



PARI
PATHS FOR RURAL
INNOVATION

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3 Local Plans for the setup of CSEIs in the partner rural territories

Deliverable #4.1



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Introduction

This document presents three distinct local plans developed by the regions of Navarra (Spain), Östergötland (Sweden), and the municipality of Torres Vedras (Portugal). These plans represent a forward-looking commitment to exploring the feasibility and means of establishing or strengthening Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs) within their respective territories, recognising the crucial role that such clusters can play in addressing contemporary challenges and guiding the necessary social and ecological transitions.

Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs) have emerged as foundational models for promoting sustainable development and innovation at the local level. Their definition and potential have been extensively explored in key publications, including the 2021 report commissioned by the European Commission and produced by the Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship (GECES)¹. This report identified CSEIs as ideal vehicles for aligning local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), social economy organisations, and other relevant actors towards shared goals of social and ecological innovation.

The defining characteristics of CSEIs, as highlighted by the research and preparatory work of Work Package 4 of the PARI project, include:

- **Strong local focus.** CSEIs are intrinsically rooted in their geographical context, which precludes the adoption of universal models and requires tailored approaches that account for territorial specificities. This proximity is a crucial element of their effectiveness and their capacity to respond to specific needs.
- **Multi-stakeholder infrastructure.** CSEIs are built on collaboration among a plurality of actors, including public bodies, social enterprises, civil society organisations, academic institutions, and mainstream businesses. This diversity of perspectives and resources is essential for their effectiveness and for creating a robust innovation ecosystem.
- **Integration of social, ecological and economic objectives.** Unlike traditional clusters, CSEIs aim to generate not only economic value but also social and environmental value, promoting a holistic approach to development. The most commonly pursued priorities are job creation and local economic development, frequently linked to social ambitions such as inclusion, education, and the promotion of an ecological and circular economy.
- **Adaptive capacity:** Their flexible structure allows them to respond proactively to changing external conditions and new community needs, ensuring resilience and continued relevance over time.
- **Strong community engagement.** The success of CSEIs depends on broad participation and active commitment from local community members, who contribute to the definition of priorities and the implementation of initiatives. This bottom-up approach is fundamental to the legitimacy and sustainability of local plans.
- **Shared territorial vision.** The presence of a common vision for the future of the territory is a unifying element that guides action and strengthens cohesion among cluster actors, facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration.

¹ European Commission. (2021). Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences. Report GECES Sub-Group. Full report can be downloaded from the Publications Office of the European Union: <https://tinyurl.com/ClustersSEI>

- **Democratic and participatory governance mechanisms.** The management of CSEIs is characterised by inclusive decision-making processes that ensure the representation and voice of all stakeholders. Where formalised, decision-making is invariably participatory and, in most cases, democratic.
- **Monitoring and evaluation cycle.** The implementation of continuous monitoring and evaluation systems enables learning from experience, course correction, and ongoing performance improvement, ensuring a dynamic, evidence-based evolution of the cluster.

These characteristics underscore the complexity and transformative potential of CSEIs, making them strategic instruments for addressing social and ecological challenges in an integrated and participatory manner. Their cross-sectoral nature, as highlighted by the GECES report, indicates that they are often driven by objectives beyond mere sectoral competitiveness, focusing instead on broader impacts.

The 2021 publication commissioned by the European Commission and produced by GECES, entitled “Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences”, constitutes a foundational reference for the understanding and promotion of CSEIs in Europe. GECES, an expert group on the social economy and social enterprises, established a dedicated sub-group tasked with exploring the role of clusters and other forms of business cooperation in fostering the development of the social economy. The primary objectives of this analysis were:

- **Socioeconomic characterisation →** To arrive at a clear definition and socioeconomic characterisation of the CSEI concept.
- **Innovative aspects →** To identify and analyse the principal innovative dimensions that CSEIs contribute to social and ecological transitions.
- **Innovation diffusion →** To analyse the characteristics, components, and determinants of clusters that enable the diffusion and transfer of innovation to other contexts.

Through a literature review and a multiple case study of 30 potential clusters across 13 EU member states, the report demonstrated that the “clusterisation” of the social economy is a recent and growing social movement within the European Union. The methodology included a questionnaire completed by GECES members and a descriptive statistical and content analysis. A second phase deepened the analysis of how CSEIs emerge and what activities and services they provide, including policies favourable to clusterisation. An extended list of 70 cases was subsequently added.

The key findings of the 2021 GECES report emphasise that CSEIs serve as vehicles for financial opportunities (e.g. project funding, crowdfunding, public-private investment) and are used to pool financial resources for the social economy or specific projects, with social economy actors playing a leading role. Most clusters confine their activities to a single political-administrative jurisdiction, making “proximity” an important element. Many CSEIs have a legal entity, a cluster manager and employees, while others operate more informally.

The report further identified the contributions of CSEIs to economic innovation (promoting the economic environment, accessing new markets, generating positive economic impacts, ensuring economic sustainability), social innovation (collective learning, new social models of intervention, organisational development, territorial regeneration, community empowerment, trust-building), governance innovation (defining ethical values, cooperative forms of governance, creating new accountability mechanisms), and ecological innovation (environmental standards, biodiversity enhancement, circular economy, climate change mitigation).

Within the framework of the PARI project, **Navarra, Östergötland** and **Torres Vedras** have embarked on the development of local plans for the establishment or strengthening of CSEIs. Although grounded in a shared conceptual framework, these plans reflect the specificities and unique challenges of each regional and local context. Activities were initiated in late 2025, and by June 2026, all three territories have moved on from a diagnostic and planning phase, to the actual drafting of local plans, based on mapping and stakeholder engagement.

The examination of the local plans of Navarra, Östergötland and Torres Vedras offers a rich and multifaceted perspective on the challenges and opportunities inherent in establishing and strengthening Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation across Europe. These territorial efforts, albeit at different stages of development, share a common commitment to building more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient innovation ecosystems. The lessons learned, particularly regarding the necessity of bottom-up strategies and the value of evidence in ensuring continuity beyond political cycles, are crucial for the long-term success of such initiatives.

Enjoy exploring the three Local Plans!



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NAVARRA **LOCAL ACTION PLAN**

JUNE 2026



Gobierno
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AGENDA
2030

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1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1.1 Purpose and scope of the analysis

This context analysis defines the baseline situation for the development of the PARI Navarra Action Plan. In line with the PARI methodological framework, it gathers and structures relevant information directly or indirectly related to the selected field of intervention, in order to inform the subsequent phases of stakeholder engagement and action planning.

The analysis builds on a review of regional policy and strategic frameworks relevant to rural development, social innovation and ecological transition in Navarra, as well as on the main findings collected during the PARI Mission in Navarra, as documented in Deliverable D3.4 – Mandatory Transnational Workshop Report (Mission 4 – Navarra).

1.2 Selected field of intervention

The PARI project in Navarra focuses on social and ecological innovation in rural areas, with a specific emphasis on the development of multi-actor rural clusters. This approach aims to strengthen cooperation between enterprises, territorial actors, knowledge organisations and public authorities in order to address complex rural challenges.

As highlighted in Deliverable D3.4, this field of intervention is particularly relevant in Navarra, given the presence of diverse rural territories with shared structural challenges and active but often fragmented innovation initiatives.

1.3 Policy and strategic framework at regional level

1.3.1 Rural Development policy framework

The Navarra Rural Development Plan constitutes the primary policy framework for rural development in the region, including measures related to innovation, cooperation and local governance through the LEADER approach. As observed during the PARI Mission in Navarra and reported in Deliverable D3.4, Local Action Groups play a central role as territorial intermediaries.

The PARI Navarra Action Plan is positioned as a complementary operational instrument, consistent with the Rural Development Plan, aimed at reinforcing cooperation dynamics and supporting the replication of locally tested approaches.

1.3.2 Sustainability, ecological transition and territorial cohesion

Navarra's strategic framework for sustainability and territorial cohesion is articulated through the Navarra Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, which promotes a just ecological transition, balanced territorial development and participatory governance. The

relevance of these priorities for the PARI project was confirmed during the Mission in Navarra, as reported in Deliverable D3.4.

1.3.3 Social Economy policy framework

The Social Economy represents a strategic pillar of Navarra's socio-economic model, particularly in rural areas. The regional Social Economy policy framework (Comprehensive Social Economy Plan of Navarra) reinforces the role of Social Economy enterprises as drivers of social innovation, employment and territorial cohesion.

According to Deliverable D3.4, Social Economy organisations in Navarra show strong innovative capacity, although their experiences are often insufficiently structured for scaling and transfer.

1.3.4 Regional innovation system and social innovation

Navarra benefits from a consolidated regional innovation ecosystem, structured around the Navarra System of R&D and Innovation (SINAI) and coordinated by ADItech. This system is complemented by dedicated infrastructures and units addressing social innovation and territorial impact, such as the IRIS Hub and the Social Innovation Unit of Navarra.

1.4 Preliminary assessment of the rural ecosystem

The rural ecosystem in Navarra includes enterprises, Social Economy organisations and territorial actors engaged in social and ecological innovation. Consolidated local development structures such as Local Action Groups coexist with networks and platforms supporting rural innovation.

Specialised actors in ecological transition and agri-food sustainability, including the regional body for organic production and technical support organisations such as INTIA, further reinforce the ecosystem. As highlighted in Deliverable D3.4, cooperation among these actors remains fragmented, which underlines the relevance of the PARI cluster-based approach.

1.5 Implications for the PARI Navarra Action Plan

This context analysis indicates that Navarra offers favourable conditions for the implementation of the PARI Action Plan. Alignment with regional policy frameworks, the maturity of the rural ecosystem and the involvement of the Government of Navarra as a project partner provide a solid foundation for co-designing and testing a replicable, cluster-based approach.

This context analysis has provided the evidence base for the subsequent stages of the PARI methodology, including stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessment, the development of a consolidated vision and the preparation of the Navarra Local Action Plan.

1.6 SWOT ANALYSIS FOR A MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Purpose of the SWOT analysis

This SWOT analysis assesses the main internal and external factors influencing the development of the PARI Navarra Action Plan. It builds upon the Context Analysis and supports the identification of priority areas for intervention in the establishment of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs) in rural areas.

The analysis focuses on the capacity of Navarra to structure collaborative, multi-actor processes addressing social, economic and ecological challenges at territorial level.

Strengths

- Strong alignment with regional policy frameworks
- Active involvement of the Government of Navarra
- Consolidated Social Economy ecosystem
- Presence of territorial intermediaries
- Advanced regional innovation system
- Existing enterprises ready to engage in cluster dynamics

Weaknesses

- Fragmentation of existing initiatives
- Uneven territorial capacities
- Limited experience with structured cluster governance
- Dependence on project-based dynamics
- Limited structured interdepartmental coordination within public administration

Opportunities

- Growing policy priority of ecological transition and rural resilience
- PARI as a European framework for experimentation and learning
- Potential for intra-regional replication
- Increasing recognition of the Social Economy
- Opportunity to use PARI as a platform for intersectoral collaboration

Threats

- Stakeholder fatigue due to multiple initiatives
- Administrative and regulatory complexity
- Institutional or political changes
- Economic uncertainty affecting enterprises
- Risk of limited scalability

Strategic implications

The SWOT analysis confirms that Navarra presents favourable conditions for developing cluster-based approaches to social and ecological innovation in rural areas. However, success will depend on:

- Structuring cooperation between existing initiatives
- Ensuring the involvement of key stakeholders
- Promoting intersectoral collaboration within the administration
- Designing mechanisms for replication and scaling across territories

2. DEFINITION OF THE CONSOLIDATED VISION IN THE IDEAL SITUATION

The consolidated vision presented in this chapter is the result of the iterative process developed through Tasks 1, 2 and 3 of the PARI methodology.

Building on the findings of the Context Analysis and SWOT Analysis, the process combined technical assessment, stakeholder engagement and feasibility analysis in order to define a shared and realistic vision for the future development of Social and Ecological Innovation Clusters (CSEIs) in rural Navarra.

The objective of this phase was not only to identify a desirable future scenario, but also to ensure that the proposed vision is supported by key stakeholders, aligned with existing policy frameworks and feasible within the institutional, legal and financial context of Navarra.

The following sections summarise the stakeholder engagement process, the guiding criteria identified, the feasibility assessment carried out and the resulting consolidated vision.

2.1 Stakeholder engagement process

2.1.1 Stakeholder mapping

Purpose of the stakeholder mapping

This stakeholder mapping identifies and categorises the key actors relevant for the design and implementation of the PARI Navarra Action Plan. It supports the definition of roles, levels of involvement and interaction dynamics within the PARI multi-actor cluster approach.

The mapping builds on the Context Analysis and on the findings of the PARI Mission in Navarra (Deliverable D3.4 – Mission 4, Navarra).

Core Partners

- Government of Navarra – Strategic partner, ensuring policy alignment and transfer of learning.
- ANEL – Operational coordination and ecosystem facilitation.

Key implementation stakeholders

Enterprises (initial cluster members)

The following enterprises are identified as initial core members of the PARI Navarra local action plan:

- Eseki S.A.L. – Industrial Social Economy enterprise with strong rural anchorage.
- Gure Sustriak S. Coop – Social inclusion and territorial development cooperative.

- Eutsi S. Coop – Cooperative enterprise linked to rural and community-based innovation.
- Josenea Bio – Social enterprise specialised in organic production and sustainable agri-food.
- Aspace Navarra – Social Economy organisation providing services and territorial social impact.

These enterprises represent different profiles (industrial, agri-food, social services, inclusion), allowing the cluster to address social and ecological innovation challenges from a multi-sectoral perspective.

Local Action Groups

Role: Territorial anchoring, stakeholder mobilisation and alignment with LEADER strategies.

Rural Innovation Clusters and Cluster-Like Initiatives

Role: Ecosystem structuring, scaling and intra-regional replication.

Examples include:

- Ruralink
- Social Innovation Unit of the Government of Navarra

Public administration – Additional Directorates-General (to be involved progressively)

In addition to the Government of Navarra as project partner, relevant Directorates-General will be involved depending on the thematic focus and evolution of the PARI Navarra Action Plan. Potentially relevant policy areas include:

- Rural Development
- Social Economy
- Territorial Cohesion
- Energy and Digital Transition, Business R&D&I and Entrepreneurship

The specific Directorates-General to be engaged will be determined progressively, in accordance with the concrete actions and pilot initiatives defined within the Action Plan.

Supporting stakeholders

Universities and research organisations – Knowledge support and systematisation.

Innovation centres (e.g. IRIS Hub, Centro Vidaas) – Methodological and experimentation support.

Technical bodies (e.g. INTIA, Organic Production Council) – Thematic expertise in ecological transition.

Engagement principle

Stakeholder involvement will be progressive and adaptive. The enterprises listed above constitute the initial core group for the PARI Navarra cluster. Additional stakeholders, including Directorates-General of the Government of Navarra, may be incorporated depending on thematic focus and territorial replication needs.

2.1.2 Presentation to the wider public

Objective

The objective of this activity was to present the main outcomes of Task 1, including the emerging vision for the PARI Navarra Action Plan, to a broader group of stakeholders beyond the initial core working group.

The purpose was not to validate detailed actions at this stage, but rather to raise awareness, stimulate discussion and prepare the ground for a wider stakeholder engagement process.

Target Audience

Based on the Stakeholder Mapping exercise, a minimum target group was defined including:

Core partners

- Government of Navarra
- ANEL

Enterprises

- Eseki S.A.L.
- Gure Sustaiak S. Coop.
- Eutsi S. Coop.
- Josenea Bio
- Aspace Navarra

Territorial stakeholders

- Local Action Groups (LAGs)
- Ruralink

Innovation and knowledge actors

- Social Innovation Unit of the Government of Navarra
- Public University of Navarra
- Centro Vidaas
- IRIS Hub

Technical and thematic stakeholders

- INTIA
- Organic Production Council

Additional stakeholders may be incorporated progressively as the Action Plan evolves.

