



# PATHWAYS project

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## Case Study

Innovative forms of land management in Castro Laboreiro, Peneda-Gêres National Park, Portugal

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CDB    | Communal land organizations (Conselho Directivo de Baldios )   |
| DRAP-N | Ministry of Agriculture Regional Division in Northern Portugal (Direção Geral Agricultura e Pescas do Norte) |
| ELA    | Local management structure of the ITI (Estrutura Local de Apoio)   |
| ITI    | Integrated Territorial Intervention, policy measure created in the Rural Development Plan PRODER 2007-2013   |
| PNPG   | Peneda-Gerês National Park (Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gêres)   |

## 1 Background of the initiative and overview

Conflicts over the use of natural resources and associated sustainable land use and management strategies occur all over the world (Zube 1986, Ehrlich 1996, van der Ploeg, Renting et al. 2000, van der Ploeg and Roep 2003, van der Ploeg and Marsden 2008, Selman 2009). In areas where biodiversity is an important asset there are often overlapping interests driven by sectors such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, to cite only a few. These interests are often managed through agriculture, forestry and/or coastal areas sectorial planning tools. In addition, there are socio-economic plans (e.g. rural development), landscape heritage plans, biodiversity plans, and others (O'Riordan and Voisey 1998). However, the link between overlapping interests, the planning tools, and the socio-economic dynamics of the local communities is often vague and arguably insufficient for an integrative management of multi-functional landscapes. In order to gear towards sustainable land use transitions there is a need for reconciling conflicting interests amongst stakeholders (Dwyer 2007, Rogge, Dessen et al. 2011).

In the case of European cultural landscapes a key issue is how to sustain rural communities in marginal rural areas while promoting biodiversity (Navarro and Pereira 2012). In this context, one of the main challenges is to address biodiversity issues in places where land abandonment has been occurring (Pereira, Queiroz et al. 2005, Pereira, Domingos et al. 2006). Areas undergoing such land use transition can undergo several pathways, ranging from bringing back nature through rewilding, to an agricultural focus purely dependent on subsidies, to a focus on new ways to reconnect with the global economy, e.g. by finding entrances to niche markets. Each one of these pathways is likely to have different implications on both biodiversity and community livelihoods.

This report presents the Portuguese case study for the domain of land use and biodiversity in the PATHWAYS project. This case study analyses the ways by which new forms of land management emerged and developed in a small community in the Peneda-Gerês National Park, the Castro Laboreiro parish. This is a community where traditional farming is being abandoned. The focus of our work was on the way such a novel management initiative unfolds and develops, and how they can expand or modify existing regimes.

This case study encompasses a multi-issue initiative as there are several interests at stake (e.g. conflicting interests over the land management from agriculture, forestry, biodiversity) and not only a single demand in isolation (Fressoli, Arond et al. 2014). Therefore, actors are confronted with diverse and complex starting positions and collaborations are crucial. Gray (1989:5) defines collaboration as a process whereby people with potentially conflicting interests “can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible”. Seeking common ground and creating collaborative solutions results in better outcomes for communities. Collaborative land management is likely to enhance understanding of and promote a balance between self-interest and the common good. This includes engendering trust among participants ‘mediated by awareness of others and a willingness to compromise and accommodate needs’ (Cox 2000:101).

This study is thus important for PATHWAYS, particularly to the land use/biodiversity domain, as it explores the ways in which innovative forms of collaborative land management for enhancing ecosystem services such as biodiversity emerged, developed and implemented in a particular socio-ecological system where land abandonment has been occurring. Given that, land abandonment is one of the most important land use transitions occurring nowadays in Europe (Navarro and Pereira, 2012), this study provides critical insight into the local social dynamics developing in community facing major land use transitions. This case study explores motivations, beliefs and visions of local communal land managers and nature protection organizations when land management is being reconciled with biodiversity goals.

As both the innovation type and learning are obviously affected by the specific composition of actors (who typically represent a wide range of complementary competencies, skills, and expertise) (Smith, Vo et al. 2010) this empirical case can give hints that might help to better target decision making and governance strategies able to tackle land management for enhanced biodiversity in the context of land abandonment in rural areas of Europe.

This work is also important for PATHWAYS as it has implicitly the challenge of reconciling governance and policy at multiple levels of governance (European, National (Portugal) and regional/local), calling for combination of framings and modes of engagement (for example insertion/mobilization of different actors (Fressoli, Arond et al. 2014). At an international level,

this case is an example of the clash of interests in the pursuit of different goals e.g. fire used by shepherds to renew pastures vs. activists for biodiversity/natural protection who themselves start conservation initiatives. These initiatives may lead to compromises and solutions/innovations or further conflicts eventually bringing both goals into a stalemate.

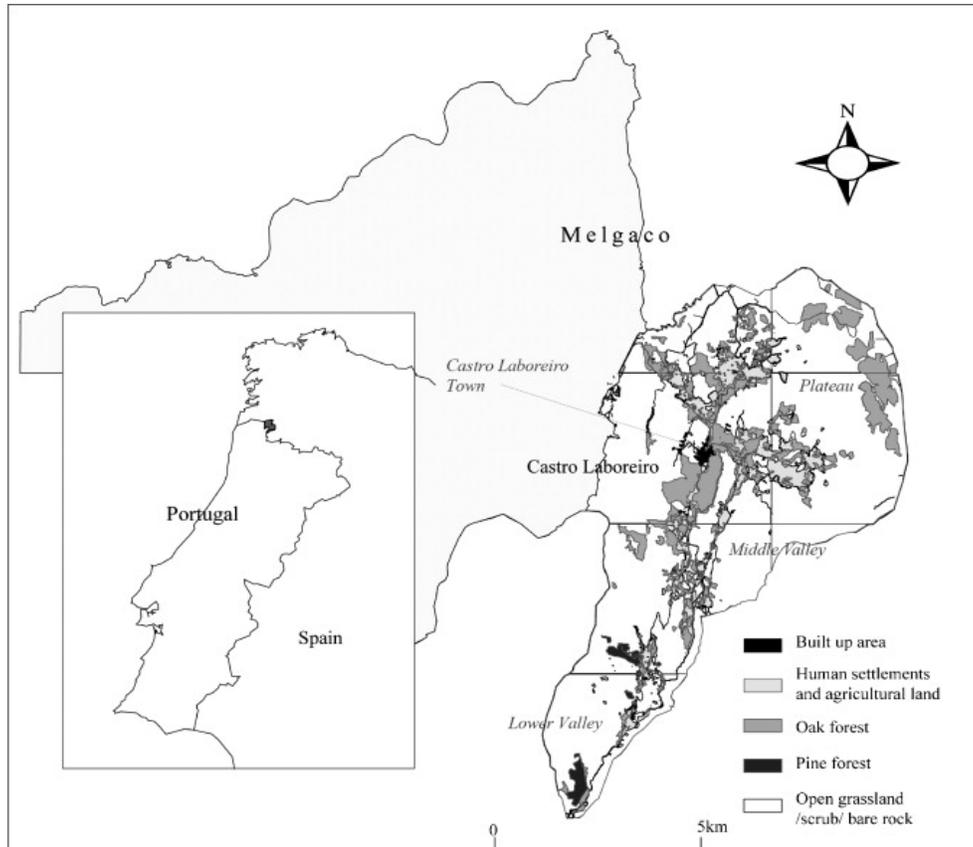
This case study reports one type of social innovation which imply a paradigm shift involving and empowering new actors and can thus be considered as PATHWAY B. One of the challenges of governance for sustainable land use is to forge new forms of land management able to fulfil the goals of different actors this likely implying landscape multi-functionality. Because land use and biodiversity have a strong spatial component (CEMAT 2007), we here adopt the Council of Europe definition of governance as “the emergence and implementation of innovative shared forms of planning and managing of socio-spatial dynamics” (CEMAT 2007:29).

