above all the vote of the people living in the cities. There are subsidies, there is support from the government to help property owners. But on the other hand, there are movements or associations with little affinity towards the rural world that hold back development. It also varies depending on how autonomous you are, since each is managed independently of the others. There are associations that help landowners like APROCA, ELO, Alianza Rural that allow you to exert pressure on politicians.

The erroneous conception of the rural world by many people who assume that the countryside belongs to everyone, and also the lack of knowledge of the economic and labor sacrifice that the owners make every day. The latter are subject to an infinite number of bureaucratic procedures to carry out any type of activity on their property, so if the local authorities were to facilitate a little of this labyrinth of paperwork, it would make the work of the managers easier, given that in the end they manage according to the guidelines of the administration, being, indirectly, managers of the administration itself.

Even so, this circumstance is more aggravated in other European countries, so the Spanish situation is better than that of other countries.

- Tax regulations

Owners are subject to a significant tax burden. In Spain there is a special tax called the Impuesto de Patrimonio, which has a particularly negative impact on fincas, as a finca is an asset in itself, but the yield it generates may be so small that it is impossible to meet this tax burden (Cost of the finca ≠ Profit generated). This problem is somewhat cyclical, not linked to the political party in power at the time. When the owner cannot face the costs of the farm he is forced to sell it, most probably at a lower price.

- Pressure campaigns from interest groups: local, national, international.

El Castañar Farm is dedicated to the extensive management of wild cattle (Toros de Lidia) of which a part of its production is used in bullfights. The bullfighting spectacle has generated much controversy related to the suffering of the animals and their rights. Many groups want its abolition offering as a solution to impossible management. On the other hand, the farms where improvements in biodiversity and recovery of protected species have been achieved are hunting farms and/or where fighting bulls are bred because they are managed farms with greater control than others. Hunting and extensive cattle raising occupy a large number of hectares and are the best scenario for improving biodiversity. On November 5, the European Parliament held a debate on the role of the fighting bull as a guardian of biodiversity, with the support of several MEPs and Commissioners.

Legal factors

- Conservation legislation.

Many times landowners are against the use of their properties for the introduction of protected species, but then in the end this is not the case. The manager continues with his work and tasks without being affected or blocked by the administration and even observes improvements because of these actions.

- Legislation on (property) taxation

Currently the tax burden is not very large, but as we have mentioned before, wealth tax can be a very difficult issue.

Environmental factors

- Ecological consequences of production

As it is an extensive farm, there are no problems arising from agricultural or livestock activity. There are some points in particular where there is a little more density, but by no means enough to create ecological damage. As it is extensive, the vast majority are governed by the ecological option. What happens is that the yield is lower when it is extensive.

- Habitat loss

The farm, due to its type of activity, does not have a loss of habitat as such, being this caused by climatic factors such as droughts. Losing oaks and other trees in the pasture. This is not a cyclical phenomenon, as it could be in other regions, but there is a growing deficit of water.

- Contextually relevant environmental issues

The farm is affected by climate change per se. There are no environmental problems at the local level, such as problems with wastewater or similar situations except as mentioned in the previous point, water scarcity. This is not only a problem for this farm but for many throughout Spain. Many of them are forced to stop their activity due to the high price of bringing water to the farms. In addition, as it is happening continuously, they do not allow the countryside to recover, thus leading to its decline. Furthermore, trying to change the business model to something that can adapt to the new climate situation is very complicated.

Social factors that influence heritage

- Media views

As we mentioned before, the controversy generated by the breeding of wild cattle. Social networks are full of comments against this practice, generating a bad image of the activity. Also the hunting activity is the target of many critics, not being aware of the cost and work involved in managing it efficiently and sustainably.

The activity has been broadcast on local television stations, where there is support for the sector, but on a smaller scale than if it were in a city.

In regions such as Catalonia or the Balearic Islands, bullfights have been banned, due to pressure from various platforms affecting the sector in those areas.
The lack of knowledge of how the rural world works, means that certain practices that have been done for generations in rural areas are considered inhumane.

Economic factors influencing the State

- Taxes and fees

Virtually every activity carried out on the farm has a government tax attached to it. In addition to all the investment that the owner has to make in the property itself.