Communication Approach

Considering the exploratory nature of the PARI process and the objective of fostering ownership among key territorial actors, a targeted stakeholder communication approach was selected instead of a broad public dissemination campaign.

The communication strategy focused on:

- Direct engagement with stakeholders identified in the Stakeholder Map.
- Presentation of the results achieved during Task 0 and Task 1.
- Sharing the emerging vision for the future Action Plan.
- Inviting stakeholders to contribute to the next stages of the process.

Communication Tools

The following communication tools were used:

Stakeholder Meeting

A dedicated stakeholder meeting was organised on 20 April 2026 at CoAlea (Pamplona), with the possibility of online participation.

The meeting included:

- Presentation of the PARI project.
- Presentation of the Context Analysis.
- Presentation of the SWOT Analysis.
- Presentation of the Preliminary and Ideal Vision.
- Presentation of the Stakeholder Mapping.
- Open discussion and collection of feedback.

Direct Communication

Stakeholders received direct invitations and information regarding the objectives of the process and the role expected from participants.

Project Documentation

The results of Task 0 and Task 1 were made available to stakeholders participating in the process and will continue to be used as reference documents during the next phases of the Action Plan development.

Results

The communication process successfully reached the initial core group identified in the Stakeholder Mapping.

Stakeholders confirmed the relevance of the challenges identified during Task 0 and highlighted the need to:

- Improve connections between existing actors and initiatives.
- Facilitate access to information, resources and funding opportunities.
- Prioritise a limited number of strategic challenges.
- Build upon existing structures rather than creating new ones.

The feedback received during this phase will be integrated into the next stages of stakeholder mobilisation and Action Plan development.

Conclusion

The presentation of Task 1 results contributed to increasing stakeholder awareness and ownership of the PARI process.

It also confirmed the relevance of the proposed vision and provided a solid basis for the wider stakeholder engagement activities foreseen under Task 2.3.

2.1.3 Mobilisation of the local community

Objective

The objective of this phase was to engage relevant stakeholders and territorial actors in order to validate the emerging vision for the PARI Navarra Action Plan, identify key territorial challenges and collect proposals for future action.

This activity aimed to move beyond the technical analysis developed during Tasks 0 and 1 and ensure that the Action Plan reflects the perspectives and priorities of local stakeholders.

Participatory Process

Considering the characteristics of the Navarra pilot territory and the stakeholder ecosystem identified during the stakeholder mapping exercise, a targeted participatory approach was adopted.

The process focused on engaging key actors representing public administration, Social Economy enterprises, territorial development organisations and innovation support structures.

A first stakeholder workshop was organised on 20 April 2026 at CoAlea (Pamplona), with the possibility of online participation.

Participants included representatives from:

- ANEL
- Government of Navarra

- Gure Sustaiak
- Eteki
- The Social Innovation Unit of the Government of Navarra, represented through its technical assistance provider Mentis Innovadoras

The workshop combined:

- Presentation of the work carried out during Task 0 and Task 1.
- Presentation of the emerging vision for Navarra.
- Open discussion on territorial challenges and opportunities.
- Collection of proposals and reflections from participants.

Main Findings

The participatory process confirmed several findings previously identified during the Context Analysis and SWOT Analysis.

Need to strengthen connections between actors

Participants highlighted that the main challenge is not the absence of initiatives, resources or organisations, but rather the limited level of connection and coordination between them.

Better knowledge of existing initiatives

A recurring issue was the lack of awareness regarding ongoing projects, available resources and existing opportunities across the territory.

Participants stressed the importance of creating mechanisms that facilitate information sharing and mutual learning.

Integrated responses to rural challenges

Stakeholders underlined that many rural challenges are interconnected and require integrated solutions involving multiple actors and policy areas.

Focus on concrete priorities

Participants recommended avoiding excessively broad approaches and concentrating efforts on a limited number of priority challenges capable of generating tangible results.

Building on existing structures

A strong consensus emerged around the need to build upon existing organisations, strategies and networks rather than creating new structures.

Preliminary Validation of the Vision

The workshop provided a first validation of the emerging vision developed through Tasks 0 and 1.

Stakeholders broadly agreed with the idea that the future Action Plan should focus on:

- Strengthening collaboration between existing actors.
- Connecting territorial needs with available resources and funding opportunities.
- Promoting practical and results-oriented initiatives.
- Supporting integrated responses to social, ecological and economic challenges.
- Building on existing territorial capacities and governance structures.

Lessons Learned

The participatory process confirmed that future actions should focus on a limited number of strategic priorities and maintain a strong territorial anchoring.

The workshop also demonstrated the willingness of stakeholders to continue participating in the development of the Action Plan.

Next Steps

The results collected during this phase will be used to:

- Refine the Ideal Vision for Navarra.
- Identify priority challenges for intervention.
- Define the strategic objectives of the Local Action Plan.
- Design future actions and pilot initiatives.

Additional stakeholders may be involved during subsequent stages of the Action Plan development process.

Conclusion

The mobilisation process successfully engaged key stakeholders and provided valuable feedback for the development of the PARI Navarra Action Plan.

The activity contributed to increasing ownership of the process, validating the emerging vision and identifying key priorities for future action.

2.2 Guiding criteria for the consolidated vision

Introduction

The guiding criteria presented below are the result of the work carried out during Task 0 and Task 1, as well as the stakeholder engagement activities developed under Task 2.

They aim to provide a common framework for the design, prioritisation and implementation of future actions within the PARI Navarra Action Plan.

The criteria are ranked according to the level of consensus reached during the participatory process and their relevance for achieving the desired territorial transformation.

Criterion 1 – Build on existing structures and initiatives

Priority: Very High

Future actions should build upon existing organisations, networks, programmes and governance structures rather than creating new entities or parallel mechanisms.

Rationale

This principle emerged as the strongest consensus during the stakeholder consultation process. Participants repeatedly highlighted that Navarra already possesses a rich ecosystem of actors and initiatives, and that the main challenge lies in improving coordination and cooperation among them.

Criterion 2 – Focus on a limited number of priority challenges

Priority: Very High

The Action Plan should concentrate its efforts on a small number of strategic challenges capable of generating visible and measurable impact.

Rationale

Stakeholders expressed concern about the risk of fragmentation and stressed the importance of concentrating resources and efforts on clearly identified priorities.

Criterion 3 – Promote multi-actor collaboration

Priority: High

Actions should foster collaboration between public authorities, Social Economy enterprises, Local Action Groups, innovation actors, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations.

Rationale

The analysis confirmed that complex rural challenges cannot be effectively addressed by individual organisations acting alone.

Criterion 4 – Connect needs, opportunities and resources

Priority: High

The Action Plan should facilitate the connection between territorial needs, existing funding opportunities, public policies and available support mechanisms.

Rationale

Stakeholders identified this function as one of the most valuable contributions that PARI could bring to the territory.

Criterion 5 – Ensure territorial anchoring

Priority: Medium-High

Future actions should be rooted in local realities and developed with the active participation of territorial actors.

Rationale

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of avoiding top-down approaches disconnected from local needs and opportunities.

Criterion 6 – Generate measurable results

Priority: Medium

Actions should aim at producing tangible outcomes and practical benefits for rural communities.

Rationale

Participants consistently advocated for a practical and results-oriented approach.

Criterion 7 – Promote replication and scaling

Priority: Medium

Successful initiatives should be transferable and replicable across different rural territories of Navarra.

Rationale

Replication was identified as a key mechanism for maximising impact and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Validation Mechanism

The guiding criteria have served as a reference framework for the preparation of the Local Action Plan and will continue to guide its implementation, monitoring and future revision processes.

2.3 Deep analysis of feasibility

Terms of Reference for the Expert Assessment

The purpose of the expert assessment was to evaluate the feasibility of the emerging vision for Navarra considering:

- The territorial context.
- Existing policy frameworks.
- Legislative and competence considerations.
- Available financial resources.
- Stakeholder expectations and priorities.

The assessment was based on the outputs produced during Tasks 0, 1 and 2, including:

- Context Analysis.
- SWOT Analysis.
- Stakeholder Mapping.
- Legislative Framework Assessment.
- Financial Resources Mapping.
- Stakeholder Consultation Process.

Main Findings

Institutional and policy feasibility

The analysis confirmed that the PARI approach is fully aligned with existing regional strategies, including:

- III Comprehensive Social Economy Plan of Navarra.
- Rural Development policies.
- LEADER territorial strategies.
- Ecological Transition policies.
- Regional Innovation Strategy (S4).

No major policy contradictions or institutional barriers were identified.

Legal feasibility

The assessment concluded that no significant legal barriers prevent the implementation of the proposed approach.

Potential limitations are mainly related to:

- Public funding regulations.
- State aid rules.
- Public procurement procedures.
- Coordination between different policy areas.

These limitations are considered manageable through appropriate governance arrangements.

Financial feasibility

The analysis identified multiple potential funding sources capable of supporting future implementation, including:

- Social Economy programmes.
- LEADER funding.
- Rural development instruments.
- Innovation programmes.
- Ecological transition schemes.
- Social innovation and care-related initiatives.

The challenge is therefore not the absence of financial resources, but rather the ability to mobilise and combine them effectively.

Stakeholder feasibility

The participatory process demonstrated a strong willingness among stakeholders to continue collaborating in the development of the Action Plan.

Stakeholders broadly supported the proposed direction and highlighted the need to:

- Improve coordination.
- Strengthen information sharing.
- Prioritise common challenges.
- Build upon existing structures.

Discussion with Stakeholders

The results of the expert assessment were presented and discussed during the stakeholder workshop held on 20 April 2026.

The discussion confirmed the relevance of the findings and reinforced the conclusion that the main challenge for Navarra is not the absence of initiatives, resources or actors, but rather the need to improve coordination and collaboration between them.

Overall Feasibility Assessment

The analysis concludes that the implementation of the PARI approach in Navarra is feasible from:

- A policy perspective.
- A legal perspective.
- A financial perspective.
- A stakeholder engagement perspective.

The main success factor will be the capacity to facilitate cooperation among existing actors and to connect territorial needs with available resources and opportunities.

2.4 Consolidated vision for Navarra

Introduction

The Consolidated Vision presented below is the result of the iterative process developed through Tasks 0, 1,2 and 3 of the PARI methodology.

The Context Analysis highlighted the existence of a favourable ecosystem characterised by strong Social Economy actors, active public institutions and multiple policy frameworks supporting rural development, innovation and ecological transition.

The SWOT Analysis identified important strengths and opportunities, while also highlighting challenges related to fragmentation, coordination and the need for integrated responses to complex territorial issues.

The stakeholder engagement process confirmed these findings and provided additional insights regarding priorities, expectations and implementation conditions.

Finally, the legislative, institutional and financial assessments demonstrated that the proposed approach is both feasible and compatible with existing policy frameworks and resources.

Based on these elements, the following Consolidated Vision has been defined.

Consolidated Vision

By 2030, Navarra will strengthen the resilience, sustainability and attractiveness of its rural territories through a collaborative ecosystem that effectively connects existing actors, initiatives and resources around shared territorial challenges.

Rather than creating new organisations or governance structures, Navarra will build upon existing networks, policy frameworks and territorial capacities. Cooperation between Social Economy enterprises, public authorities, Local Action Groups, knowledge institutions and other territorial stakeholders will be strengthened in order to generate integrated responses to social, ecological and economic challenges.

This collaborative ecosystem will facilitate the identification of common needs, improve access to available resources and funding opportunities, and support the development of practical projects capable of generating tangible benefits for rural communities.

Particular attention will be given to challenges that require coordinated action across sectors and policy areas, recognising that issues such as employment, demographic change, access to services, ecological transition and territorial attractiveness are closely interconnected.

Implementation will focus on a limited number of priority challenges identified collectively by stakeholders and addressed through collaborative initiatives with clear responsibilities, measurable results and potential for replication across different rural territories of Navarra.

Strategic Principle

The objective is not to create new structures, but to improve the connections between existing actors, needs and resources in order to generate collaborative responses to rural challenges.

Expected Long-Term Outcome

A more connected, resilient and innovative rural Navarra, capable of mobilising its existing assets and stakeholders to address complex territorial challenges through cooperation, Social Economy and ecological transition.

3. DEFINITION OF ACTIONS TO PURSUE THE DIFFERENT OBJECTIVES

The following actions constitute the operational pathway for moving from the current situation towards the Consolidated Vision for Navarra. They have been designed in accordance with the guiding criteria identified through the PARI methodology and build upon the participatory implementation programme developed during Task 4.

The actions presented below should be understood as strategic implementation pathways rather than predefined projects. Their purpose is to guide the transition from the current situation towards the Consolidated Vision, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to adapt to evolving territorial needs, stakeholder priorities and funding opportunities identified during implementation.

3.1 Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen Coordination and Collaboration Among Rural Actors

Justification

The stakeholder engagement process identified fragmentation and limited interaction between existing actors as one of the main barriers to social and ecological innovation in rural areas. Strengthening cooperation mechanisms is therefore a prerequisite for achieving the Consolidated Vision.

Action 1.1 – Rural Social and Ecological Innovation Community

Objective

Create a permanent collaboration framework connecting the main actors involved in rural development, Social Economy, innovation and ecological transition.

Lead Actor

ANEL

Contributing Actors

Government of Navarra, Social Economy enterprises, Local Action Groups, Social Innovation Unit, Ruralink and other relevant stakeholders.

Means of Implementation

- Periodic stakeholder meetings.
- Exchange of information and good practices.
- Identification of common challenges.
- Networking and cooperation activities.

Resources and Origin

- Existing organisational capacities of participating organisations.

- Social Economy support programmes.
- Future project-based funding opportunities.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of participating organisations.
- Attendance levels.
- Stakeholder satisfaction.

Timeframe

Continuous throughout the implementation of the Action Plan.

Action 1.2 – Territorial Knowledge and Initiative Mapping

Objective

Improve knowledge of existing initiatives, projects, actors and resources operating in rural Navarra.

Lead Actor

ANEL

Contributing Actors

Stakeholders participating in the PARI process.

Means of Implementation

- Mapping exercises.
- Knowledge-sharing activities.
- Dissemination of good practices.

Resources and Origin

Internal organisational resources.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of initiatives identified.
- Number of stakeholders reached.

Timeframe

Initial implementation phase and periodic updates.

3.2 Strategic Objective 2: Improve the Connection Between Territorial Needs and Available Resources

Justification

Stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the difficulty of connecting identified challenges with existing support mechanisms, funding opportunities and policy instruments.

Action 2.1 – Identification and Prioritisation of Territorial Challenges

Objective

Identify and periodically review the main challenges affecting rural territories in Navarra in order to guide collective action and resource mobilisation.

Lead Actor

Government of Navarra and ANEL

Contributing Actors

Stakeholders and territorial actors.

Means of Implementation

- Participatory workshops.
- Annual review exercises.
- Stakeholder consultation activities.

Resources and Origin

Internal organisational resources.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of stakeholders involved.
- Number of priorities identified.
- Degree of stakeholder consensus achieved.

Timeframe

Annual review cycle.

Action 2.2 – Funding Opportunities Observatory

Objective

Improve access to information regarding funding opportunities, support mechanisms and policy instruments relevant to rural development and social and ecological innovation.

Lead Actor

ANEL

Contributing Actors

Government of Navarra, Ruralink, Local Action Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

Means of Implementation

- Monitoring of funding opportunities.
- Dissemination of information.
- Matchmaking between projects and resources.

Resources and Origin

Existing organisational resources.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of funding opportunities identified.
- Number of stakeholders reached.
- Number of opportunities mobilised.

Timeframe

Continuous.

Action 2.3 – Collaborative Project Incubation

Objective

Support stakeholders in transforming identified needs and opportunities into collaborative project proposals.

Lead Actor

ANEL

Contributing Actors

Interested stakeholders and project promoters.

Means of Implementation

- Facilitation and technical support.
- Project development assistance.
- Partner identification and matchmaking.