## 2 Case study area

Castro Laboreiro is a parish located in the northern Portuguese municipality of Melgaço in the Peneda mountain range (Figure 1). The parish altitude ranges from 400 to 1300m above sea level. Due to this topography, there are two distinctive climatic zones stretching from north to south namely the high plateau and a valley zone (Figure 1). In 1971 Castro Laboreiro was included as part of the Peneda-Gerês National Park (*Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês*, PNPG).

Prior to the 1940s the valleys and gentle slopes of the mountainous region were used for small-holding mixed agriculture (smaller than 1 ha). These holdings were in the lower zones of Castro Laboreiro where farmers had winter housing (*Inverneiras*), taking advantage of the milder valley climate and better growing conditions (Domingues & Rodrigues, 2008). The land use produced a patchwork of arable meadows interspersed with oak forests in various stages of succession (Moreira, Rego, & Ferreira, 2001). In the summer months, the plateau was used as common pastureland (*baldios*). Strong social ties supported an annual transhumance with the entire population moving from valley to plateau settlements (*Verandas ou brandas*). Pastoral activities on the plateau were maintained through regular burning of scrubland. The resulting plateau

shrub and grasses supplied fodder for the grazing of cattle (*Cachena, Barrosã*), pony (*Garrano*), goat herds and sheep herds (Domingues & Rodrigues, 2008).



**Figure 1.** Case study location.

Socio-economic and political changes, beginning in the 1940s, caused significant land use changes in Castro Laboreiro, especially land abandonment. Programs of afforestation in the Minho region, which further decreased income-earning possibilities, triggered many to leave when grazing limitations were set for the communal lands (Moreira et al., 2001). Male out-migration to areas where income-earning possibilities were much higher was prevalent in two waves from 1960 to 70 and 1980 to 90 (Edwards and Fernandes, 1999 and INE, 1981). Those people that stayed in Castro Laboreiro, a large number of them women, continued small-scale agricultural activities.

Today, few people are still interested in farming as environmental conditions limit farming potential. At present, the plateau, which generally has poor acidic soils, is mostly used for grazing cattle, sheep and goats. Cultural traditions are changing as ageing farmer communities discontinue the annual transhumance, preferring instead to stay year round in the better plateau houses (Aguiar et al., 2009 and Domingues and Rodrigues, 2008). Residents have largely abandoned valley homes, which are increasingly in disrepair. The valley is still used for fodder production but some fields are being left to rewild (Aguiar et al., 2009, Domingues and Rodrigues, 2008).

A number of newcomers have been buying houses and agricultural fields in the region. With a few exceptions (e.g. planting myrtles), most newcomers do not implement any farming activities. Some of the newcomers work in the tourist industries e.g. accommodation and outdoor activities, other simply install their vacation or retirement houses. There are other newcomers interested in studying the ecological rewilding process-including socio-economic dimensions-occurring. A field research station - Peneda Field Station<sup>1</sup> - was created in 2007.

Currently there is a concern, shared between local and national policymakers, that if current agricultural management is stopped or severely changed, then the agro-environmental habitats, the regional aesthetic character of the area - which has been able to attract an increasing number of tourists - as well as the sense of place and landscape identity by the local people will be at peril. On the other hand, the on-going land abandonment can also be seen as an opportunity for rewilding and ecological restoration of the area. There is thus the need to study the trade-offs involved in future land management strategies in order to inform future policies and governance strategies.

### **2.1 General background for the case**

This case study illustrates the ways in which innovative forms of land management were developed and implemented in Castro Laboreiro parish. The innovation addressed throughout

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.isa.ulisboa.pt/inbio/theoeco/resources/index.html>

this case study is how local communities, in cooperation with regional institutions (e.g. Peneda-Gerês National Park), organized themselves in order to use public funds, namely the Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI) measure for reconciling biodiversity and rural livelihoods. We do not see ITI as the innovation in itself but we see it as a mean able to gear social innovation reconciling different interests amongst National Park and communal land managers. Therefore, this case focus on both social (new forms of organizations) and economic (new forms of getting funding) innovations.

This case is based on reconciling interests between the management of the Peneda-Gerês National Park (PNPG), the Ministry of Agriculture of Northern Portugal (DRAP-N), the park's inhabitants and land managers (e.g. farmers), the communal land management organizations, and other local interests, including tourism developers or local parish administration. The issue at stake is how to maximize the socio-economic benefits from the use of the land, for example, for grazing activities but as well for commercial/tourism use. The challenge is then enhancing livelihoods while protecting nature and biodiversity.

In order to make this innovation likely to succeed two contrasting dynamics had to be reconciled. On one hand, there was a bottom up process led by communal land managers and the Peneda-Gerês National park (described in detailed in section 3.1). Those local and regional actors were looking for an opportunity to invest in the land. These investments were needed in order to overcome rural depopulation and enhance the natural capital as well as the cultural heritage as a means to prevent further land abandonment. On the other hand, there was a top down approach framed at the national level (which in turn was dependent on the European level) for providing Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) to reward local/regional actors located in marginal areas for the Ecosystem Services (ES) they provide. The PES schemes acknowledge the importance of ES provision on these marginal lands rewarding farmers and other land managers with payments decoupled from production. On those marginal areas, agriculture is often not economically competitive, and PES aims at rendering agricultural activities more attractive by rewarding land managers for the public goods they provide.