- Economic situation of specific communities or population groups relevant.

In Spain there is the strange situation of unemployment in rural areas, but then during the season of collecting fruit and vegetables, foreign labour is used. Making it clear that people prefer to receive unemployment benefits than to work in the fields.

Technical factors that influence the State

- Possible replacement/alternative technologies, new technologies that could have an impact or that could be used to achieve objectives

SWOT

While this whole scenario may seem daunting and pessimistic, there are always opportunities.
The biggest opportunity today is the creation of a rural awareness campaign, many times the information we receive about the countryside is incomplete or biased. It is necessary to make the countryside known in all its aspects, so that people really understand how the countryside works, without bias or subjective opinions. People have to be aware of the infrastructure behind activities such as cattle breeding, or hunting and above all the benefit they bring to the environment, which is never mentioned by people who oppose these types of activities. Quality rural tourism can be the solution to this.
Another opportunity is to promote the improvement of the environment by lowering taxes, thus promoting people's involvement in rural business, making it more profitable. Even with lower taxes, they could collect more as it is easier to have a business in the rural world.
The diversification of the business can offer another opportunity within the rural world: adaptation to new business models is the solution to continue generating with the rural world, but on the other hand the threat that this generates is the lack of capital, or level of knowledge to develop the new activity.

Threats:

A bad image generated by disinformation can revert in the cessation of a business that REALLY cares for the environment and that is neeeded, now more than ever with the uncertain future that awaits us.
As mentioned before, the lack of water can be the biggest threat within the rural world, and it is not feasible to find an opportunity within this threat.

Key messages

- The combination of livestock and agriculture allows the benefit to be greater, if only focused on agriculture or livestock. The agricultural activity is carried out in such a way that the impact of the activity is minimal for the fauna (beetle banks and uncultivated strips)

- There is a growing deficit of water. All the problems related to environmental factors end up leading to water shortages, being the main problem. Nowadays there is help to build water points and wells.

- There is also the problem that the taxes increase, and the subsidies decrease.

The National Park De Hoge Veluwe

Introduction

The National Park De Hoge Veluwe is managed by an independent foundation that only makes limited use of government subsidies. The Park thus privately owned and almost entirely dependent on paying visitors for its survival. The relatively small organisation is characterised by consistent policy and management, idiosyncrasy, and modern entrepreneurship. The director is assisted by the advisory committee on recreation and the nature management committee. The supervisory board supervises the management.

The Foundation is financially and administratively independent. The Park is known as a good employer, is a recognised training company and has a very extensive network: European, national and regional. The high ecological level maintained over the past decades is directly related to the financial policy aimed at independence. Each year, the Park manages to raise 80% of the funds required for its operation by receiving paying visitors.

Structure: Independent Foundation managing nature in combination with landscape, cultural and heritage values

Tools used: Subsidies (only limited), Part of international label network

External influences [PESTEL]

Political & Legal

- Regulations on nature conservation, nature management, hunting, N2k management (32% of park is located in N2k area)
- Regulations on visitor safety
- Regulations on food security (hunting)
- Regulations on infrastructure
- Competition between management of private Estates and conservation NGOs
- Impact subsidies e.g. Nitrogen measures subsidies, purchase subsidies, …
- [Limited] Changing politics
- Short term vision of the State
- Subsidies in the Netherlands are very much fluctuating, depending on the economic state of the country

Environmental

- Climate change and pollution causing a change in habitats (e.g. nitrogen)
- More scientific research going on the effects of climate change and pollution and techniques to reverse/mitigate the effects
- More recreation in the area: pressure on the park area
- More drought
- Certain types of recreation can be harmful for the environment (mountain bikers, photographers,)
- Visitors need infrastructure
- Weather conditions might influence the willingness of people to visit a nature park

Social & Economical

- Public ideal image of nature is often not matching with the (non-managed) natural fluctuations and shifts
- Recreation expectations change over time.
- Public opinion on nobility owning land: often negative
- Public opinion on entrance fees for nature areas or of making profit of nature management: often negative
- The park is the biggest employer of the area
- Tourism increased in the area because of the park
- The park is internationally known
- Awareness is raising on the importance of local nature
- Schools and educational institutions need a (local) nature area for field visits and tests
- Importance and (international) interest in cultural heritage