Resources and Origin

Existing support programmes and future funding opportunities.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of projects generated.
- Number of funding applications submitted.
- Number of collaborative partnerships created.

Timeframe

Implementation phase.

3.3 Strategic Objective 3: Promote Collaborative Pilot Initiatives Addressing Priority Rural Challenges

Justification

The Action Plan aims not only to improve coordination but also to generate practical solutions capable of producing tangible territorial impact.

Action 3.1 – Selection of Collaborative Pilot Initiatives

Objective

Identify and prioritise collaborative initiatives capable of addressing the challenges identified through the stakeholder engagement process.

Lead Actor

Government of Navarra and ANEL

Contributing Actors

Relevant stakeholders according to thematic priorities.

Means of Implementation

- Identification of pilot opportunities.
- Selection of initiatives aligned with stakeholder priorities.
- Validation through stakeholder consultation.

Resources and Origin

Regional, national and European funding instruments.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of pilot initiatives selected.

- Stakeholder participation in the selection process.

Timeframe

Periodic.

Action 3.2 – Development and Implementation of Pilot Projects

Objective

Support the implementation of collaborative projects capable of generating practical responses to priority territorial challenges.

Lead Actor

Stakeholders leading each initiative.

Contributing Actors

Project partners involved in each pilot action.

Means of Implementation

Implementation of collaborative projects addressing identified territorial challenges.

Resources and Origin

Combination of:

- Social Economy programmes.
- LEADER funding.
- Rural Development instruments.
- Ecological Transition schemes.
- Innovation funding opportunities.
- Other relevant public and private funding sources.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of projects implemented.
- Results achieved.
- Stakeholder satisfaction.
- Degree of territorial impact generated.

Timeframe

Implementation phase.

Action 3.3 – Replication and Scaling Strategy

Objective

Facilitate the transfer and adaptation of successful experiences to other rural territories in Navarra.

Lead Actor

ANEL

Contributing Actors

Stakeholders involved in successful pilot initiatives.

Means of Implementation

- Documentation of good practices.
- Dissemination activities.
- Peer-learning exchanges.
- Transfer and replication support.

Resources and Origin

Project resources and future funding opportunities.

Participatory Evaluation

- Number of initiatives replicated.
- Number of territories reached.
- Evidence of knowledge transfer.

Timeframe

Consolidation phase.

3.4 Communication Strategy and Community Involvement

The implementation of the Action Plan will follow a participatory approach aimed at ensuring the continuous involvement of relevant stakeholders and territorial actors.

Information Process

Information regarding the implementation of the Action Plan will be shared through:

- Periodic stakeholder meetings.
- Direct communication with key actors.
- Presentation of progress reports and results.

- Participation in regional events related to rural development, Social Economy and territorial innovation.

The objective is to maintain transparency and ensure continuous stakeholder engagement.

Involvement Roadmap

Government of Navarra

Role: Strategic guidance, policy alignment and institutional coordination.

Type of involvement: Decision-making, validation and monitoring.

Timing: Continuous throughout implementation.

ANEL

Role: Operational coordination and facilitation.

Type of involvement: Operational.

Timing: Continuous throughout implementation.

Social Economy Enterprises

(Eseki, Gure Sustraiak, Eutsi, Josenea Bio, Aspace Navarra)

Role: Pilot actions, testing solutions and providing feedback.

Type of involvement: Operational and consultative.

Timing: Design, implementation and evaluation phases.

Local Action Groups

Role: Territorial mobilisation and local anchoring.

Type of involvement: Operational and consultative.

Timing: Implementation and territorial scaling phases.

Innovation and Knowledge Actors

(UPNA, Social Innovation Unit, IRIS Hub, Centro Vidaas)

Role: Methodological support, knowledge generation and evaluation.

Type of involvement: Technical and advisory.

Timing: Design, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Additional Stakeholders

Other public bodies and territorial actors may be progressively incorporated depending on the priorities selected within the Action Plan.

The actions described above provide the operational framework for implementing the Consolidated Vision. Their implementation will be progressive, adaptive and dependent on stakeholder engagement, resource mobilisation and the identification of suitable opportunities for collaboration and experimentation.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

4.1.1 Objective

The monitoring and evaluation framework aims to assess the implementation of the Action Plan and support evidence-based decision-making throughout the process. It is designed to monitor progress towards the Consolidated Vision, measure the effectiveness of the actions implemented and support continuous improvement throughout the implementation process.

4.1.2 Ex-Ante Indicators

The following indicators will be used to establish the baseline situation and assess the initial conditions for implementation.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Number of organisations involved.
- Diversity of stakeholder categories represented.
- Number of stakeholder meetings organised.

Collaboration

- Number of collaborative initiatives identified.
- Number of cooperation opportunities detected.

Resources

- Number of funding opportunities mapped.
- Number of policy instruments identified.

4.1.3 Process Indicators

The following indicators will be used to monitor implementation progress.

Participation

- Number of actors actively participating in implementation.
- Attendance rate at stakeholder meetings.

Cooperation

- Number of collaborative projects launched.
- Number of organisations participating in collaborative actions.

Resource Mobilisation

- Number of projects submitted to funding programmes.
- Amount of funding mobilised.

Territorial Impact

- Number of rural territories involved.
- Number of pilot initiatives implemented.

4.1.4 Monitoring Procedure

Monitoring activities will be coordinated by ANEL in cooperation with the Government of Navarra.

A monitoring review will be carried out at least once per year in order to assess progress, identify emerging challenges and support evidence-based decision-making.

Progress reports will be shared with stakeholders and used to support future revisions of the Action Plan.

4.1.5 Evaluation Plan

The evaluation process will include:

- Baseline assessment.
- Annual monitoring.
- Mid-term review.
- Final evaluation.

The evaluation results will be used to inform future implementation decisions, identify lessons learned and support possible updates of the Action Plan.

4.2 Revision Process

4.2.1 Objective

The purpose of the revision process is to ensure that the PARI Navarra Action Plan remains relevant, feasible and responsive to evolving territorial needs, stakeholder priorities and emerging opportunities.

4.2.2 Revision Mechanism

The Action Plan will be reviewed periodically based on:

- Monitoring results.
- Stakeholder feedback.
- Changes in policy frameworks.
- Availability of new funding opportunities.
- Emerging territorial challenges.

4.2.3 Revision Procedure

Annual Review

An annual review meeting will be organised involving the core stakeholders of the PARI Navarra ecosystem.

The review will assess:

- Progress achieved.
- Difficulties encountered.
- Emerging opportunities.
- Need for adjustments.

Strategic Review

A broader strategic review may be conducted when significant changes occur in:

- Policy frameworks.
- Funding conditions.
- Territorial priorities.

4.2.4 Revision Timetable

Yearly

- Monitoring report.
- Stakeholder review meeting.
- Identification of corrective actions.

Every Two Years

- Strategic assessment of the Action Plan.
- Update of priorities and implementation arrangements if required.

4.2.5 Continuous Improvement Principle

The Action Plan should be understood as a living framework.

Its implementation will follow an adaptive approach based on learning, stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement rather than a fixed and rigid planning model. This approach will allow the Action Plan to evolve over time while remaining aligned with its long-term objectives and the needs of rural territories in Navarra.

4.2.6 Expected Result

A flexible implementation framework capable of adapting to changing territorial realities while maintaining the long-term objectives of the PARI Navarra Action Plan and supporting the progressive achievement of the Consolidated Vision.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PATHWAYS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The PARI Navarra Local Action Plan provides a strategic framework for strengthening collaboration and fostering Social and Ecological Innovation in rural territories across Navarra.

The process undertaken throughout the PARI methodology confirmed that the territory already benefits from a diverse ecosystem of actors, initiatives, policy frameworks and support mechanisms capable of contributing to rural resilience and sustainable development. The analyses and stakeholder consultations carried out during the project highlighted that the main challenge is not the absence of resources or initiatives, but rather the need to improve coordination, cooperation and alignment between existing actors and opportunities.

The Consolidated Vision and the actions proposed in this Plan therefore focus on strengthening connections between stakeholders, facilitating access to resources and funding opportunities, and supporting the development of collaborative responses to shared territorial challenges.

Implementation of the Plan will rely on the active involvement of public authorities, Social Economy enterprises, Local Action Groups, innovation actors, knowledge institutions and other territorial stakeholders. Progress will be supported through the monitoring, evaluation and revision mechanisms described in the previous chapter, ensuring that the Plan remains responsive to evolving territorial needs and opportunities.

The Local Action Plan should be understood as a flexible and evolving framework. Its purpose is not to define a fixed set of projects, but to provide a common direction for future collaboration, experimentation and collective action. Through this approach, the PARI process establishes the foundations for developing practical initiatives capable of contributing to more resilient, sustainable and attractive rural territories across Navarra.

Making the Invisible Innovation System Visible

Report PARI Paths to Rural Innovation



Summary of the PARI project

Östergötland has a strong innovation system with established science parks, incubators, cluster organizations, universities, and public actors. This system has contributed to the region's competitiveness and innovation capacity, particularly in technology-intensive and knowledge-based sectors. At the same time, experiences from the project PARI – *Paths to Rural Innovation* show that a significant share of the region's innovation capacity remains invisible within the structures designed to promote innovation.

During the period 2024–2026, Region Östergötland and Coompanion Östergötland, together with partners in Portugal and Spain, have explored how social innovation and place-based collaboration can contribute to increased quality of life, sustainable development, and innovation capacity in rural areas. Through study visits, interviews, workshops, and analyses, the project has shown that innovation often emerges in contexts other than those traditionally associated with innovation.

A key conclusion is that Östergötland in practice consists of two innovation systems. The visible innovation system includes established innovation actors such as science parks, incubators, clusters, academia, and public innovation support organizations. In parallel, there is an invisible innovation system consisting of civil society organizations, local development groups, social enterprises, LEADER initiatives, village associations, cultural actors, and community entrepreneurs. These actors develop new solutions to local needs and societal challenges, but their innovation capacity is rarely recognized within the regional innovation system.

The project also shows that traditional concepts such as clusters do not always capture the logic of innovation in rural areas. Innovation in rural contexts often occurs through place-based networks, informal collaborations, local engagement, and combinations of resources, rather than through specialized industry clusters. To understand and support this development, a broader perspective on innovation is required—one in which social, ecological, and economic values interact.

Experiences from PARI confirm research showing that civil society is an important innovation actor and that many societal challenges require solutions developed *with* people rather than *for* people. Social innovation is not only about new activities but also about new relationships, ways of working, and forms of collaboration that create societal value.

The report highlights the need to develop the innovation support system so that it can better identify, understand, and support initiatives emerging in local contexts. This includes strengthening knowledge about the diverse conditions of rural areas, making the contributions of civil society to innovation more visible, developing new forms of collaboration, and building bridges between the visible and invisible innovation systems.

The challenge going forward is to harness the innovation capacity that already exists across the entire geography of the county. By broadening the view of innovation, strengthening collaboration between sectors, and recognizing the value of social and place-based innovations,

the region can create better conditions for sustainable development, increased competitiveness, and good living conditions throughout Östergötland.

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Photo: Study visit in Söderköping, Östergötland, September 2025 (Malin Gumaelius)

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1 What is rural? The importance of geography

Place Typology – Understanding the Geography of Östergötland

Östergötland is home to 472,446 inhabitants across 13 municipalities, ranging from a small municipality of just 3,600 inhabitants to a large one with over 160,000. The region offers a striking variety of landscapes, from dense urban areas and highly productive farmland to deep forests and a vast archipelago.

Why Place Typology Matters

The concept of place typology goes beyond administrative borders, recognizing that “what is rural depends on the question.” Instead of relying only on municipal boundaries, it uses a grid-based method (1,000 m squares) that factors in:

- Population density
- Commuting patterns
- Land use (housing, industry, agriculture, forests)
- Economic activity (variety of businesses)
- Accessibility and distance to cities

This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of rural and urban dynamics.

Roots of the Method

The model is inspired by the Finnish statistics institute SYKE and developed further by the research institute Nordregio. Region Östergötland has adapted this method to create a regional-level perspective for Swedish conditions.

The analysis divides Östergötland into seven place categories:

1. Inner urban area
2. Outer urban area
3. Peri-urban area
4. Local center in rural area
5. Rural area close to urban
6. Rural heartland
7. Sparsely populated rural area

Typology for urban areas

To get an even better understanding of the geography Region Östergötland also have a typology also for urban areas, or dense areas. This typology goes beyond number of inhabitants and shows instead the functionality, what range of functions reside there.

The urban areas and municipal “capitals” play a significant role for surrounding rural areas, for access to services, health care, public transport, childcare, schools and job opportunities.

Beyond population size, places are also assessed by their functions—what services, opportunities, and roles they provide. Examples include:

- Cross-regional nodes (universities, university hospitals)
- Regional nodes (large municipal capitals)
- Part regional nodes (smaller municipal capitals)

- Nodes for larger rural areas (with workplaces, education, services)
- Nodes with limited or no services (from a grocery store to housing only)

The framework considers the range of services available in urban areas and what they mean for surrounding rural communities which creates an understanding of urban functionality:

- Commercial services and shops
- Public healthcare (from pharmacy to hospital)
- Education (from childcare to university)
- Public transport access
- Balance between workplaces and population

Place typology and typology for urban areas help policymakers, planners, and communities see Östergötland not just as a collection of municipalities, but as a mosaic of places with unique roles, challenges, and opportunities. By focusing on both geography and functionality, the region can better design strategies for sustainable development and vibrant rural-urban connections.

What is rural? Östergötland is a multifaceted region where the countryside takes on different expressions. To understand where and how clusters emerge, we need to understand the differences between various types of rural areas. Region Östergötland's place typology divides the county into several geographical categories, including:

- Dense areas in the countryside – small centers with some business density.
- Rural areas – areas with more dispersed settlement but strong local anchoring.
- Sparse rural areas – areas with low population density, often in forest or archipelago landscapes.

Understanding the variation of rural areas is crucial when analyzing clusters – it affects everything from collaboration opportunities to access to workforce and visitors.

2 Swedish conditions

One aspect that clearly stands out in the Swedish context is the prevalence of informal organizing, in clusters, networks, and cross-sector cooperation. Sweden has a long tradition of collaboration, partnership, and co-creation that tends to emerge from the bottom up, often with encouragement and support from municipalities or regional authorities.

In this context, whether as a private individual, entrepreneur, association member, or public official, one does not always perceive a strong need to formalize collaboration if it is functioning effectively on an informal basis. As a result, much of the traditional formality such as annual meetings, board meetings, and similar procedures can be avoided in favor of action.

A central explanation for this may be found in the concept of trust. In Sweden, levels of trust are comparatively high. Both interpersonal trust and trust in the state, public authorities, and institutions. Though naturally varying depending on factors such as residence, educational level, and social

vulnerability. Data from the OECD¹ (2023) supports this observation, suggesting that high trust may be one reason why informal organizing plays such a prominent role in Sweden.

Further evidence for this interpretation is provided by a study from Lund University, which reinforces the theory that trust functions as an enabling factor for informal collaboration². This paper analyses how the European Social Fund (ESF) in Sweden is implemented with forms of collaborative governance: top-down, bottom-up regional initiatives, and horizontal local collaboration.

A multi-case, practice-based study of 14 Swedish regional clusters³ shows that day-to-day collaboration depends heavily on orchestrating and narrating practices that mobilize members through bottom-up, relationship-driven coordination rather than strict formal structures.

Reviews of Swedish civil-society research⁴ (incl. "Partner sökes") track a long tradition of municipality–association cooperation, much of it practice-driven and locally negotiated rather than rigidly formalized.

Research on horizontal local governance⁵ during and after the 2015 refugee response shows extensive civil-society engagement and cross-sector partnering emerging rapidly and informally to meet needs.

Across clusters, public services, and civil society, Swedish actors repeatedly describe collaboration as something that grows from relationships first—with formal tools used when useful, not as a precondition. The high-trust context helps these informal networks function smoothly, matching your observation that Swedes often "skip" extra formality when cooperation already works.