Therefore, a particular feature of the innovation described in this case study targets the payment for ecosystem services independently of production. The policy measure that allowed

such social innovation to be implemented was the ITI (Integrated Territorial Intervention). The overall goal of the ITI was to reconcile low intensity agricultural production with nature conservation. The creation of formal policy instruments targeting not only individual farmers (that were entitled to the existing agri-environmental schemes in the CAP - Common Agriculture Policy), but as well their communal land associations (CDB - Conselho Directivos de Baldios), is a comprehensive attempt at reconciling rural livelihoods and biodiversity in vast areas of communal lands in Portugal (see Section 7-Annex for an introduction to the communal land management in Portugal).

This represents a paradigm shift in dealing with payments under the common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and mainstream agricultural policies in Portugal. Instead of only paying for production, small scale farmers and communal land organizations are now entitled to payments for conserving nature. The inclusion of communal lands as eligible to the ITI was indeed an innovative way of dealing with these agro-forestry systems in protected areas and heritage landscapes in Portugal. The ITI for Peneda-Gerês was also seen as a pilot for replicating in other marginal areas in Portugal. Another strength of this innovative approach was reconciling different interests across different governmental bodies (agriculture, nature conservation and tourism) and local communities' representatives and communal land organizations.

## **2.2 Overview of the initiative and timeline**

The innovation this case study describes was only possible because the top down and bottom up dynamics described above were reconciled. This initiative relates to the ways in which local actors innovatively worked together in order to get the ITI public funds (European and National) to support land management strategies reconciling biodiversity with rural livelihoods goals.

The bottom up process was led by communal land organizations together with the Peneda-Gerês National Park (PNPG) and it started in 2000. At that time, both the communal land organizations and PNPG found it important to work together in order to steer away from unfavorable trends, such as rural depopulation and land abandonment, rather than expanding

their disagreements based on their different viewpoints concerning land management (for a description of the points of disagreement see section 4.1 Gestation period).

Also in the beginning of 2000 the Portuguese Rural Development Plan from 2000 to 2006 (called RURIS) created a policy measure named Zonal Plan (Plano Zonal). This Zonal Plan gave the opportunity to communal lands located in protected areas to develop a set of infrastructures, such as the shepherds' house in the mountains, water mills and other local infrastructures that were in disrepair. The Zonal Plan measure was never implemented, due to the lack of funds in the Ministry of Environment. Nevertheless, in the following Portuguese Rural Development Plan (2007-2013), a similar measure called Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI) was created. The ITI was entitled with Ministry of Agriculture funds (CAP funds) and included agricultural organizations (farmers NGOs) and the Ministry of Agriculture regional bodies (e.g. DRAP Direção Regional de Agricultura e Pescas do Norte de Portugal).

This new policy instrument, ITI-Integrated Territorial Intervention (2007-2013), was very similar to the Zonal Plan (2000-2006), but it involved new actors in addition to the communal lands and National Park. Indeed, the ITI also intended at paying individual farmers for the ecosystem services they provide. The ITI also included other actors such as tourism developers and parish representatives.

There were changes in actors across the timeline of the initiative. While major stakeholders from the bottom up approach were the National Park (Ministry of Environment) and communal lands, the top down approach included a broader set of actors. The ITI formal design comprised the creation of a Local Support Agency called ELA (Estrutura Local de Apoio). The ELA is a regional management body and integrates all the relevant actors integrating ministry of environment, agriculture, local parishes and municipalities' representatives as well as tourism developers. Table 1 below summarizes the major events and the time periods of the initiative.

**Table 1.** Major events and the time periods of the initiative.

| Time/Date/Period | Event  |
|------------------|--|
| 1971-2000        | Communal land owners clash with national park management because of conflicts between rural communities and biodiversity conservation initiatives. Castro Laboreiro common lands were hardly ever entitled to apply for funding. During this period, forestry projects were major investments elsewhere, but in Castro Laboreiro there were not forest plantations. Elsewhere, where there were forest plantations, the park funded the projects, but the revenues from selling timber were shared between the park (40%) and the communities (60%).   |
| Gestation period |  |
| 2000-2004        | Dialogue to find solutions between National Park and communal land organizations with the aim of developing the management plan for communal lands (PUB - Plano de Utilização do Baldio). The existence of an approved management plan for the communal land was compulsory for applying to the Zonal Plan (Plano Zonal). This was a very important period in reconciling interests between park and communal land managers. Together they established rules for using the land ( e.g. grazing), built a list of to do things that needed investments, and established priorities for spending funds (to be awarded by the zonal plan) |
| 2004-2005        | After four years of planning investments (2000-2004) and establishing priorities, the Zonal Plan application was not awarded for funding. This was the first set back. Some communities had already spent money doing infrastructure projects but the funding never arrived.   |
| 2005             | Creation of ITI, which implied the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture, in addition to the Ministry of Environment/PNPG and communal lands. The ITI aimed at bringing to the process the Ministry of Agriculture and individual farmers were also eligible for funding in the ITI.  |

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| Development period    |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 2006-2007             | The PNPG and the DRAP-N created the ELA and applications were open. ELA is the local management structure that includes all the relevant stakeholders (National Park, agricultural organizations and NGOs , tourism developers, municipalities)   |
| 2008-2012             | ITI implementation (funds paid). Although formally created, the ELA-Peneda Gerês had some problems in implementation. Whereas stakeholders such as communal organizations had a chief role, other agents for example farmers and its representative bodies were not as active. Therefore, in the first call of applications the vast majority of the local projects awarded were for communal lands.                                  |
| Implementation period |   |
| 2012- 2014            | Second call for ITI applications is awarded. The low effectiveness of farmers and its representative organizations were not solved in the second call of applications. Again, the majority of the projects awarded to communal lands.   |
| 2015-                 | There were elections for the management body of communal lands in Castro Laboreiro- CDB Conselho Diretivo de Baldios. The CDB that started this process lost the elections. There are struggles in power within the community that, at the time of writing this report, are not solved. New applications to ITI are likely compromised, as there are governance issues on the communal land. The composition of actors changed again. |

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### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Data collection and sources

Data were collected based both on semi structured interviews of local informants (section 3.1.1) and through a questionnaire survey (section 3.1.2). Table 2 summarizes the methods, issues at stake as well as the stakeholders involved in the two research steps described before.

##### 3.1.1 Semi structured interviews to key local informants

Local informants were selected because of their expertise and knowledge of the area. Two type of interviews were conducted. One was framed for the members of local government (*junta de freguesia*), the other was informally conducted with local farmers. We aimed at learning whether or not interviewees knew about the ITI projects as well as to investigate their assessment of the whole initiative.

Experts outside the study area were also contacted through a semi-structured interview. The goal was to get in depth insights about the initiative. The input of key informants and their knowledge of the current situation helped to design the questionnaire survey.