Technological

- Technological improvements for nature monitoring and data collection
- Technological improvements for nature management techniques and methods
- Scientific research on conservation and management topics
- Outsourcing opportunities for specific management actions
- Technological innovation of (social) media

Key messages

- Act consistently to become a trusted example for others
- Dare to go for an alternative management; balance between nature, landscape, cultural and heritage management to make the overall park durable
- Accept that nature conservation is a slow process and results are only developing on the long-term
- Keep believing in the (same) vision and mission for the management
- The landscapes are looking natural, in fact they are highly managed; Bringing Nature to the people, not people to nature
- Think and act in solutions
- Accept challenges and use them as an opportunity

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES	BARRIERS
• The Park is managed by a Private foundation which give them a certain independency for the management • The independency of the management structure and the size of the park in combination with the in-house experience and in-field knowledge offers the managers a certain flexibility in the set frameworks and to solve problems and react on external effects within the park or organization • Combining nature and culture to make the whole organization sustainable on the long-term • Long-term vision, with a continuous consistent management • Only 10% of the exploitation is subsidized; financially independent • Biggest job provider of the area • Recognized private park management as an example to others • Known as a trustworthy partner in conservation management • The park is internationally known • The size of the park gives the managers a voice and certain impact in higher level discussions e.g. State discussions • The independency of the management structure limits the impact of other conservation NGOs on the management • Area open for visitors • Entrance fees for visitors • They are often asked to participate in (scientific) projects • The park is boosting the local tourism and economy • Lowering the threshold of visiting a nature area by following the latest technological and social developments • Part of the European WE label network • A strong director means a strong business model and higher lobby impact • Offering visitors, a balanced combination of nature and culture	• Competition with nature conservations and their impact • Public opinion of land under private management and private land conservation • Public opinion of paying an entrance fee to visit nature 'Nature has to be freely accessible" • Public opinion of entrance fees for nature or making profit of nature management: often negative • Public ideal image of 'real nature' is often one without any human management interventions • Not always fully supported by the government because they are seen as more private entrepreneurs/businessmen. More challenging to receive subsidies • Need to evolve the business models to maintain sufficient income to maintain the park • Dependent on (changing) (strict) regulations • Short term vision of the government • Impact subsidies • Borders needed in the park to organize the recreation pressure • The income fees need to depend on the financial situation of the organisation • Infrastructure needed for visitors • Number of visitors/income can depend on the weather conditions and transport • Pollution causes habitat changes

• Vision of thinking in solutions for experienced challenges • Cooperation with conservation NGOs and other stakeholders • Concentrating visitors as much as possible on certain areas of the park to save the quiet areas for conservation and protection only	
STRENGTHS • The consistent, continuous management because of the long-term vision makes the park a trustable partner • Able to use practical knowledge for lobbying, concrete figures and strategies available • Only very minimally dependent on subsidies. Not in danger if the government decides to remove the subsidies. • Offering nature and cultural values to the visitors • Diversity in management goals; nature and landscape, cultural, historical, … • Strong lobby position: high level impact and recognition • Discussion with State and other local stakeholders • Higher level and international contacts and impact • A certain flexibility in implementing regulations because of financial independence • Possibility to engage in scientific projects • Motivated, innovative and enthusiastic team • Strong knowledge based on in-field experience and engagement in scientific projects • Known museum in the park attracting extra visitors • Active management: Bringing Nature to the people, not people to nature • Successful examples to show • Part of international networks • Cooperation • Zoning of the park over the different management aims • A strong director means a strong business model and higher lobby impact	WEAKNESSES • Success strongly depends on the skills and charism of the director • Director is vulnerable in his/her role • Dependent on the success of the business model • Problems with mountain bikers and photographers destroying nature • Lack of time to participate actively in projects or scientific research or technological improvements • (Income depending on weather conditions) • Internal dilemma: more money needed to maintain the park means more visitors and higher recreation pressure. Nature is the priority • Lack of staff to test and implement all new available technologies

The NATO airfield in Malle

Introduction

The NATO airfield in Malle was one of six reserve airfields that were built in Belgium from 1952 onwards at the request of NATO and for which SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the central command centre of NATO) determined the criteria to be met. The first expropriations for the construction of the airfield took place in 1952. The expropriations involved 5 private families who were engaged already for many years in conserving the nature values of the area.