Connecting Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* to the Swedish context: Putnam's Core Idea: Social Capital

Robert Putnam defines social capital as the networks, norms, and trust that enable people to act together more effectively for common goals. He distinguishes between:

- Bonding social capital – strong ties within a homogeneous group (family, close friends).
- Bridging social capital – weaker ties that connect across different groups (associations, networks, community life).

In *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam argued that the United States had seen a decline in social capital since the 1960s. Participation in associations, clubs, and local civic life declined, leaving Americans more socially isolated and less engaged in collective action.

Applying Putnam to Sweden

¹ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results-country-notes_a8004759-en/sweden_11ca1946-en.html

² <https://lup.lub.lu.se/record/7c395238-6530-4832-b943-355d748872d5>

³ Anna Yström & Hedvig Aspenberg, 2017. "Open For Innovation? Practices Supporting Collaboration in Swedish Regional Clusters," *International Journal of Innovation Management* (ijim), World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., vol. 21(05), pages 1-28, June

⁴ <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A360402/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/politicalscience/articles/10.3389/fpos.2021.643134/full>

Sweden (and the Nordic countries) has traditionally had high levels of social capital—both bonding and bridging. Evidence from the World Values Survey (WVS) and OECD trust surveys (as mentioned above) shows Swedes report very high generalized trust (“most people can be trusted”), which is an indicator of strong bridging capital. Sweden has a long tradition of popular movements (folk movements) such as the cooperative movement, the temperance movement, labor unions, and sports clubs, all of which fostered civic engagement and trust. Unlike the U.S., Sweden has not seen a dramatic erosion of civic participation. Instead, much activity has shifted toward looser, more informal networks (clusters, partnerships, cross-sector collaborations).

What This Means for Informal Organizing in Sweden

- Putnam’s framework helps explain why Sweden can rely more on informal forms of cooperation.
- Where *Bowling Alone* highlights decline in the U.S., Sweden shows a different path: formal associations coexist with informal networks.
- High trust allows actors—citizens, businesses, civil society, and public authorities—to collaborate without always needing contracts, heavy formalities, or rigid hierarchies.
- Municipalities and regions reinforce this by supporting co-creation and partnership even when not formally institutionalized.

How does that play with the context for the other partners?

Swedish society is commonly characterized by modesty, compromise, and consensus-based decision-making, often described through the concept of “lagom.” However, findings from the World Values Survey (2023) demonstrate that Sweden occupies an exceptional position, marked in yellow on the map, both in relation to the global context and in comparison, with the partner countries situated in the green area. This divergence carries important policy implications. Significant variation in values and societal contexts within project PARI can serve as a strategic strength, enabling a broader range of perspectives and innovative approaches. At the same time, such differences require deliberate coordination and targeted strategies to ensure that common objectives are achieved and shared actions remain feasible.

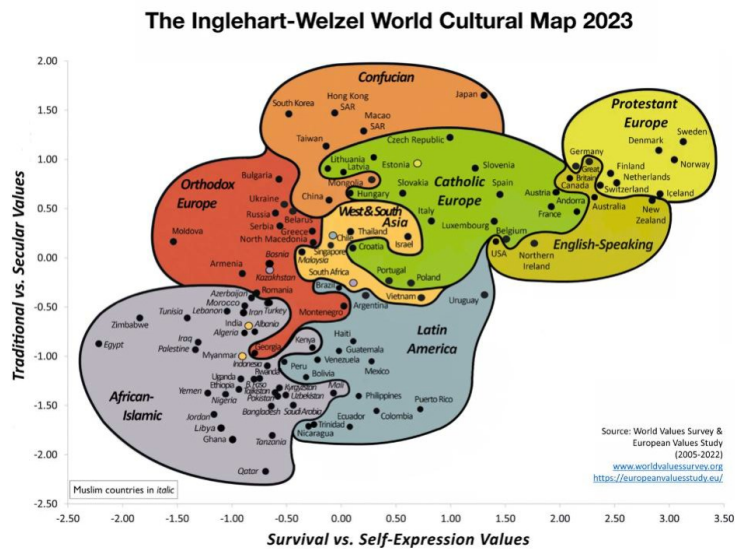


Figure. The Inglehart–Welzel cultural map of the world

Another contributing factor to Sweden's distinctiveness in this context may be the sparsity of its rural areas. Sweden has a comparatively small population spread over a large territory. This may contribute to clusters and collaborations often remaining informal, as the scale is limited and the need for formal organization may not arise. Sweden's population density is very low compared with the rest of Europe, as shown in the map below:

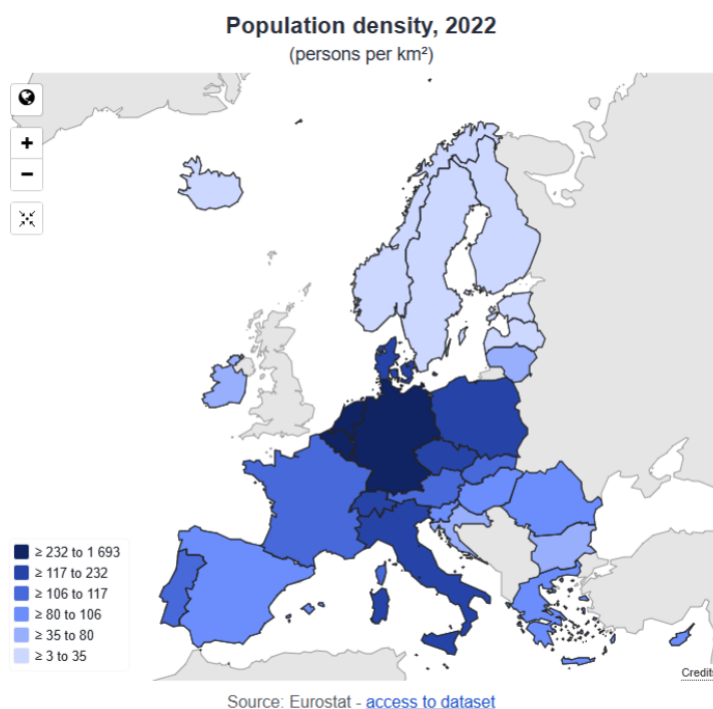


Figure. EU Population Density (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/demography-2024>)

3 Forming a local plan

3.1 List of stakeholders

3.1.1 Municipalities

The 13 municipalities in Östergötland, as participants in the rural network led by Region Östergötland.

Participants are civil servants, often rural developers or strategists in rural development, planning or business development. The rural network meets four times each year to work with issues connected to service provision in rural Östergötland, exchange knowledge and experiences concerning rural areas, challenges and projects. The network also makes study visits in local grocery stores, visits local NGOs and other relevant actors.

3.1.2 Leader areas

The three Leader areas in Östergötland, Leader Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd, Leader Folkungaland and Leader Kustlandet.

Leader is a method for rural development introduced by the EU in 1991. The method places local anchoring, initiative, and engagement at its core. The idea is that development of your specific area is most effectively carried out by those who live and work there – by you, your association, local businesses, and other organizations. You are the ones who know which needs and challenges must be addressed.

To ensure a local focus, the Leader method is implemented in geographically defined areas, known as Leader areas. There are 40 Leader areas in Sweden, and across the entire EU there are more than 3,500. All Leader areas are independent associations, and you can easily find your area here at leadersverige.se.

To establish a Leader area, local stakeholders from the non-profit, private, and public sectors must come together to develop a development strategy. This strategy is based on the needs and conditions of the specific area. It describes, for example, what needs to be done to increase employment, create more new businesses, and make the area attractive and competitive.

The local development strategy forms the basis for the Leader area's budget, which is decided by the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Residents and stakeholders within the area can apply for funding from the Leader area to run projects. Projects that are granted support must contribute to achieving the goals of the development strategy. Each Leader project can thus be seen as a piece of a puzzle that, together with all other projects, helps fulfill the area's goals and vision.

Leader funding distributed to various projects comes from the EU (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), the Swedish government, municipalities, and sometimes regions. During the period 2023–2027, a total of approximately SEK 1.7 billion is available to strengthen the competitiveness and development of Sweden's rural areas through Leader.

3.1.3 Rural Sweden

The NGO Rural Sweden, mostly known as The all of Sweden shall live, Östergötland (Hela Sverige ska leva, HSSL).

Rural Sweden is a national non-profit organization whose membership consists of thousands of local development groups. Members are community groups and village councils as well as some local heritage associations and even sports clubs who are dedicated to local development.

What unites these groups is that they work for local development in their village or district, even if their activities may vary. They work with everything from organizing Midsummer celebrations and taking over schools and shops, to promoting their village as an attractive place to live and work in. Our 24 regional departments provide support and guidance to groups in their respective locations. The departments coordinate and initiate common issues and maintain contact with government agencies and organizations at the regional level.

At the national level, an administrative office under the leadership of the organization's board maintains contact, coordination and communication with groups throughout the country. The board consists of 13 members from across Sweden.

An important component of the work by the administrative office and the board is to act as a collective voice for the rural movement in Sweden. Thousands of local development groups are unable to meet with the Minister for Rural Affairs but the board can do so and convey the voice of the rural movement.

Rural Seden also has about forty large member organizations that share values and support the work.

Rural Sweden was founded in September 1989, at the end of a large campaign by the same name. This meant a strong mobilization of rural Sweden and after the campaign ended, local groups wanted to continue to work together to develop their villages and communities.

3.1.4 Community Center

The NGO Rural community center, regional level Östergötland (Bygdegårdarna Östergötland).

The Community Centre (Bygdegården) is a natural meeting space for the local community. It is a gathering place that is open to everyone – regardless of age, gender or faith – and grounded in democratic values. The Community Centre

- Is a general meeting space, set up by those who live in the neighborhood
- Welcomes everyone and is grounded in democratic values
- Is run as a non-profit organisation
- Is a place for meeting, learning, celebrations and culture
- Is available for rent by the public

There are more than 1,400 community centres across Sweden, and most of them are located in the countryside. They are general meeting spaces for their local communities and are open to all. Community centres often:

- Host cultural events such as theatre productions, concerts, dance performances and film screenings
- Organize celebrations and festivities, including Christmas markets and flea markets
- Can be rented out by other associations, companies and private individuals

3.1.5 The university

Linköping University LiU, situated in the region of Östergötland.

One of the foundations on which Linköping University's success is built is collaboration with the society around. It connects education to the labour market, strengthens the relevance of research, and makes it possible for the knowledge gained to benefit society and nurture positive social development.

The strategic collaboration agenda of Linköping University is based on the ambition to deepen the role as long-term source of expertise and hub of knowledge in the development of society and the business world. It is related to all operations and is a quality-assurance investment in education, research and collaboration. The work of development takes place in collaboration with, among others, the university's strategic partners.

To strengthen and develop collaboration with the society around, LiU has entered into agreements with a number of strategic collaboration partners – companies and public bodies with whom the university has a special relationship and with whom the university intend to deepen collaboration.

Such partnership involves strategies and annual plans of action in order to secure future needs for expertise and create benefit through collaboration.

LiU's strategic collaboration partners

- ABB
- Ericsson
- Linköping Municipality
- Norrköping Municipality
- Region Östergötland
- SAAB
- Siemens Energy AB
- Tekniska verken
- The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, VTI

3.1.6 ESBR

East Sweden Business Region is a network designed to make it easy for companies to gain an overview of all the opportunities available in the region.

The idea behind the network East Sweden Business Region (ESBR) is that companies looking to grow should not have to search for what kind of support the public sector can offer. Instead, they should easily be able to access a consolidated overview of the available services and activities. To help find the right path, there is the ESB Guide – a facilitator who can open many new doors for you and your company.

Public actors working with growth in the region are gathered within the East Sweden Business Region (ESBR) network. The idea is that companies aiming to expand should not have to search for available public support but should instead be able to gain a clear and comprehensive overview of what is offered.

There are many companies that are not aware of the extensive support system and the various actors and organizations included within ESB.

For several years now, the ESB Guide has taken on an outreach role – acting as a kind of facilitator – where municipalities can receive support in contacting companies with which they have had little or no prior contact. The purpose is to ensure that companies become aware that they can receive support from the ESB system to address challenges and issues they face or may encounter. In addition, companies in the region can contact the ESB Guide directly when they have a need that one or more ESB actors may help address. The ESB Guide can open doors to many new opportunities and thereby help companies grow.

The ESB Guide works according to a clear and strategic approach. After an initial conversation, the guide conducts a needs analysis to assess where the company stands and whether there are areas where support from any of the actors within the system may be beneficial. This can include anything from organizational or business development to establishing contact with a researcher or student at a university who can help move the business forward.

Following the initial conversation, the ESB Guide refers the company to one or more relevant actors within the support system, who then take over the contact. The company also receives feedback from the ESB Guide on different pathways within ESB that can support its growth and development.

The picture below shows all members of ESB. For a detailed presentation please visit <https://www.eastsweden.se/es/east-sweden-business-region/innovation-och-samverkan/vara-organisationer>



3.1.7 Arena for Social Innovation

The Arena for Social Innovation was established, together with several other initiatives, to explore how the objectives related to social innovation in the Regional Strategy for Business Development and Innovation could be translated into practice.

The overall objective of the regional Innovation Strategy is to:

"Strengthen the region's innovation capacity through increased collaboration, improved support structures, and stronger connections between ideas, research and market applications."

The Arena for Social Innovation works towards the following goals:

- Develop a common approach to supporting social innovation and integrate it as a natural part of Östergötland's innovation support system.
- Establish a hub for social innovation integrated within the East Sweden Business Region (ESBR) collaboration platform.
- Enable enterprises developing social innovations to participate in public procurement processes.

Of these three objectives, the PARI project is primarily connected to the first two.

The Arena for Social Innovation holds recurring meetings, approximately four times per year. In addition, smaller meetings are organised with selected members of the Arena for specific purposes, such as developing project ideas, preparing collaborative initiatives or exploring particular themes and areas of common interest. The Arena for Social Innovation has, to some extent, served as a sounding board for the PARI project. The project team has regularly reported on project progress and discussed findings and experiences with the Arena.

Members of the Arena for Social Innovation are listed below.

ALMI East Central Sweden is a regional development organisation with the mission of strengthening business competitiveness, innovation capacity and sustainable growth across the counties of Östergötland, Södermanland, Uppsala, Västmanland, Örebro and Gotland. Through financing, business development services and advisory support, ALMI assists entrepreneurs and companies at various stages of development, from idea generation and innovation to expansion and transformation. ALMI particularly focuses on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in developing new products, services and business models while contributing to sustainable regional development. Through its combination of capital, expertise and networks, ALMI is an important part of the regional innovation and business support system.

Linköping Innovation is the innovation office of Linköping University. Its mission is to support researchers, students and staff in transforming ideas, research results and knowledge into innovations that create societal value. Through advisory services, proof-of-concept support, business development and networking activities, the organisation strengthens the link between research, entrepreneurship and innovation. Its activities aim to increase the societal impact of research and knowledge by supporting the development of new products, services, methods and solutions.

Stadsmissionen Östergötland is a civil society organisation working towards a more inclusive and humane society by supporting people in vulnerable situations and creating opportunities for participation, empowerment and social inclusion. Its activities include labour market integration, social support, education, employment initiatives, meeting places and social enterprises. By developing new approaches and collaborative models to address social needs, Stadsmissionen Östergötland also contributes to social innovation. The organisation operates at the intersection of civil society, the public sector and the private sector and plays an important role in developing solutions to complex societal challenges.

Hela Sverige ska leva Östergötland (Rural Sweden/The Whole of Sweden Shall Live) is a regional development network bringing together local development groups, village associations, community organisations and other actors working for vibrant rural communities. The organisation strengthens local development capacity by supporting citizen-led initiatives, sharing knowledge and fostering collaboration between local, regional and national actors. The network promotes local empowerment, sustainable community development and good living conditions throughout the county.