##### 3.1.2 Questionnaire survey

The overarching goal of the questionnaire survey was to understand how different user groups (locals, visitors and experts) access the trade-offs between positive and negative consequences of land abandonment in Castro Laboreiro. We also aimed at assessing if the demands by different user groups could be fulfilled through the implementation of the ITI policy measure.

The first section of the questionnaire was used to assess the current landscape, starting with a visual description “If you could take a photo of the aspects your like the most about the Castro Laboreiro countryside, what and where would you take this picture?” This question was framed in this way to generate responses that focus on the aspects of the landscape that respondents would convey to others, who might or might not be familiar with the region, following Carvalho-Ribeiro et al. (2013). The second section aimed at gauging whether or not the implementation of the ITI initiative satisfied landscape preferences of both local inhabitants and tourists visiting the area.

Table 2. Methods

| Method   | Issues at stake   | Questions   | Stakeholders Involved  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Semi-structured interviews to key informants, from the local area</b>   | Gathering the insider perspective, from farmers and the parish council perspective.   | e.g. How many ITI projects were implemented in the Castro Laboreiro area? By whom? Which project typologies were most implemented? Why?         | Individual farmers that applied to the ITI subsidies.<br><br>Parish council  |
| <b>Semi-structured interviews to stakeholders involved, experts and researchers from PNPG and outside the area</b> | If farming is discontinued what are the social and ecological implications?<br><br>What are the implications for biodiversity arising from land cover preferences by people (local inhabitants and tourists)? | If farming is discontinued what type of landscape changes will occur? What will be the land cover compositions of the future?                   | <b>Institutions</b><br>PNPG<br>DRAP Norte<br>Communal lands<br>Cooperatives<br><br><b>5 experts:</b><br>José Lima Santos,<br>Ana Firmino,<br>Isabel L. Ramos |
| <b>Questionnaire survey including photo questionnaire to tourists and local inhabitants:</b>                       | Preferences and perceptions of local inhabitants vs tourists/visitors of Castro concerning the land use transition occurring: farming activities discontinuation.   | Why farming has been discontinued? Is there the need to reinstall farming activities? Which land cover types local inhabitants/tourists prefer? | -Local inhabitants (50)<br><br>-Visitors of the Castro area (50)   |

## 4 In detail description of the case

### 4.1 Gestation Period

In mountain marginal areas such as Castro Laboreiro there are few “viable options” for rural development. Since the creation of the Peneda-Gerês National Park in 1971, the local population and particularly the communal lands organizations have been arguing that the Park further contributes to hamper the scarce development options. Indeed, one of goals of the National Park is to preserve the ecology of the area, namely by avoiding intensive use of the land. In order to fulfil this goal, the Park developed land management plans to regulate land use and management practices, such as the use of fire for enhancing grazing productivity. The small-scale agriculture in the region is not very attractive economically. Farmers depend greatly on the communal land for grazing their livestock, as the small fields they own are of small size and fragmented (mean field size around 0.5 ha, median of total area of fields for each farmer around 4 ha). The commons of Castro Laboreiro sum up more than 5000 ha and are used for grazing of local cattle breeds such as *cachena*, but as well other non-local breeds and horses. The grazing activity, particularly the use of fire for pasture management, has been sometimes at clash with the Park management and with other stakeholders (e.g. tourism operators).

Currently there is local and policymaker concern that if current agricultural management and grazing is stopped or severely changed, several values will be at peril. These include the agricultural habitats, the regional aesthetic character of the area - which has been able to attract an increasing number of tourists -, as well as the sense of place and landscape identity by the local people. There were recurrent calls from society (including from environmental NGOs) for an integrated action plan from the government, in order to steer away these rural areas from unfavorable development patterns. Such a plan could promote rural development by integrating forestry and agriculture with broader community issues. Environmental problems such as forest fires, rural depopulation, loss of cultural identity and heritage values were the arguments used to justify the call for action from a bottom-up perspective.

The commons are of utmost importance as they occupy a large share of the parish. The commoners are all the residents living in the main town in Castro Laboreiro parish and in the

small villages' scattered by the mountainous parish. Castro commoners work in agriculture, livestock grazing or services like, construction and tourism. The Castro Laboreiro village is surrounded by common land and the improvement of Castro Laboreiro communal resources directly affects the livelihoods of local people. Although the right to use the communal lands is very important for local inhabitants, their active use of the communal land has been steadily decreasing. Many small scale farmers have been discontinuing the use of the communal land as they have been having fewer livestock, but a few farmers now run large-scale operations on the common land (e.g. as large as 50 cattle heads).

The common land of Castro Laboreiro is managed by the Conselho Directivo de Baldios (CDB). The CDB is composed by a group of nine commoners, elected every four years by the general assembly of the commoners. Common land management in Portugal goes back several centuries, but during the Portuguese dictatorship from 1930's to 1970's, the common lands across the country were appropriated by the state for afforestation projects. In 1974, with the democratic revolution, the management was returned to the local people, but the Park (or elsewhere, the State Forest Service) kept a key role in the management. Therefore, there has been a long relationship between the local managers of the Castro Laboreiro common land and the Peneda-Gerês National Park.

The Castro Laboreiro communal land organizations, and in general the 37 communal lands within the Peneda-Gerês National park, have a long history of complaints and "fights" with the Park management. The issues at stake have always been on the trade-offs between rural development of the communities versus the ecological and conservation measures of the Park. The biodiversity and conservation measures of the Park affected people living in Castro Laboreiro in several ways, including:

- local people needed to obey to park regulations, in addition to the official planning bodies such as local municipalities, when rebuilding their houses (this is no longer the case since the implementation of the new management plan of the Park in 2011); the process of getting licenses to build houses or building refuges for animal husbandry are bureaucratic;

- farmers and livestock grazers cannot burn pastures without permits; although this is now the case in the entire country, the process to obtain permits is more complex (and more enforced) in National Park because of the need to safeguard important biodiversity assets;
- most development projects carried out locally need the National Park approval;

Furthermore, many local inhabitants believe that the National Park is not looking well after the traditional heritage and cultural patrimony of the villages. They claim that the National Park exclusively focus on conservation and biodiversity neglecting local inhabitants and their needs.

A more recent conflict started when an energy company expressed interest in installing wind turbines in the mountains. The company offered a large sum of money to communal land organizations to install the wind turbines in the communal land of Castro Laboreiro. However, the National Park did not agree to such plans. Furthermore, in 2011, the National Park approved its management Plan, regulating the land uses in both private and communal lands. This plan is called “Plano de Ordenamento do Parque Nacional da Peneda Gerês” and, according to it, wind parks are not allowed neither in private nor in communal lands. This made communal land organizations feel that their interests were not well cared for by the National Park. The National Park is partner and co-manager of the communal lands (as they are under modality B of the law, as explained in annex). However, their shared management responsibilities’ are mainly for the forestry regime. The owners of the land are the communal organizations and not the park. Thus in the view of the CDB, the National Park should not restrict the installation of the wind turbines in the communal land.