Today, two private flying clubs are still active, but the airfield is no longer in use as a military airport and the Belgian army, the owner of the airfield, indicated it is willing to sell this airport. The more than 200 ha large area is part of Natura 2000 so there is a keen interest from the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests and from Flanders' largest nature NGO Natuurpunt. However, legally the initial owners have the right to buy back their original land at the original buying price. The preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever brought together the different partners involved to check a possible cooperation between all partners. During 2019 and 2020 several meetings were organised between all partners to discuss such a cooperation. Those meetings finally led to a signed agreement between the neighbouring private landowners and Natuurpunt. They agreed to set up an NGO in order to buy the airfield with the assistance of the Agency for Nature and Forest (subsidies to buy the land in line with regional policy). They also agreed to manage together the area in function of realising the Natura 2000 goals.

Today, it remains unclear if the proposed structure will be able to buy the land as there is no agreement between the seller and the buyers on the legal procedure to be followed. This is complicated by the proposal of the Flemish Authority to expropriate the land for nature conservation showing a willingness to work with the NGO proposed to realise the nature goals.

Structure: NGO in which as well the neighbouring landowners as Flanders' largest nature conservation organisation Natuurpunt will participate.

Tools used: Subsidies (land acquisition nature management), conservation easement, land stewardship, private reserves designation, conservation contract

External influences [PESTEL]

Political & Legal

- Regulations on nature conservation, nature management, hunting, N2k management (area is part of N2000)
- Acquisition: unclear legal situation (right of initial owners to buy back at original price – based on 1834 law)
- Ministry of Defence has to follow governmental rules when selling (public tender)
- Competition between nature NGO, private Landowners, governmental agency responsible for nature)
- In Flanders a landowner can buy land for nature conservation with land acquisition subsidies if the buyer already manages a type 4 nature (nature reserve); unclear if new NGO would comply with this rule even with a nature conservation organisation managing type 4 nature present in the organisation)

Environmental

- Conflict between ongoing economic activities and the obligation to realise type 4 nature (nature reserve)
- Incompatibility between type 4 nature and hunting
- Effect of groundwater pumping by drinking water company
- Need for visitors infrastructure
- Certain types of recreation can be harmful for the environment (e.g. mountain bikers)
- Long term effect on nature goals of surrounding properties
- Some infrastructure should be removed

Social & Economical

- Multiple use of the airfield infrastructure: two private flying clubs active, testing of touring cars (largest Belgian touring car company needs the airfield infrastructure for its survival), army exercises, police training, …
- Conflict between ongoing economic activities and the need to realise type 4 nature (nature reserve)
- Groundwater pumping by drinking water company
- Minimal infrastructure needed for storage of airplanes .

Technological

- Technological improvements for nature monitoring and data collection
- Technological improvements for nature management techniques and methods
- Scientific research on conservation and management topics
- Outsourcing opportunities for specific management actions

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES	BARRIERS
• The airfield can be managed by a new NGO including the neighbouring landowners and Flanders' largest nature NGO Natuurpunt. • Area partly open for visitors • Positive for local tourism and economy • One of the neighbouring properties is part of the European WE label network • Development of type 4 nature (highest possible quality – nature reserve) and achievement of Natura 2000 NCOs	• Involvement of several economic stakeholders • Public procurement procedure: risk external party would by the land • Unclear legal situation: right of initial owners to buy back at original price – based on 1834 law • Need for land acquisition subsidy
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Cooperation between nature NGO and private landowners • Nature values already present due to former nature	• Difficult legal situation • Diverging views

Key messages

- Offer private landowners a broad menu of private land conservation tools. The broader the menu the more likely a landowner will find an instrument fitting its individual need.
- Cooperation between private landowners and nature conservation NGOs is based on trust. Sometimes it takes a while to build this trust.
- A well conceptualised nature conservation project can include economic and social factors.