Coompanion Östergötland is a regional business advisory and development organisation working to strengthen social innovation, social entrepreneurship and sustainable local and regional development. The organisation supports individuals and organisations seeking to address societal challenges through collaboration, cooperative entrepreneurship and other forms of mission-driven

enterprise. Coompanion contributes to innovation at the intersection of business, the public sector and civil society and works to enable more people to transform ideas into sustainable ventures and societal value.

The SPIRA Network is a regional collaboration network in Östergötland bringing together organisations from civil society, the social economy and the non-profit sector. The network promotes collaboration, knowledge development and exchange of experience among actors contributing to social sustainability, inclusion and local development. By creating meeting places and highlighting the role of civil society in societal development, SPIRA contributes to strengthening the region's social innovation capacity.

3.1.8 The Board of Coompanion Östergötland

The entire Board of Coompanion Östergötland was invited to participate in the stakeholder meeting held on 19 May. The Board has also received regular updates regarding the progress of the PARI project.

The Board consists of elected representatives from the member organisations of Coompanion Östergötland, namely Valdemarsvik Municipality, Marieborg Folk High School, Söderköping Municipality, Finspång Municipality and Riksbyggen

3.2 Activities

3.2.1 Gaming as a method

17 December 2025 the Linköping University presented gaming as a method for understanding rural context. The presentation was held internally for Region Östergötland. A deeper presentation of gaming as a method for discussing rural-urban perspectives as part of the PARI project was held for the rural network, see 26 February 2026. The activities did not result in any specific findings in the PARI project.

3.2.2 Leader as a tool for innovation

25 February 2026 the Leader areas were invited to a dialogue on the role of clusters in rural areas and how organizations can support social innovation in Östergötland. Questions asked in the dialogue were what constitutes a cluster, what are the benefits of clusters, are there examples of clusters or facilities that makes innovation prosper, if so - who organizes. A finding from the dialogue is that Leader is part of the ESBR-system but not a particularly strong or visible partner.

3.2.3 Cluster is an irrelevant term

26 February 2026 the PARI project was on the agenda for the rural network meeting. LiU presented gaming as a method for discussing rural-urban perspectives following a dialogue on the role of clusters in rural areas and how organizations can support social innovation in Östergötland. What would be fruitful ways to strengthen conditions for social innovation in rural local areas? A finding from the dialogue is that clusters may be an irrelevant term as a base for social innovation in the sparsely populated rural areas of Östergötland. Perhaps better to talk about geographical areas or to work with, or strengthen co-operation between, existing companies or local organizations (than to use the term clusters).

3.2.4 The need for support

15 April 2026 a seminar was held on the ESBR event on how organizations can support social innovation in Östergötland. The aim was to create awareness and understanding of social innovators' needs for support, and to foster a deep feeling for the importance of social innovations.

To help the ESBR network the social innovator Efraim Jovlund from Snacka om sjukt (talk about health and illness) made a talk for approximately 90 ESBR actors, on an innovator's view and need for support. A finding from the seminar is that there is a risk that all capacity for social innovation in rural areas are not recognized and will not get the support it needs to be realized.

3.2.4 Social innovation hard to grasp

19 May 2026 stakeholders were invited to a presentation of findings within the PARI project, for stakeholders to react on and validate. The following organizations participated, Hela Sverige ska leva/Rural Sweden, Östergötlands Bygdegårdsdistrikt/Community Center, Leader Kustlandet, Leader Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd, Linköpings kommun, Mjölby kommun, Åtvidabergs kommun, Valdemarsviks kommun, ESBR, Hulta kretsloppsförening. One of the findings discussed was that social innovation is hard to grasp, perhaps there is a need to find a more suitable expression.

3.3 Findings

The findings from WP 4 in the PARI project results from the entire project, the study visits conducted, discussions and facts held and collected by all the participating actors as well as from activities held within the actual WP4. Five main findings are presented below.

1. Rural areas have different conditions

- Compared to Europe, the Nordic countries are sparsely populated
- Sweden's rural areas have a tradition of grassroots engagement, informal collaboration, and trust
- Östergötland's place typology is a way of understanding the differing conditions of rural areas
- Rural areas often fall outside the norm, for example:
 - Small-scale vs. large-scale
 - Individual dependence vs. more institutionalized structures
 - Collaboration is often informal vs. formalized agreements
- In some cases, the conditions of rural areas are not addressed in strategies

2. Enablers exist but are not automatically integrated into the support system

- Enablers that are part of the support system include Leader and local savings banks (although they could be made more visible)
- Enablers active in the local geography include meeting places, engagement by individuals, associations and businesses, and the attraction/"gravitational pull" of what already exists in a place
- Tools for local development may include LUP (Local Development Plan) and LEA (Local Economic Analysis)

3. Concepts matter for relevance

- Clusters may not be relevant at a local scale – the concept can be misleading
- Which concepts better reflect what is important in rural contexts? Enablers, arenas, meeting places, collaboration, "along the way," gravitational pull

- The concept of social innovation is difficult to understand, has many interpretations, and is often associated with non-profit activity, which can create resistance, reluctance, or lack of interest in business contexts

4. Difficult to distinguish social innovation from entrepreneurship or core activities

At the same time, it is important to show that all aspects are important. Set aside time within the company or association to think strategically about development and innovation in order to remain relevant and sustainable in the long term.

5. The infrastructure for local development needs to be clarified

- How does the local level connect to the municipal, regional, and national levels? Are there missing elements in the infrastructure for regional development when it comes to the local level?
- Infrastructure and stability have long been in place for large-scale arenas. There are funding opportunities for major investments and projects – in contrast to local initiatives, small-scale efforts, and sparsely populated areas
- There is a strong dependence on individuals in rural areas; a systems perspective is often lacking

4 Strategic Direction for Promoting Innovation

The **National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development throughout the Country 2021–2030** states that:

“The demographic development, technological development including digitalization, globalization, the climate and environmental transition including adaptation to climate change, as well as socioeconomics and cohesion, entail major societal challenges and imply a transformation of society. Through innovation and renewal, as well as entrepreneurship and business development, regional development efforts can contribute to addressing societal challenges, harnessing opportunities, and finding solutions. The conditions for innovation and renewal, as well as entrepreneurship and business development, vary across different parts of the country. Therefore, initiatives need to have a territorial perspective and be adaptable to different conditions.”

Furthermore, the importance of harnessing everyone’s innovation capacity is emphasized:

“Innovation includes value creation that extends beyond what originates from traditional research and development. To meet existing transformation needs, it is important to adopt a broad perspective on innovation and include multiple parts of society. It is essential to strengthen the innovation capacity of individuals, businesses, organizations, and the public sector throughout the country.”

At the regional level, these national ambitions are reflected in the **Development Strategy for Östergötland**:

- Residents of Östergötland should have the opportunity to participate, influence, and contribute to societal development. Everyone should be able to participate based on their own conditions.
- Competitiveness is created when businesses and society have the capacity and the right skills to drive innovation. To succeed, collaboration is needed between business support organizations, academia, municipalities, authorities, companies, innovators, and civil society.

The **Business and Innovation Strategy for Östergötland** specifies how efforts to promote innovation should be carried out. One priority concerns social innovation, with the aim to:

“integrate social innovation as a natural part of Östergötland’s innovation support system—where solutions are developed in collaboration to address societal challenges.”

One measure involves:

“developing a shared approach to supporting social innovation and integrating it as a natural part of Östergötland’s innovation support system.”

In addition to the strategic direction outlined above across multiple levels, consideration will need to be given to the ongoing inquiry into Sweden’s cohesive development, **SVESAM**. On July 11, 2024, the Government adopted committee directives concerning future regional development policy and rural policy (Dir. 2024:69). A special investigator is tasked with proposing how future regional development and rural policy should be designed and oriented. The purpose of these proposals is to strengthen the possibilities of achieving the objectives of regional development policy and cohesive rural policy. The assignment is to be reported no later than June 30, 2026.

4.1 Experiences from PARI

The lessons from the PARI project presented below are based on experiences from the entire implementation of the project, study visits conducted, discussions, experiences, and data collected by or with the support of all participating actors, as well as activities within work package 4 (WP4). The insights relate to Östergötland.

Different rural areas have different conditions, which clearly distinguish them from urban environments. Compared to much of Europe, the Nordic region is sparsely populated, which shapes both opportunities and challenges in development work. Rural Sweden is characterized by a strong tradition of local engagement, informal collaboration, and a high degree of trust.

Östergötland’s place typology is a useful tool for highlighting and understanding the conditions of different rural areas. Rural areas often fall outside prevailing norms—for example through their small scale in relation to large-scale environments, a strong reliance on individuals rather than established structures, and forms of collaboration that are more often informal than formally regulated. The conditions and perspectives of rural areas are not always addressed in strategic development work.

There are several important actors that promote innovation and development in rural areas, even if they are not always clearly visible or integrated into the support system. Examples of formal enablers include Leader and local savings banks. In addition, there are locally rooted enablers such as meeting places, individual engagement, associations, companies, and the attractiveness already present in a place. Tools such as Local Development Plans (LUP) and Local Economic Analyses (LEA) can contribute to more structured development work.

The choice of terminology plays an important role. Some concepts, such as “clusters,” are not always relevant in a local rural context and may be misleading. Other terms—such as enablers, arenas, meeting places, collaboration, development “along the way,” and local attractiveness—may better reflect rural realities. The concept of social innovation is also perceived as unclear and ambiguous. It is often associated with non-profit activities, which can create some resistance or lack of interest in business contexts.

In practice, it is difficult to draw clear boundaries between social innovation, entrepreneurship, and regular activities, as these often overlap. This also highlights the importance of recognizing that all these elements are interconnected. Both companies and associations benefit from allocating time to strategic development and innovation to remain relevant and sustainable in the long term.

Finally, there is a need to clarify and strengthen the infrastructure for local development and social innovation in rural areas. This includes how the local level connects to municipal, regional, and national levels, and whether there are gaps in the current support system that make it more difficult for local actors. There are established structures and funding opportunities for larger investments, while conditions are different for small-scale, locally driven initiatives in sparsely populated areas. In

many rural areas, dependence on individual actors is high, and a more coherent system perspective is often lacking.

4.2 Proposed Actions

The experiences and findings from PARI should be incorporated into the implementation of the Regional Business and Innovation Strategy. The primary recipients of these findings are the managers of the Regional Business Development Unit at Region Östergötland. The proposed actions focus on capacity-building within the regional support system as well as the allocation of resources to strengthen innovation support structures in rural areas.

The mapping and analysis conducted within PARI identified five key conclusions:

1. Innovation takes place throughout the region's geography.
2. Social innovation is underrepresented within the innovation support system.
3. Micro-clusters function as important innovation environments.
4. Civil society is an innovation actor.
5. There is a need for bridge-builders between the visible and invisible innovation systems.

These conclusions form the basis for the proposed action plan and strategic direction.

The following actions aim to operationalise the strategic objective of developing a common approach to supporting social innovation and integrating it as a natural part of Östergötland's innovation support system.

4.2.1 Increase Understanding of the Need for Social Innovation to Address Societal Challenges

To fully utilise Östergötland's innovation capacity, the regional innovation support system needs to strengthen its ability to identify, understand and support social innovation. Large parts of today's innovation system are shaped by norms and practices primarily designed for technological innovation, business growth and commercialisation. This risks overlooking innovations emerging from civil society, rural areas and local contexts where societal challenges are the primary drivers.

The purpose of this action is to broaden the understanding of innovation by recognising local, social, ecological and economic values as important components of the region's innovation capacity.

Proposed activities

Make normative structures within the innovation system visible

- Identify and discuss the norms influencing which innovations are perceived as legitimate and worthy of support.
- Highlight how concepts such as innovation, growth, scalability and entrepreneurship are often associated with technology, businesses and urban environments.
- Increase awareness of how these norms may contribute to making social innovations and place-based initiatives invisible.

Develop a shared language and conceptual framework

- Create a common understanding of concepts such as social innovation, social entrepreneurship, place-based innovation, local economy and social value creation.
- Develop examples and case studies from Östergötland illustrating how social innovation manifests itself in different contexts.

- Integrate knowledge from the Social Innovation Orientation Map for Societal Change and current research on social innovation.

Strengthen the competence of innovation support actors

- Organise training programmes and workshops for ESBR actors, municipalities, business support organisations and other parts of the support system.
- Create forums for exchange between traditional innovation actors and civil society organisations.
- Increase understanding of how social innovation can contribute to addressing societal challenges such as skills supply, service provision, inclusion, public health and rural development.

Highlight and disseminate good practices

- Document and communicate examples of social innovation from across Östergötland.
- Showcase initiatives currently operating within the invisible innovation system to increase recognition and legitimacy.
- Create opportunities for inspiration and learning through study visits, seminars and networking events.

Expected impact

A stronger understanding of social innovation will improve the ability to identify and support innovations that currently fall outside established support structures. This will enable more actors to contribute to addressing societal challenges and strengthening innovation capacity throughout Östergötland.

4.2.2 Increase Knowledge Within the Support System About Rural Conditions and Contexts

For the innovation support system to contribute to development throughout Östergötland, it must better understand that different places have different conditions, resources and development logics. PARI demonstrates that many innovation support approaches are shaped by assumptions originating from urban environments and market-oriented innovation models. This risks overlooking the innovation capacity and development potential of rural areas.

The purpose of this action is to strengthen understanding of how place, geography and local economic conditions influence opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

Proposed activities

Increase understanding of rural economic logic

- Highlight the differences between the market economy and the foundational economy, and how they interact within local communities.
- Increase awareness of how value is created through local services, associations, volunteer work, social networks and other resources often invisible in traditional economic analyses.
- Integrate perspectives from research on local economies and local agency, where place-based resources, relationships and self-organisation are regarded as key development factors.

- Strengthen understanding of how social, ecological and economic values are often created simultaneously in rural development processes.
- Promote tools such as Local Development Plans (LDPs) and Local Economic Analyses (LEAs).

Use Östergötland's place typology as an analytical tool

- Integrate the place typology into innovation and business development activities.
- Highlight differences between larger cities, smaller towns, rural areas and peri-urban rural areas.
- Ensure that support measures are adapted to different local conditions and needs.
- Develop approaches that strengthen place-based development and local innovation capacity.

Visualise the geography of economic activity

- Use maps and geographical analyses to illustrate the distribution of businesses, employment, services and innovation environments across the region.
- Highlight the importance of agriculture, tourism, culture and the social economy to regional development.
- Map local development environments, micro-clusters and social entrepreneurial initiatives that are often absent from regional innovation analyses.
- Develop visualisations that complement traditional business statistics and provide a more nuanced understanding of innovation capacity across the region.

Create encounters between knowledge and practice

- Organise study visits and learning journeys across different parts of the county.
- Involve local development groups, entrepreneurs, social enterprises and civil society actors in learning activities.
- Create forums where experiences from different parts of the region can be shared and translated into development practice.

Expected impact

Greater understanding of rural conditions will improve the ability of the innovation support system to design relevant, targeted and inclusive support measures. By understanding the significance of place and rural economic logic, more innovations can be identified, more actors included and development capacity strengthened throughout Östergötland.

4.2.3 Develop Support Structures that Promote Innovation in Local Geographies

PARI demonstrates that many innovations in rural areas emerge close to people, organisations and local communities. At the same time, large parts of the current innovation support system are organised at the regional level and designed according to conditions primarily found in urban settings. As a result, many initiatives never reach existing support structures, while the support system itself has limited presence in the local environments where innovation actually emerges.

A key finding of PARI is the existence of both a visible and an invisible innovation system in Östergötland. Strengthening innovation throughout the region therefore requires support structures that build bridges between these systems and operate closer to local communities.

Expected impact

Developing structures that support innovation in local geographies will increase the ability to identify, support and scale innovations that currently remain invisible. Stronger links between the visible and invisible innovation systems will enable more actors to contribute to regional development while making more effective use of regional resources.