During the gestation period of the ITI, the original communal land organization was split up into five organizations. The new CDBs were created by initiative of local communities in the different villages in Castro Laboreiro, as a result of unsatisfaction about the management of the original organization. Communal land management has been very recently reunited again into a single management unit, but there are still unsolved issues.

The National Park, as a co-manager of communal lands (80% of PNPG is common land), organizes the selling of the timber, getting 40 % of the revenue, and leads the application for

funding for new forestation projects, being technically responsible for the elaboration as well as implementation of these forestry projects. Nevertheless, one of the claims by commoners is that the National Park does not invest money back in the communal land management. In order to address the commoners concerns, the National park has been looking for opportunities to invest more in common lands. Over the last 15 years, due to budget cuts in the Ministry of Environment and in the National Park, it has been hard for the Park to invest on the management of the communal lands.

One avenue explored by the Peneda-Geres National Park was the “lobbying” for the creation of the Zonal Plan. The opportunity for funding by the Zonal Plan appeared in the context of the previous rural development program, called RURIS 2000-2006. At that time the Park management engaged with communal lands and discussed the creation of agro-environment measures that were likely to bring investment to the area. The measures to be implemented were discussed between Park managers and the communal organizations in a participative way. One of the first actions of both the commoners and national park was to create rules and a management plan for the vast areas used for grazing (Plano de Utilização do Baldio). They also described the land management actions, which need substantial funding in order to restore agriculture and forestry areas within the park. The problem was that the Peneda-Gerês Zonal Plan, although negotiated and agreed amongst the local parties, did not get the national funding in the RURIS Rural Development Program.

#### **4.2 Development Period**

In the new Rural Development Program from 2007 to 2013, called PRODER, an agri-environmental scheme named Integrated Territorial Intervention (ITI), became the successor of the Zonal Plan initiative. The ITI was therefore seen as an opportunity to get funding to invest in biodiversity while enhancing rural infrastructures. Nevertheless, the ITI framework required that the National Park and the communal lands cooperated with other actors, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture. In the Northern Part of Portugal the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture is DRAP-N (Direção Regional de Agricultura e Pescas do Norte). DRAP-N has a

different philosophy from PNPG (or its parent organization, the Instituto de Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, ICNF) and places priority in agricultural production.

After the original Zonal Plan faced a setback from the Ministry of Environment own budget (zonal plans not awarded in the RURIS plan), the ITI initiative built upon funds of the Ministry of Agriculture. Therefore, the innovative forms of land management, as envisioned by commoners and national park, changed over time in order to be reconciled with a broader set of actors, including the Ministry of Agriculture own views.

Altogether, the ITI overall goal is to promote innovative land management strategies by communal land users, including shepherd, hunters and beekeepers, and by individual farmers, in order to promote integrated land management and multi-functionality. In addition to enhance biodiversity and conservation status, the ITI also aims at safeguarding traditional heritage. Therefore the ITI can provide financial support to “non-productive investments”, such as rebuilding stone walls, restore water mills, communal ovens and ancient bridges (van Berkel, Carvalho-Ribeiro et al. 2011, Carvalho-Ribeiro, Ramos et al. 2013).

Payments for both agri-environmental and silvo-environmental measures of the ITI depended on the total area of land managed (larger areas receiving larger amounts). In addition, greater funds were allocated to local livestock breeds (*Cachena* and *Barrosã* cattlebreeds), while the number of animals of non-autochthones breeds and horses allowed on the common land were regulated. Concerns had been expressed by locals on the horses staying year round on the common land, and that when the cattle arrived in the spring, some of the best pastures were already partially eaten. Fire was also regulated to be undertaken always in partnership with park officers, according to detailed prescribed burning plan.

The ITI is thus a measure to compensate farmers and communal land organizations for management practices promoting both the biodiversity and the traditional agroforestry systems. The ITI measure by itself does not specifically aim at stopping the decline of farming and steering the process of land abandonment. The ITI purpose is instead to safeguard the biodiversity values related both to traditional farming systems (agri-environmental measures) and steer the ecological rewilding process occurring (silvo-environmental measures promoting

natural forest growth). These payments are seen as remuneration for the ecosystem services provided by land managers, recognizing their role in biodiversity conservation and landscape maintenance.

### Castro Laboreiro case study networking

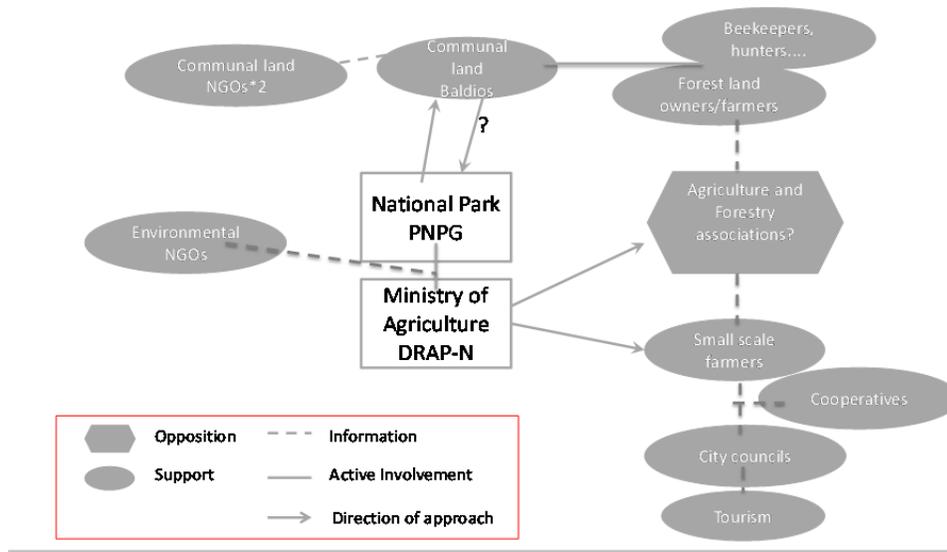


Figure 2. Actors and interests in the initiative.

### 4.3 Implementation period

The implementation of the initiative started when ITI funding became available for land managers. There were 2 round of applications and implementation stages, namely 2008 to 2012 and 2012 to 2014 (see Table 2).