Slangebeekbron nature reserve

Introduction

In 2017 the Flemish Government introduced a new nature legislation giving equal opportunities to private landowners and nature conservation NGOs. Both of them are able to buy land in function of nature conservation goals making use of the same amount of subsidies for acquisition of the land and for managing specific habitats. In order to be able to receive subsidies to acquire the land one has to prove he/she is able to do this . So the manager/owner has to prove he/she already manages a type 4 nature reserve. An easy task for a nature conservation NGO whose main objective is nature conservation, but a lot more difficult for individual private landowners.

The nature conservation NGO 'Stichting Behoud Natuur en Leefmilieu Vlaanderen' (SBNL) has existed for almost 3 decades. Based on the outcome of the preparatory LIFE+ project Land Is For Ever the Board of Directors decided to reform the organization to a land trust, but adapted to the nature legislation in Flanders. Within the framework of the Land Is For Ever project SBNL bought 10 ha of nature reserve in the province of Limburg, formerly recognized to be a type 4 nature reserve. By applying again for the type 4 recognition SBNL will be able to buy additional land in Flanders for nature conservation purposes. SBNL got the financial support of the Fund Baillet Latour. For each of the additional nature reserves SBNL will cooperate closely with private landowners bordering the new nature reserve. Private landowners interested to buy land for nature conservation can contact SBNL. SBNL buys the land. The private landowner contributes 20% to the purchase price while the remaining 80% comes from the Flemish Authority. SBNL takes the final responsibility for the management of the reserve but is doing this in close cooperation with the private landowner who will also take the responsibility for the management of the land. This way private landowners can become managers of land next to their estate while integrating the nature management in the management of their estate.

Structure: cooperation between a nature conservation NGO and private landowners

Tools used: Subsidies (land acquisition nature management), conservation easement, land stewardship, private reserves designation, conservation contract.

External influences [PESTEL]

Political & Legal

- New Flemish nature legislation (2017) giving equal opportunities to private landowners and nature conservation NGOs
- Condition to be able to get subsidies for acquisition of land: manage already type 4 nature (nature reserve): difficult for individual private landowners
- Condition to be able to get subsidies for acquisition of land: manage already type 4 nature (nature reserve): easy for a nature conservation NGO as it only needs 1 one type 4 nature reserve to be able to buy land all over Flanders
- Land trust owning a nature reserve can apply subsidies: as well for acquisition of the land as for managing the land
- Land trust can buy the land and agree with a private landowner neighbouring the land to manage the land as part of his/her nature management plan.

Environmental

- Private landowners are a key component in realising the 30% protected area goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030
- Acquired land can be integrated in existing nature management plans realising larger nature conservation projects (or areas) with the same conservation objectives
- Recognition of contributions of private landowners can have positive effect on other private landowners
- Quality control by land trust and governmental agency (an approved management plan will be evaluated every 6 years by the competent authority (ANB) based on a monitoring report provided by the responsible manager(s).
- Private properties can act as steppingstones or as corridors between governmental nature reserves of nature reserves of nature conservation

Social & Economical

- Integrating nature management in estate management resulting in win-win situations
- Recognised contribution to private land conservation for private landowners

Technological

- Nature monitoring on private land contributing to larger datasets

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES • Financial contribution of private landowners to nature conservation and restoration targets • Cooperation possible between individual private landowners and nature conservation NGOs • Involvement of private landowners in monitoring of nature • Integration of nature management in the overall estate management • Ecologic/economic win/win situations	BARRIERS • Competition with nature conservation organisations • Land is owned by land trust and not by individual private landowner • Administrative procedure for each individual area
STRENGTHS • Quality control by SBNL • Recognition for private landowners participating	WEAKNESSES • Lack of knowledge on nature conservation by some individual private landowners

Key messages

- Give equal opportunities (same instruments and tools) to private landowners and nature conservation NGO
- Cooperation between private landowners and nature conservation NGOs leads to win-win situations
- Recognition is an important factor for private landowners
- Involve private landowners in nature conservation using trusted organisations
- Integration of nature management in the overall estate management is for private landowners an important reason to get involved in nature conservation