At the same time, such efforts will create better conditions for social, ecological and economic innovation throughout Östergötland and strengthen the region's overall capacity to address future societal challenges.



PARI
PATHS FOR RURAL
INNOVATION



Co-funded by
the European Union

Action Plan

Engaging Stakeholders

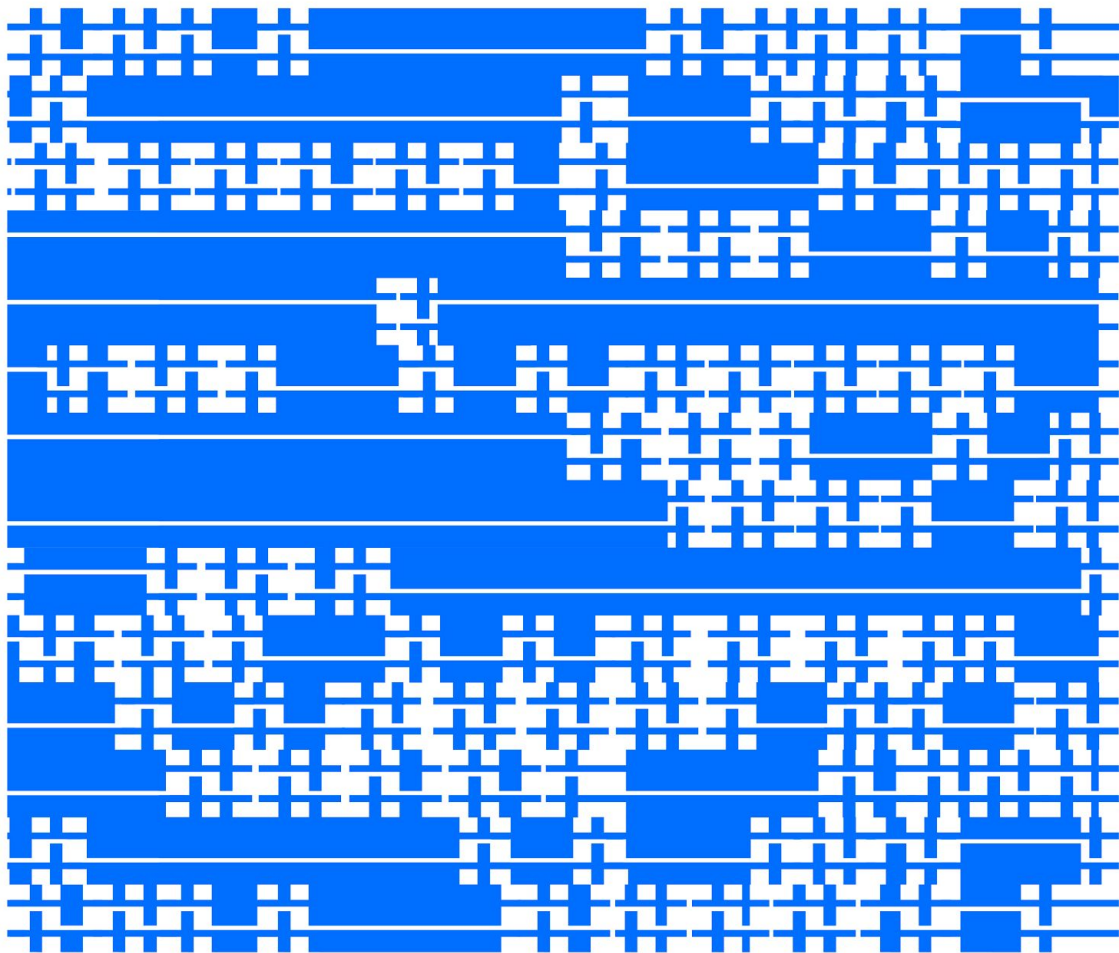
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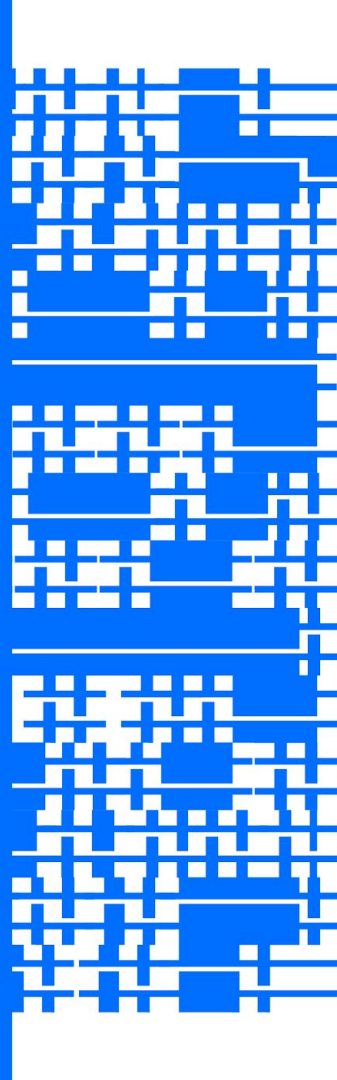
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ROADMAP

Executive Summary

1. Context and Objectives
2. Methodology and Tools
3. Results
4. Conclusions and Pathways
5. References
6. Annexes



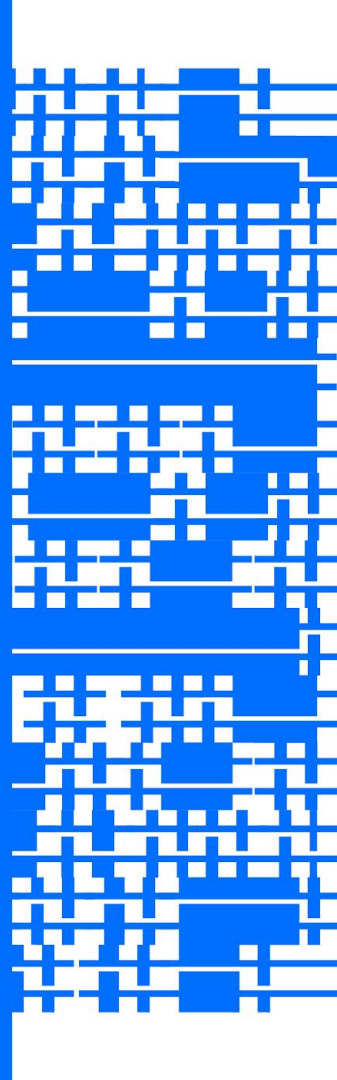
Executive Summary

The PARI Action Plan (Paths for Rural Innovation) is a strategic roadmap to establish Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) in Torres Vedras. The goal is to make the municipality a European leader in territorial resilience and social equity by 2030.

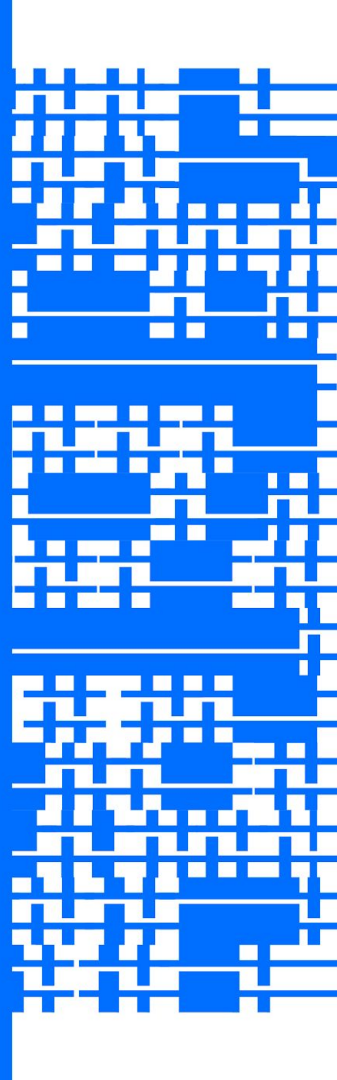
Strategic Pillars:

- **Rural Vitality:** Supporting smallholders through agrotech innovation and a dedicated Rural Support Office.
- **Sustainable Mobility:** Expanding cycle paths and low-emission transport links to rural parishes.
- **Social Equity:** Combating isolation through neighbourhood community centres ("Portas do Bairro") and solidarity networks.
- **Affordable Housing:** Using public rehabilitation and cooperative models to provide sustainable housing.
- **Circular Economy:** Scaling up community composting loops and zero-waste municipal procurement.
- **Transparent Governance:** Modernising administration through open-data portals and participatory local assemblies.

Governance and Monitoring: The plan is led by the Torres Vedras Municipality, acting as the central link between innovation hubs like Smart Farm Colab, the commercial sector, and local associations. Implementation will be tracked through a participatory framework, with independent oversight provided by a Citizens' Observatory to ensure long-term accountability.



1. Context and Objectives





Torres Vedras is a municipality of 89,526 inhabitants in the Oeste Region of Portugal, retaining a strongly rural character across much of its territory. Its mosaic landscape — vineyards, orchards, vegetable plots, forests, and pastureland — is both its defining identity and principal strategic asset. In terms of land use, agriculture (18,334 ha) and forestry (17,342 ha) account for around 87.6% of the total area, making Torres Vedras a distinctly rural municipality despite its proximity to Lisbon.

The Municipality's strategic framework is structured around a comprehensive programme covering fourteen thematic areas. The most directly relevant to the PARI project and the CSEI are: the rural world and agricultural development agenda; the environment, well-being, and circular economy agenda; social development and inclusion; and innovation and entrepreneurship. These policy ambitions create a conducive environment for the CSEI, which is conceived as the participatory governance architecture to help bring them to life.

The Strategic Urban Development Plan (PEDU) and its derived action plans — PAMUS (sustainable mobility), PARU (urban regeneration), and PAICD (integrated community development) — provide the spatial and operational planning backbone. The Municipality has also expressed a commitment to a climate and energy action plan (PAESC 2050), establishing a trajectory towards carbon neutrality and circular economy transition.

Context | Municipal Policy Priorities and CSEI Alignment



The following municipal policy commitments and programme areas are directly relevant to the Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI). They represent strategic intentions and planned instruments, not all of which are yet fully operational:

RURAL WORLD & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Municipality's programme sets out a vision for a Municipal Plan for Agricultural Development and Support (PMDATA), structured around three axes: participatory governance through a planned Municipal Council for the Agri-food Economy (CMPEAP), proximity services via a planned Rural Support Office (Gabinete do Mundo Rural), and applied innovation through a planned AgroTech programme. The programme also envisions the creation of an Institute for Applied Rural Research (IRIA) and a local agricultural quality label (Marca Torres Vedras). These are strategic ambitions — the CSEI can help accelerate their implementation and ensure they are built on genuine multi-stakeholder foundations.

ENVIRONMENT, CIRCULAR ECONOMY & CLIMATE

The Municipality intends to develop a Municipal Circular Economy Action Agenda, including a Selo Verde Municipal (green label for low-footprint local products), and is committed to a climate action plan (PAESC 2050) targeting carbon neutrality. A water management plan is also planned, critical for agricultural resilience. The CSEI is a natural vehicle for embedding these commitments in local practice.



Municipal Policy Priorities — CSEI Alignment



The following municipal policy commitments and programme areas are directly relevant to the CSEI. They represent strategic intentions and planned instruments, not all of which are yet fully operational:

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & INCLUSION

The Municipality has committed to developing a network of social canteens covering all parishes, with an explicit intention to integrate local produce contracts — creating a guaranteed institutional market for the CSEI food cluster. The PAICD addresses integrated community development in Encosta de São Vicente and other peripheral communities.

INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Municipality envisions fiscal benefit packages and enterprise support instruments for the social economy, as well as co-working facilities. Smart Farm Colab is already operational and constitutes a concrete anchor for the planned AgroTech programme.

Convergence point

Both the municipal programme and the PARI stakeholder mapping independently converge on the need for a coherent local innovation cluster. The Municipality frames it as a strategic objective (agricultural cluster vision); the stakeholder ecosystem produces it as an emergent logic from existing collaborative relationships. The CSEI provides the participatory governance architecture that connects these two trajectories.





The CSEI model underpinning the PARI project is defined by the EU Social Economy Action Plan [1] as follows: *Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation* - "CSEIs are dynamic networks of diverse, geographically concentrated, and interconnected actors. (...) Their collaboration is not merely incidental but is purposefully structured to address pressing social and environmental challenges within a defined territory, concurrently fostering sustainable economic activities. This collaborative synergy allows for the emergence of innovative solutions that would be beyond the reach of individual actors operating in isolation." [1].

The CSEI concept and practice underpins the whole PARI project, whose main convergence point is the creation of 3 Local Plans for the setup of CSEIs in the partner rural territories.

Context and Objectives



PARI's Torres Vedras Mission (March 2025) suggested 6 strategic actions:

1. Enhance and systematize inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms for CSEI co-creation;
2. Develop and implement targeted financial mechanisms for socially-inclusive ecological innovation;
3. Invest in continuous capacity building and knowledge exchange for CSEI Actors;
4. Strengthen data-driven, participatory monitoring and evaluation for CSEI Impact;
5. Integrate and scale successful pilot initiatives into mainstream policies and programs and
6. Amplify public awareness and education on the interlinkages between social equity and ecological sustainability.





Building on an early stakeholder mapping, a deeper surveying took place (July 2025), with the following objectives: (1) Establish the degree of alignment with PARI focus areas; (2) Assess conformity with local public policy priorities and (3) Analyse the relationships among stakeholders. The survey main findings were as follows:

- In relation to public policy changes that would better support their work, Sustainable and effective funding and Decentralized Governance are the most sought after changes. *It is therefore advisable to include Sustainable and effective funding and Decentralized Governance in the Action Plan.*
- In terms of conformity with local public policy priorities, the most aligned were Less territorial imbalances (rural-urban) and More social inclusion of vulnerable communities, followed by More environmental sustainability and Participatory Governance. *A baseline common agenda for the CSEI must be built prioritizing those issues.*

Context and Objectives

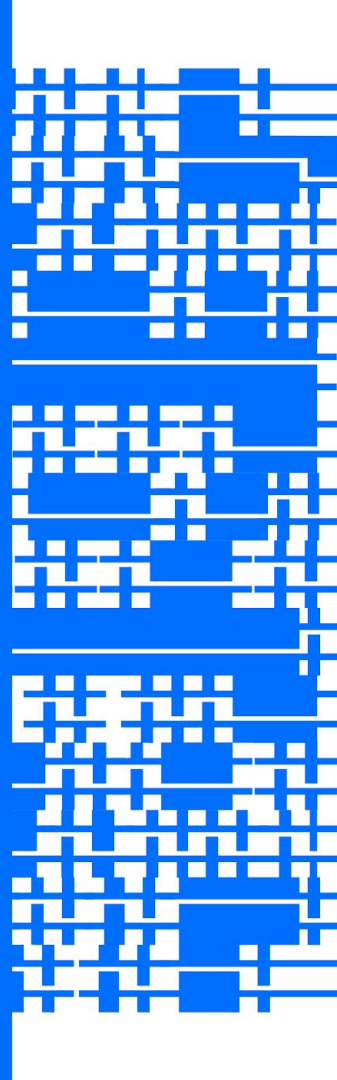


This final stage is a participatory programme engaging stakeholders towards final inputs for the CSEI Action Plan. More specifically, the objectives were the following:

- Establish a common vision for social and ecological action.
- Outline a theory of change within priority areas.
- Propose material outcomes with key performance indicators.

Activities	APRIL		MAY	JUNE		
	w1	w2	w2	w1	w2	w3
Engagement - prep and outreach						
Engagement - participatory sessions						
Action Plan - version 1						
Action Plan - validation (stakeholders)						
Action Plan - final version /submission						

2. Methodology and Tools



#Methodology and Tools



The engagement programme evolved within the Collective Impact framework [3], previously tested by the Torres Vedras Municipality.

This approach frames a collaboration among multiple relevant stakeholders — individuals or organizations — to solve a complex social and/or environmental problem, leveraging their different competencies around a common agenda for intervention.