Through the semi structured-interviews with local farmers and the local parish representatives, we learnt that while no individual farmer applied to the ITI subsidies in Castro Laboreiro, the communal land organization was very enthusiastic about the ITI, and was committed to its implementation. This shows that the innovative forms of land management aiming at significantly improve the biodiversity status within area, while enhancing rural livelihoods, were only appealing to the communal land organizations and the Peneda Gerês National Park. These stakeholders assessed the initiative as very successful and they gave us detailed information on

the area of communal land that was under management for the ITI, as well as on several indicators of implementation (Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 3.** ITI measures implemented and associated budget.

| <i>Measures implemented whole PNPG</i>  | 2007-2013       |
|---|-----------------|
| Shrub cleaning  | 2394 ha         |
| Controlled fire   | 70 ha           |
| SA1- Silvo environmental measure-Rewilding forests by increasing biodiversity | 83.5            |
| SA3 Silvo environmental measure-Enhancing interspecific diversity in forests  | 489.5           |
| SA4 Silvo environmental measure- improving scrublands                         | ?               |
| SA5 Silvo environmental measure-improving woodlands                           | 317,14          |
| SA6 Silvo environmental measure-<br>Riparian galleries                        | ?               |
| SA7 Silvo environmental measure-Ecological corridors                          | ?               |
| <i>Nonproductive investments</i>  | 213 533 euros   |
| Km of roads improved  | 213 km          |
| Fojo do Lobo-Wolf capture stone wall structures                               | 9               |
| Shepard refuges   | 62              |
| Silhas - honey protection wall structures                                     | 2               |
| Water springs for cattle  | 19              |
| Currals   | 12              |
| Water mills   | 3               |
| Animal husbandry infrastructures  | 9               |
| TOTAL PNPG communal lands   | 1.800.000 euros |
| TOTAL Peneda geres ITI  | 2.004.490 euros |

**Table 4.** Distribution of ITI budget across the Municipalities included into the PNPG. Castro Laboreiro belongs to the Melgaço municipality.

| Municipality      | N. of beneficiaries | Area under environmental commitment (ha) | Total, thousand euros |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Arcos de Valdevez | 90                  | 12.493                                   | 456                   |
| Melgaco           | 119                 | 3.360                                    | 164                   |
| Ponte da Barca    | 39                  | 4.483                                    | 199                   |
| Terras do Bouro   | 198                 | 4.988                                    | 307                   |
| Vila Verde        | 3                   | 0.2                                      | 0.05                  |
| Montalegre        | 380                 | 16.956                                   | 878                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>827</b>          | <b>42.281</b>                            | <b>2.004</b>          |

In addition, the National Park and the communal land organizations stated that, due to the ITI investments, wild fires were drastically reduced in number as well as in intensity (but quantitative evidence was not provided). Furthermore, they stated the number of non-autochthonous animal breeds and horses have been restricted and controlled. The National Park and communal land organizations believed that, as a result of the ITI, there had been numerous gains for biodiversity and conservation, and that at the same time the quality of life of rural populations in Castro Laboreiro had been improved.

In the interviews, we could see that the CDB and the National Park representatives were engaged and proud of their “reconciled” relationship. Concerning implementation issues, the National Park pointed out problems in articulating interests amongst a broad set of stakeholders. In their view, it was particularly challenging to make the regional multi-

stakeholder coordination structure, ELA, to work properly. According to the National Park representatives, there is a need to find approaches to make ELA more effective in the future.

An unexpected turn around occurred recently in this “reconciled relationship” between communal land organizations and the Park. In September 2015, the former CDB lost the elections and the composition of communal land representatives changed. This might have happened due to many reasons. One possibility is that the “reconciled relationship” between the former CDB and the National park did not win the acceptance of the majority of the commoners. Other reason maybe that the investments funded by the ITI were not well accepted by the majority of the commoners. Yet another reason can be that after all the investments funded by the ITI, communal lands became more appealing to be managed and this created a game of power in the community. Although we cannot fully assess the relative importance of each one of these reasons, we may say that a similar change in the management structure (and power) is happening in other communal lands. Quite often, as soon as there is a new possible pathway to be followed, there are opponents and supporters of it, creating struggles of power within the communities.

In addition to the communal land issues we also aimed at further investigating the reasons why individual farmers did not apply to ITI measures in Castro Laboreiro. The reasons interviewees pointed out were:

1. ITI payments were made by area. As the area of the farming plots are very small, small farmers would have received a small budget; therefore, according to the views of some of the interviewees, it was not financially rewarding to apply to the ITI;
2. ITI applications were bureaucratic and there were no farming associations (NGOs) in place to help out the few farmers willing to apply;
3. After applying to ITI farmers had to commit themselves in managing the land over a period of time following a set of “sustainable” rules; some of the farmers did not wish to compromise for the future management of the land due to their advanced age;
4. Some farmers did not know about the ITI measure saying they were not informed about the possibility to get this funding.

Disappointed by the minor uptake of ITI funds by small farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture (DRAP N) assessed the ITI as having a moderate to low success. Reasons pointed out by the DRAP-N for this, include, in addition to the ITI measures not be financially rewarding to farmers, difficulties in assessing the impact of ITI on the biodiversity of the area.

Therefore, it seems there is a mismatch of the assessment of the ITI success between different stakeholders. Possible explanations for these mixed assessments include:

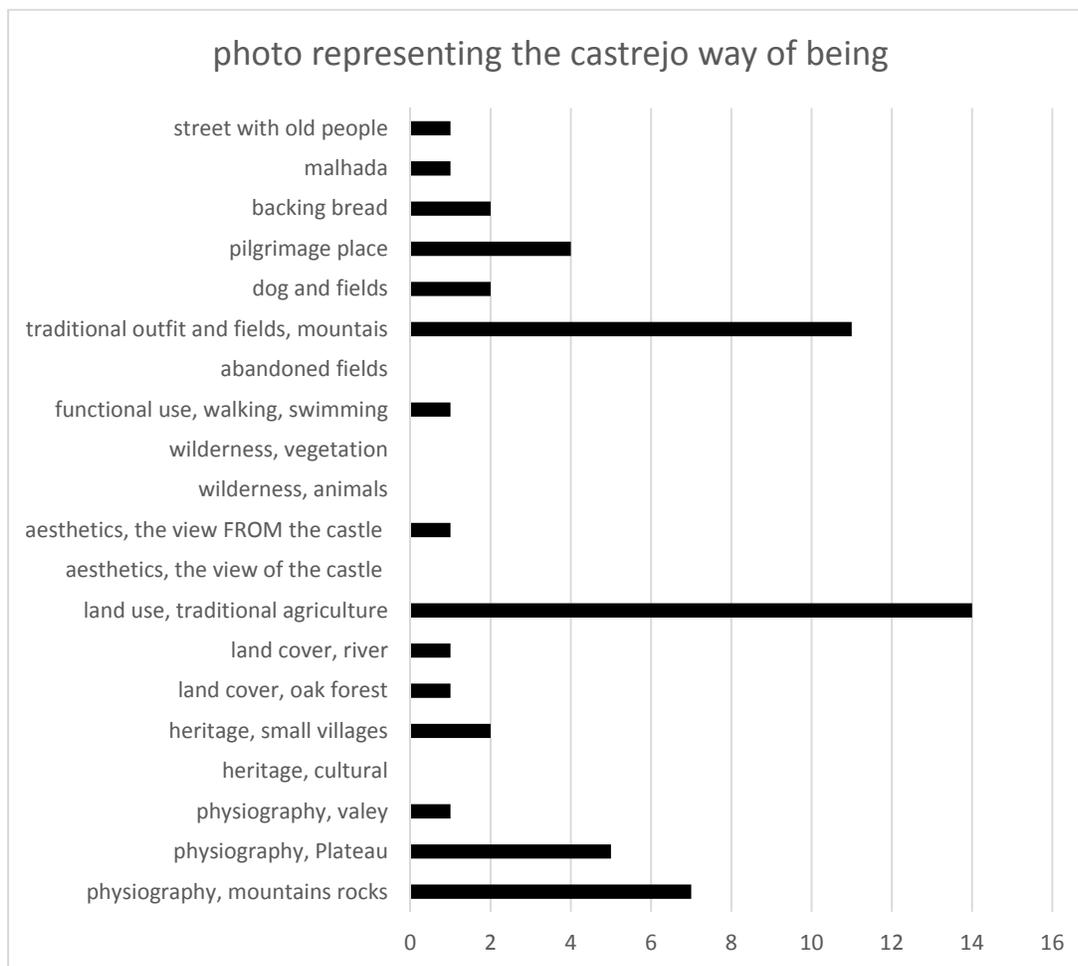
1. The ITI initiative was indeed very successful for the communal organizations and the Peneda-Gerês National Park. Through the ITI, these two stakeholders found a way to invest public money in the area they co-manage. Local farmers and other stakeholders such as tourism developers were barely involved in the ITI initiative.
2. The local management structure of the ITI (ELA) was not fully operational and this likely reveals issues in reconciling interests based on a top-down perspective. The creation of the ELA was regulated by a national law and it seems it was difficult to make it fully operational in the Peneda-Gerês ITI.
3. The ITI implementation, namely the investments, could be made in a more targeted and efficient way. For example, instead of broadly define biodiversity issues, beforehand target areas (with appropriate cartography) should have been made explicit. This would also allow at an effective post-assessment of the success of the initiative.
4. There were also some procedural problems. Some relate to the fact that validation of the information given in the application forms did not occur. In the agri-environmental measures, namely the ones on livestock management, the confirmation of the normal heads (Cabeças Normais - CN) was not made. This might cause mistrust amongst stakeholders.

Summarizing, while the reconciliation of interests between National Park and communal land organizations revealed to be robust through the gestation, development and the initial stage of the implementation periods, the involvement of other actors that were brought in by national ITI legislation was not as successful.

In order to assess the impacts of the ITI on biodiversity, we also aimed at gauging whether or not the implementation of the initiative satisfied both local inhabitants and tourists visiting the

area. Therefore, we carried out a questionnaire survey including landscape preferences by locals and tourists.

An initial question focused on the ways by which local inhabitants in Castro would represent themselves, to others living in a foreign country. The results clearly show that traditional agriculture, and associated land uses, together with traditional outfits got the higher response frequencies (Figure 4). Also important to represent the Castrejo way of being is the topography of the area, particularly its physiographic features such as the mountains, valley and the plateau.

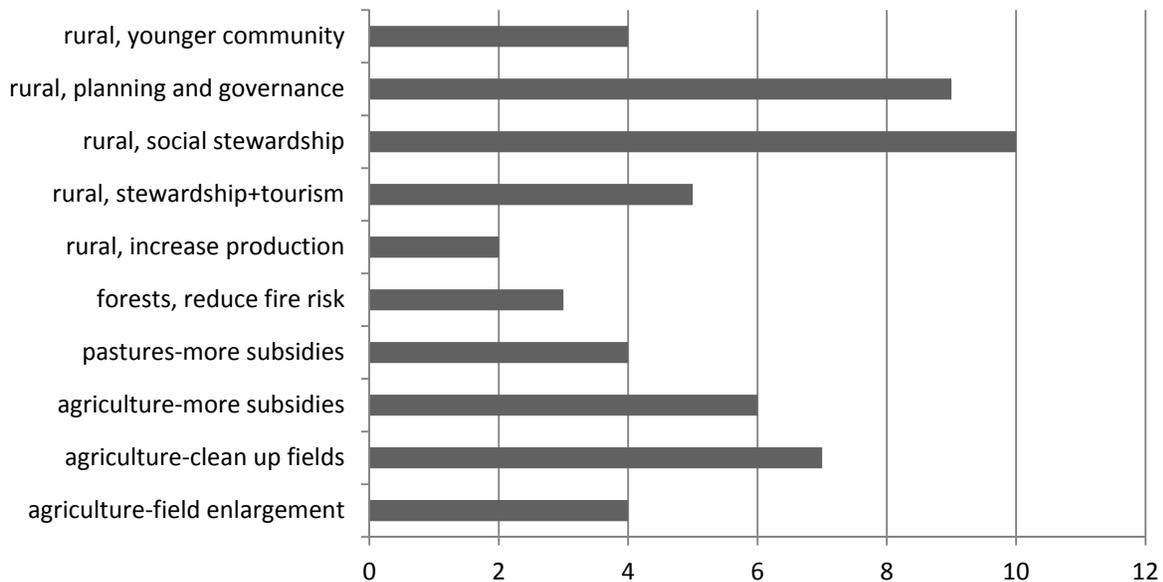


**Figure 4.** Local inhabitants answers to the “Castrejo way of being” question.

These results suggest that the traditional agricultural practices are very important to represent the “landscape identity” of Castro Laboreiro. As these practices and associated infrastructures were also the focus of the initiative (e.g. restoring stone walls, water mills), our results suggest that the idea behind the initiative is indeed consistent with preserving cultural values.