#Methodology and Tools



The chosen engagement format was direct consultation with 2 workshops (1 in person + 1 online) with stakeholders already involved and additional ones, primarily from their network, in order to broaden the future CSEI's participant base.

The sessions' general objective was to harness inputs for the Plan, namely **(a)** a common vision framing priority intervention areas within a theory of change (ToC) and **(b)** clusters of actors/relations - instrumental for implementation mechanisms (*workshop session plan available in the Annexes section*).

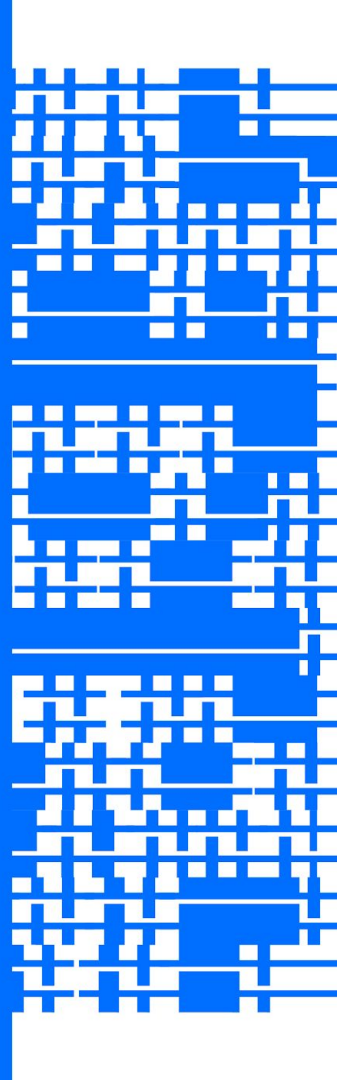


3. Results

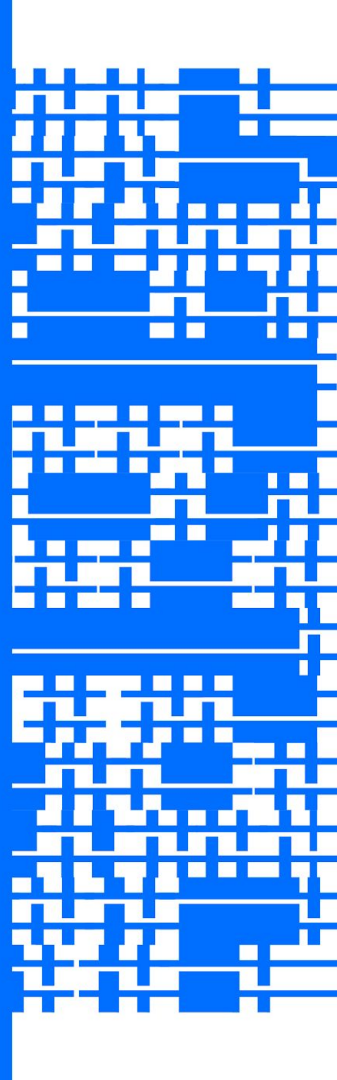
3.1. Theory of Change

3.2. Actors and Relations

3.3. Action Plan



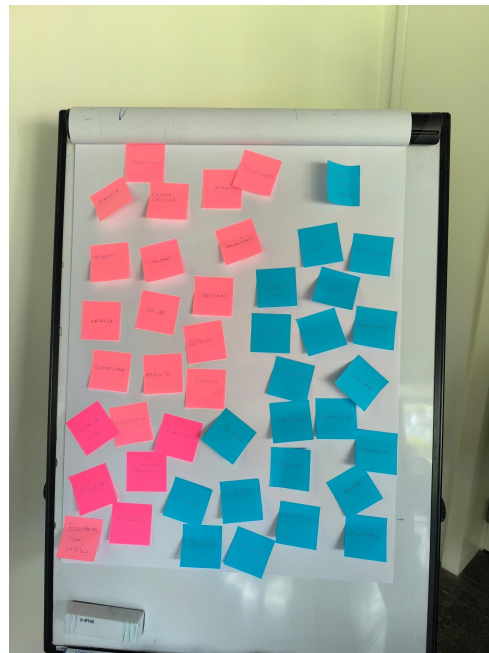
Theory of Change





Stakeholder engagement proved to be quite challenging: 2 workshops only gathered 12 participants/organisations (2 public, 7 CSO, 3 private companies), despite higher enrolment.

Both workshops started by a reflection on the crossroads between social equity and ecology in order to formulate a common vision or long term change: *"Transforming urban and rural environments into sustainable models through eco-communities"*.



#ENGAGEMENT | Vision, Priorities and Theory of Change



The sessions proceeded to outcomes harvesting, within the public policy areas extracted from the municipality's strategic plans: Less Urban-Rural Imbalances; More Mobility; Greater Inclusion of Vulnerable Communities; Better and More Housing; Greater Environmental Sustainability and Participatory Governance. It is noteworthy that - unlike the Surveying stage - at this point participants provided ample suggestions to all areas.

Due to time constraints it was not possible to thoroughly design causal links between outcomes/changes. This task was completed post-workshop with a desk study assisted by Gemini Pro - instructed to strictly use official data (see *References section*).



#ENGAGEMENT | Vision, Priorities and Theory of Change



While the initial stakeholders' vision statement ("*Transforming urban and rural environments into sustainable models through eco-communities*") captures the spatial objective, it lacks explicit causal drivers, structural mechanisms, and metrics of success. We therefore refined it into "*Torres Vedras stands by 2030 as an European reference for territorial resilience, where human equity and eco-systemic health are co-produced through a decentralized network of social-ecological innovators.*"

To operationalize this vision, the six consulted areas of change were articulated with the current municipality - Unidos Por Torres Vedras (UTV) - program and with the baseline asset hubs identified in the PARI field studies.

Consulted Area of Change	UTV Program Alignment	Baseline Asset Hubs (PARI)	Shared Operational Catalyst
1. Less Urban-Rural Imbalances	Module 05: Mundo Rural Module 06: Mar	Smartfarm Colab HuMUS Pilot (Ventosa)	Decentralized agricultural analytics; extending local tech literacy to the interior parishes.
2. More Mobility	Module 10: Urbanismo & Mobilidade	PAMUS Choupal Corridor	Integrating soft mobility networks with transit links to rural margins .



Consulted Area of Change	UTV Program Alignment	Baseline Asset Hubs (PARI)	Shared Operational Catalyst
3. Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups	Module 02: Cidadania & Des. Social	Encosta Programme	Asset-backed public-civic partnerships providing psychosocial care and community channels.
	Module 03: Saúde & Qualidade de Vida	Somos Comunidade	
4. Better and More Housing	Module 10: Urbanismo & Mobilidade	PAICD / ARU Social Housing	supported self-building models; public rehabilitation of vacant properties.
		Rental Support Program	



Consulted Area of Change	UTV Program Alignment	Baseline Asset Hubs (PARI)	Shared Operational Catalyst
5. Environmental Sustainability	Module 07: Ambiente	Vala dos Amiais BioCanteen Networks	Localized organic composting loops; urban micro-gardens; eliminating harmful synthetic inputs.
6. Participatory Governance	Module 01: Governança	Local Council Structures HuMUS Dialogues	Multi-stakeholder platforms built on complete transparency and data access.



1. Inputs & Foundations (*what we leverage*)

- Digital Data Infrastructures: Establishing the CITE (Centro de Informação e Tratamento Estatístico) to map real-time socioeconomic indicators , alongside open-access portals tracking standard metrics (ISO 37120 / 37122 / 37123) .
- Institutional Support Systems: Dedicated support offices, including the Gabinete de Apoio ao Mundo Rural and the Unidade de Boas Práticas to systematically document and share successful community actions.
- Active Scientific Networks: Direct partnerships with regional agrotech labs (INIAV's Dois Portos Innovation Hub) , creative artist residencies (RAMA) , and universities.





2. Activities & Structural Interventions (*what we must do*)

- Decentralized Neighborhood Hubs: Launching temporary, rotating "Freguesias Sede de Concelho" spaces to co-design customized, neighborhood-specific sustainable development strategies.
- Circular Procurement Loops: Expanding the School Food Sustainability Programme (PSAE) into a primary economic driver that connects local smallholder farms directly with institutional buyers.
- Repurposing Empty Urban Assets: Converting vacant municipal or commercial facilities into inclusive neighborhood sites, such as Porta do Bairro community centers and dedicated youth workspaces.



3. Immediate Outputs (*direct results of actions*)

- Formally recognized multi-stakeholder governance models implemented across urban and rural parishes.
- Community-led monitoring tools launched, providing open-source data on local climate and resource metrics.
- New pedestrian tracks, school micro-gardens, and waste-separation stations up and running at local neighborhood sites.



4. Intermediate Outcomes (*expected material outcomes*)

- The Value Flow Shift: Grassroots social and cultural initiatives move beyond a pure reliance on public subsidies. By integrating with circular local networks (e.g., selling compost, organic produce, or creative services), they establish self-sustaining funding models.
- The Network Brokerage Shift: The municipality effectively serves as an ecosystem catalyst. It translates top-down funding into non-monetized support structures (reputation capital, shared knowledge, space access) that empower local civic groups.
- The Agri-Tech Access Pipeline: Technical agricultural research safely bypasses standard corporate barriers. Smallholder farms directly access specialized agrotech tools and training developed by laboratories like the Smartfarm Colab.



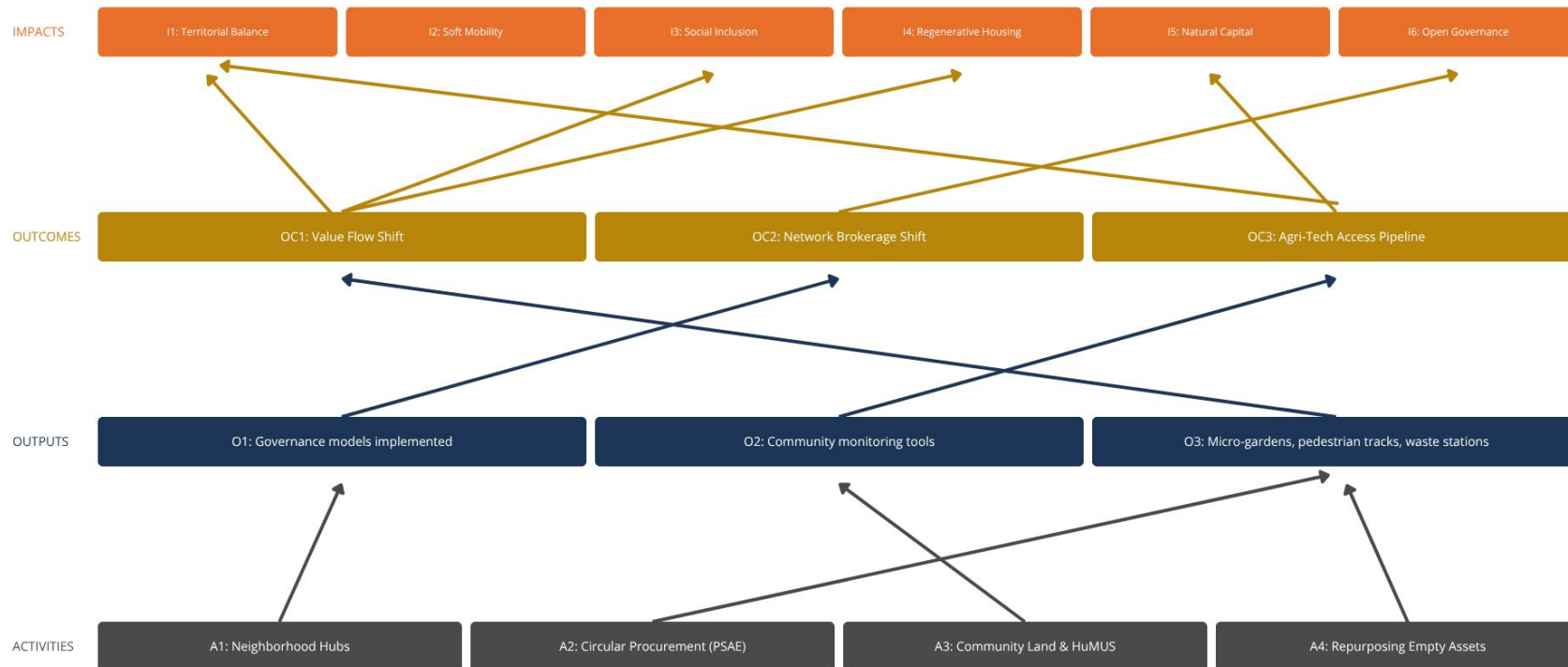


5. Long-Term Impact Pillars (*the systemic changes*)

- *Decentralized Territorial Balance*: The economic gap between the coast and the interior is minimized. Smallholder agriculture and rural professions are valued as essential, highly technical contributors to regional development.
- *Connected Soft Mobility*: Traffic congestion and emission levels drop across neighborhoods through accessible public transport connections and continuous pedestrian pathways.
- *Empowered Social Inclusion*: Systemic isolation among vulnerable populations is directly reduced through civic media networks, neighborhood care services, and community centers.
- *Regenerative Housing Models*: The availability of high-quality, eco-friendly housing expands through collaborative building networks and the systematic rehabilitation of older property assets.
- *Thriving Natural Capital*: Soil systems are protected, local waterways are restored to the urban fabric, and synthetic agricultural chemicals are phased out in favor of robust biodiversity.
- *Open, Collaborative Governance*: Public accountability increases by making data pipelines accessible, removing bureaucratic friction, and involving citizens in decision-making.



#ENGAGEMENT | Vision, Priorities and Theory of Change





Institutional & Governance Assumptions

- *Decentralization Viability*: It is assumed that the municipality (Urban Authority) can transition from centralized management to a flexible, decentralized governance model capable of delegating real decision-making power to parish levels without encountering paralyzing bureaucratic or legislative friction.
- *Cross-Sector Collaboration*: It is assumed that public entities, academic bodies (such as INIAV and Smartfarm Colab partners), private companies, and civil society organizations are willing to share information openly and maintain active, long-term dialogue through platforms like the Local Council for Urban Development (CLDU).
- *Data Integrity and Technical Adoption*: It is assumed that municipal departments can effectively launch and maintain the CITE data architecture, and that both citizens and corporate entities will trust and actively use open-access data portals configured under international standards (ISO 37120/37122/37123).





Financial & Resource Assumptions

- *Catalytic Power of Public Funds*: It is assumed that front-loaded public capital and EU structural funding (such as FEDER allocations or municipal funding) will successfully incentivize and de-risk co-investments from private property owners, businesses, and alternative social finance instruments.
- *Operational Re-investment Loops*: It is assumed that the efficiency gains or structural savings generated by centralized systems can be legally and practically diverted to reduce direct water and sanitation costs for end consumers.
- *Asset Availability*: It is assumed that the municipality can successfully catalog, acquire, or negotiate the temporary public use of degraded and vacant properties under the Carta do Património Municipal to serve as physical incubators for social and ecological projects .



Socio-Economic & Supply Chain Assumptions

- *Smallholder Capacity*: It is assumed that regional organic smallholders possess — or can develop through technology transfers from laboratories like Smartfarm Colab — the logistical capacity, consistency, and volume required to satisfy institutional procurement needs like the School Food Sustainability Programme (PSAE).
- *Hybrid Model Transition*: It is assumed that local grassroots associations (such as cultural, puppetry, or artistic collectives) possess the foundational organizational skills to transition their models into self-sustaining civic market entities without losing their baseline focus on social equity.
- *Local Enterprise Engagement*: It is assumed that local industries (including the agri-food, metallurgical, and retail sectors) will recognize the long-term commercial value of an Eco-Industrial Park and adopt sustainable bio-construction or circular economic practices.