Nevertheless, this study also shows that preferences by local inhabitants and tourists differ. Locals revealed higher preferences for the traditional agricultural landscape while tourists seem to put a higher emphasis on tourism and recreation activities in the *wild* landscapes. This difference in preferences of local inhabitants vs. tourists is well reported in the literature. The results of the Castro Laboreiro case study agree with other studies that report differences in preferences amongst stakeholders concerning rural landscapes of Europe (Tajfel and Turner 1986, Zube 1986, Tahvanainen, Tyrvaïnen et al. 2001, Ribe 2002, Swanwick 2009). These studies raise further questions on whose landscape preferences should the land management be fulfilling (e.g. locals versus visitors).

As far as the needs of inhabitants (question on what local people would need to live better in Castro Laboreiro), higher frequencies of responses happened for the improvement of agriculture conditions in the area by cleaning up the fields, enlarging the area of the agricultural fields, as well as providing more subsidies to farming also supporting grazing activities. All these activities people referred to as necessary to improve life quality can be implemented by different ITI actions. This suggests that, in theory, the eligible measures of ITI were appropriate to fulfil local inhabitants’ needs. Paradoxically, there were no applications from local farmers, for example to clean up the field plots.



**Figure 5.** Actions needed to improve the traditional way of living in Castro.

## 5 Summary and Synthesis

### 5.1 Short summary of the case and our findings

Conflicting interests between National Park representatives and communal land organizations were reconciled. Through a bottom-up process, those stakeholders agreed on the issues at stake for enhancing biodiversity and improving quality of life in Castro Laboreiro. Together they applied for funding in order to implement their plan for action. Initial funding (Zonal plan) was not awarded and these stakeholders were given a second opportunity for funding (ITI). In this later stage, other stakeholders and notably, the Ministry of Agriculture, were also included and interests had to be broadened to also include agriculture and tourism aspects.

One of the innovative aspects of the initiative was the collaborative land management. While we can say that the ITI allowed at overcoming traditionally conflicting interests (between National park representatives and communal land organizations), the involvement at a later stage of the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders was top-down driven (from the national scale to the regional/local scale) and faced some challenges.

Landscapes are often managed through separate agriculture, forestry and biodiversity sectorial planning tools. The innovation here explored reveals the issues at stake in collaborative land use management aimed at enhancing biodiversity while sustaining livelihoods.

The pioneers (communal lands and National Park) made successful applications to funding while small scale farmers and tourism enterprises barely applied to the ITI. The innovation is thus seen as more successful by the former actors than by the latter actors. Another issue is that it is very difficult to assess the impacts of ITI on the biodiversity status of Castro Laboreiro and a full assessment of the benefits may need a long-term monitoring framework.

This case study shows that despite an initial set back faced by the local stakeholders (zonal plan not awarded), multilevel governance was key in taking the initiative forward (intervention of other regional and national users). Even so, this case illustrates the difficulties embedded in including biodiversity into land use management.

## **5.2 What results are significant to the PATHWAYS project and why?**

It is very difficult to develop governance systems able to gear sustainable land use transitions. In this case there were top-down and bottom-up approaches that were self-reinforcing through comprehensive multi-level governance. In parallel, an innovative form of land management was developed and implemented at the local scale, but still there were important pitfalls and setbacks.

In theory the initiative was able to fulfil the socio-economic needs of the area, but in practice only the actors that were prepared (commons and National Park) benefited from it. Furthermore, this “successful” partnership is now at risk of being broken as the communal land management organization changed its composition, after the former management losing elections.

Areas such as Castro Laboreiro, in which land abandonment has been occurring can undergo several pathways (rewilding, agriculture niche markets, etc) and they need to have long term management plans. As this study demonstrates the clash of interest and struggles for power may hamper the long term vision for the area. Land abandonment in Castro Laboreiro may be

occurring as side effect of ineffective governance. Although land abandonment can be seen as an opportunity for rewilding, the absence of appropriate governance might compromise a successful and managed rewilding process, and preclude wider societal benefits from the landscape transition, including the maintenance of some compatible agricultural activities.

### ***5.3 How do you judge the momentum of the initiative with regard to its potential of inducing either Pathway A or B?***

Momentum for inducing pathway B locally is medium to low. If the new CDB follows the same approach, by continuing ITI applications in the future, the momentum can be classified as medium. However, if the new CDB decides not go for the same reconciled relationship with National Park, the changing focus on investments may find obstacles and the momentum will become low. This case case illustrates that the struggles for power may trap communities into vicious circles. Furthermore, there are important changes in scaling this initiative to other regions, as it would require a significant increase in agri-environmental subsidies in the Common Agricultural Policy. It is therefore difficult that the initiative changes the mainstream regime.

### ***5.4 What are the implications to be drawn for initiatives in general from your findings?***

This case study showed that conflicting interests may be reconciled creating innovative forms of land management when mainstream funding mechanisms exist. There were changes in actors throughout time and this changed the setting of the initiative. We can learn from this case that land use management is geared through power relationships and these change over time. However, overcoming unfavorable trends including biodiversity status require long-term visions. An important learning from this case is that the struggles of power, after moderate success on a certain initiative, might create conflicts within the communities and change the leadership as there are other interested parties. The struggle of power involved in land use management might trap innovations into vicious cycles and hamper the initiative to transform the regime. As

a consequence land use regime keeps closed into sectoral approaches as they are easier to “manage”.

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## 7 Annex – A brief introduction to communal lands in Portugal

According to the Portuguese civil law, the property is common when it is not appropriate in an individual way. Instead, all the people from a certain circumscription, normally a rural village or parish can use it, but only these inhabitants, all the others being excluded.

The communal lands (in Portuguese called **baldios**), exist mostly in mountainous areas in North and Central Portugal. Nowadays, this type of land ownership has been facing enormous challenges. The commons are often seen as an anachronism by the defenders of either the public or the individual property.

The right of common pasture (*compáscuo*), a reminiscence of the feudal period, stopped being used along XX century. By then, the communal rights of land use, consisted in the communion by shepherds of a certain village of pasture land situated near that village but the livestock belonging to diverse rural proprietors.

With the institutionalization of the Forestry Regime in the beginning of XX century and with the Forestry Plan of 1938 the conditions for the forestation of the majority of the uncultivated areas of the mountainous regions were created. On the whole 37 000 ha of dunes (public property) and 420 000 of common property (*baldios*) were forested.

Nowadays, in Portugal, still exist about 819 communal land organizations in total managing around 400 000 ha of communal land, this land being managed according to the different regimes established by law. Actually the management of the commons in Portugal is based on legislation established in 1976 (laws 39 and 40) and the law 68/93. The law from 1976 represents an important shift in the history of the common lands in Portugal. After the 70s the state gave the possibility of management and ownership to the commoners. In this law, the commoners organized as CDB “Conselho Directivo de Baldios” can have two types of management, one with direct intervention of the government (modality B), and other with responsibility of management exclusively by the commoners (modality A). Castro Laboreiro is under modality B.