Civic Trust & Behavioral Assumptions

- *Receptivity to Environmental Literacy*: It is assumed that the local population will actively change historical habits regarding energy, sorting waste, and water usage if provided with non-monetized social rewards, community composting networks, and transparent ecological reporting.
- *Active Civic Volunteering*: It is assumed that senior citizens and youth groups will actively participate in targeted community media initiatives (like Somos Comunidade) and local voluntary protection or solidarity programs if structural access boundaries are removed.
- *Overcoming Resistance to Change*: It is assumed that explicit public awareness campaigns highlighting the co-dependent links between human inclusion and ecological health can effectively dismantle traditional, single-sector mentalities and build widespread alignment around a shared regional vision.



SWOT Analysis



STRENGTHS

- Dense collaboration network: 79 collaborative relationships documented among 9 organisations, with an average of 8.8 partners per organisation
- Presence of high-centrality hub actors (CAC, Live With Earth, AREPO, Smart Farm Colab) anchoring the ecosystem
- Diversity of resource-exchange modalities — transactional, non-remunerated and knowledge-based — with non-remunerated and knowledge exchange playing a central role
- Three identifiable sub-ecosystems (cultural, rural innovation and social innovation) with overlapping nodes around knowledge and systemic approaches
- Strong convergence around shared priorities: reducing urban-rural territorial imbalances, promoting social inclusion, and adopting ecosystem and systemic thinking as a common reference framework

WEAKNESSES

- Over-reliance on the Municipality of Torres Vedras as the central pillar of the ecosystem, creating structural fragility
- Significant disparities in organisational capacity among actors, limiting the depth of meaningful participation
- Highly heterogeneous impact-measurement practices, ranging from theory-of-change frameworks to basic activity counts
- Gaps in representation: direct community voice, migrants, private sector, farmers, and gender-disaggregated data are largely absent from the mapped network
- Environmental sustainability remains peripheral in a significant share of cultural programming, creating a gap vis-à-vis PARI's ecological objectives
- Public procurement rules and legal constraints create structural barriers for small producers and emergent governance forms





OPPORTUNITIES

- Knowledge is increasingly recognised as a strategic asset by multiple actors, providing a foundation for deepening inter-organisational collaboration
- Ecosystem and systemic thinking is emerging as a shared reference framework, opening space for structured territorial coordination beyond individual programmes
- Complementarity between the three sub-ecosystems (cultural, rural innovation, social innovation) remains largely untapped and represents a significant potential for integration
- Alignment between stakeholder priorities and PARI focus areas creates favourable conditions for co-designed territorial action
- Existing network density and hub actors provide a ready infrastructure for scaling collaborative initiatives

THREATS

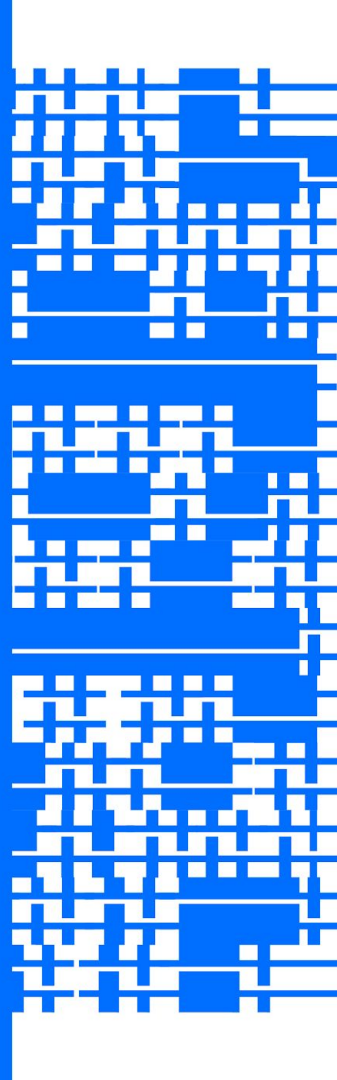
- Funding discontinuity risks undermining the long-term relational commitments that underpin the ecosystem
- Weak private-sector and farmer engagement leaves key territorial actors outside the collaboration network
- Risk of mismatch between PARI's monitoring and evaluation framework and the diverse organisational realities of network members
- Bureaucratic burden associated with EU and national co-financed programmes may discourage smaller or less resourced organisations
- Marginalisation of environmental objectives within parts of the network may compromise the ecological dimension of the CSEI



The stakeholder engagement process confirmed that the Torres Vedras CSEI ecosystem is already characterised by a dense and diverse network of collaborative relationships. The SWOT analysis derived from the mapping work reveals a territory with genuine relational assets — hub actors, multi-modality resource exchange, and convergent priorities — alongside structural gaps in representation, uneven organisational capacity, and an over-reliance on the Municipality as the central node. The following section maps the actors and relations that underpin this ecosystem, identifying the clusters, brokerage roles, and connectivity patterns that will shape the CSEI's implementation architecture.



Actors and Relations





Essential to the CSEI concept is the notion of collaborative synergies. Thus the process of mapping actors in the region with potential to establish dynamic networks of purposeful actions - namely an CSEI Action Plan - was broadened at this stage.

New actors were added to the cluster mapping - using the Miro platform -, but the result remains quite incipient due to the aforementioned timid stakeholder engagement. Nonetheless, a network analysis is useful insofar as it provides clues into the future implementation of the plan.



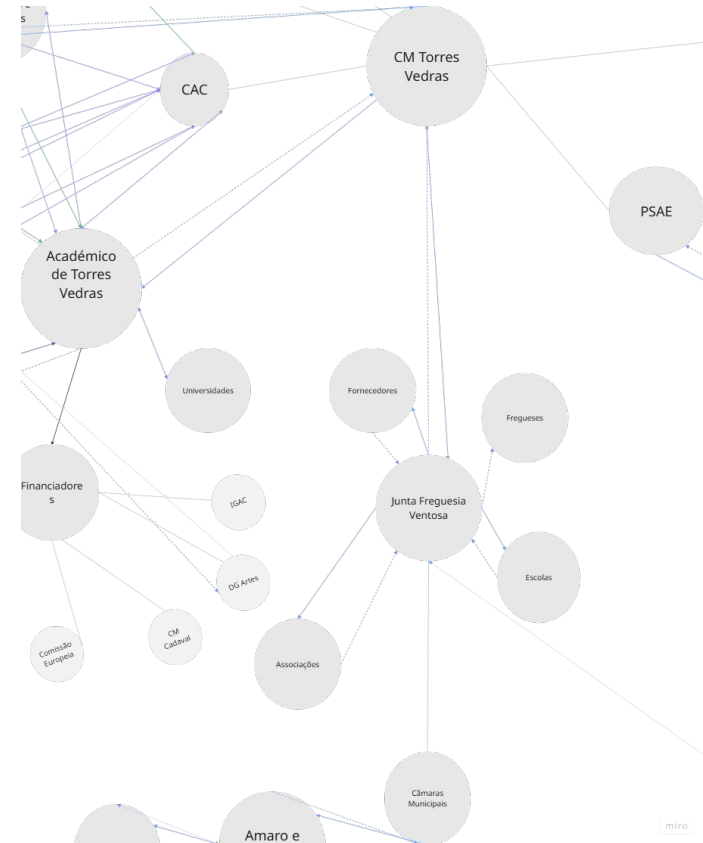
Firstly, one must note that three categories of relations were depicted: monetised transactions of goods and services (**blue lines**); non monetised transactions of goods and services (**green lines**) and non monetised transactions of intangibles, such as knowledge or reputation (**violet lines**). Representing these different kinds of relations taking place provides a rich map of value flows/edges through the territory, providing additional insight into which actors/nodes are critical.

And thus, secondly, one must ask who are the key nodes in the network. To answer this question, 3 sets of lens will be deployed: (1) *degree* centrality - how many direct connections (edges) a node has. A node with high degree centrality (e.g., an influencer) is highly connected; (2) *betweenness* centrality - a measure of how often a node falls on the shortest path between other nodes. Nodes with high betweenness act as "gatekeepers" or bridges for information and (3) *closeness* centrality: How quickly a node can access all other nodes in the network - this kind of node acts as a network lubricant.



Institutional & Governance Anchor

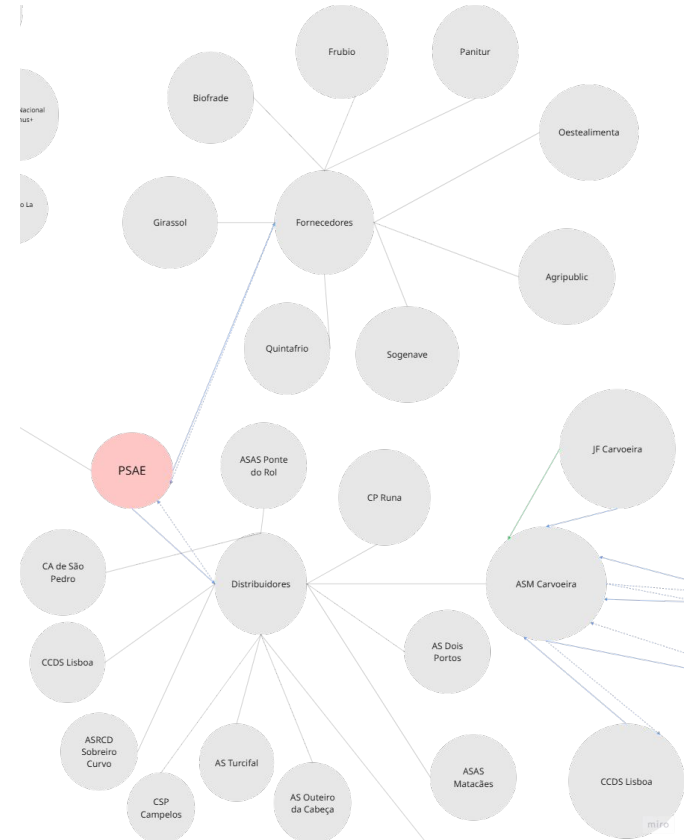
- **Core Nodes:** *Torres Vedras Municipality* and *Junta Freguesia Ventosa*.
- **Edge Dynamics:** The local government acts as a bridge, utilizing **blue lines** for formal, monetized public services or procurement, but heavily leveraging **green lines** to support local initiatives without direct monetization.
- **Insight:** The municipality acts as an ecosystem enabler. It provides non-monetized structural support (green) to civic and environmental hubs, while maintaining formal transactional relationships (blue) where statutory services require it.





Commercial & Economic Cluster

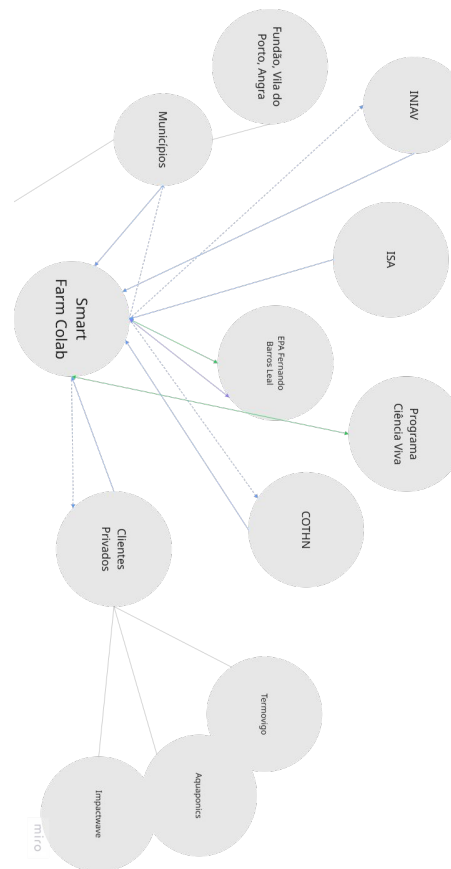
- **Core Nodes:** PSAE
- **Edge Dynamics:** This cluster is heavily dominated by **blue lines**, indicating that it operates almost exclusively on monetized transactions of goods and services.
- **Insight:** It behaves like a traditional market supply chain. Private companies (e.g., Biofrade, Sogrape, Quimioeste) feed into distributors, which then interface with regulatory or systemic entities like ASAE. There is very little non-monetized or intangible exchange here, representing a highly transactional environment.





Knowledge & Agrotech Innovation Cluster

- **Core Nodes:** *Smart Farm Colab*
- **Edge Dynamics:** This area features a heavy concentration of **violet lines** (non-monetized intangibles like knowledge and reputation) linking to academic institutions (*ISA, INIAV, ISCTE, COTHN*). It also uses **green lines** (non-monetized goods/services) to connect with local municipalities.
- **Insight:** This is the "brain" of the network. Value is generated through R&D, intellectual property, and reputational capital. The green lines suggest a framework of institutional collaboration where resources and support are shared without direct financial exchange to foster regional innovation.





Associative Cluster

- **Core Nodes:** *Académico de Torres Vedras, CAC.*
- **Edge Dynamics:** This is the most complex cluster, displaying a dense, interwoven mesh of **violet lines** mixed with **blue lines**.
- **Insight:** The heavy presence of violet lines represents a massive reliance on intangible capital —such as volunteer networks, community trust, shared knowledge, and social reputation. However, the intersecting blue lines show that this social fabric is supported by monetized transactions, likely taking the form of club memberships, ticket sales, local sponsorships, or paid community services.







Lens A: Degree Centrality (the visual influencers)

Three distinct nodes/areas command an overwhelming share of direct connections, each dominating a different transactional type:

1. The Associative Core (Académico de Torres Vedras / CAC): this is visually one of the highest-degree clusters on the map. Its influence is defined by an intense mix of violet edges (intangibles like reputation, social trust, and shared knowledge) and blue edges (memberships, sponsorships, monetized services). They act as the civic heavyweights - have the ear of the community and hold massive local relational power.
2. The Commercial Core (PSAE): this node displays massive star-burst patterns of high degree centrality. However, its influence is strictly monochrome — blue edges only. PSAE's role in the ecosystem is one of an economic engine. PSAE doesn't generate community trust or public knowledge directly, but commands physical and financial flow of goods and services in the region.
3. The Knowledge Core (Smart Farm Colab): this node connects directly to a wide array of R&D and academic institutions, heavily leveraging violet edges.. Functions as the gatekeeper of intellectual capital and technical innovation for the region's agro-sector.



Lens B: Betweenness Centrality (the gatekeepers & bridges)

High betweenness nodes are incredibly powerful because they control the "border crossings" between different types of economies (e.g., translating social value into monetary value).

1. MTV (ultimate ecosystem bridge): Visually, Municipality sits squarely between the social-associative cluster on the left, the eco-sustainability cluster in the middle, and the public/parish systems below. It uses green edges (non-monetized services/support) to fuel grassroots networks, while maintaining blue edges for formal governance. It prevents the social sector from being entirely cut off from institutional backing.
2. PSAE (business-to-government gatekeeper): acts as a literal pipeline between the central governance hub (MTV) and the commercial (distribuidores) hub on the right. This node acts as a vital translator, bridging the public/municipal sector with the highly transactional, monetized private market via a blue edge, acting as the commercial conduit for public programs.
3. Live With Earth: this node bridges the formal municipality and eco-centric/local parish initiatives (such as Junta de Freguesia do Turcifal). Works as a structural buffer, turning top-down municipal intent into bottom-up, non-monetized ecological action (green and violet edges).





Lens C: Closeness Centrality (the network lubricants)

Nodes with high closeness centrality don't necessarily need hundreds of connections themselves; they just need to be strategically positioned so that nothing in the network is more than two or three steps away.

1. CM Torres Vedras: once again, topologically, the municipality scores highest here. If an innovation happens at Smart Farm Colab (top), or a market shift happens at Distribuidores (right), or a social need arises at Académico de Torres Vedras (left), the municipality is positioned to feel the ripple effect almost instantly. It can "lubricate" cooperation by passing knowledge or resources across these boundaries faster than anyone else.
2. Local Charities and Junta Freguesia Ventosa: these nodes sit closely linked to both the central municipality and smaller, localized private actors (like Amaro & Reis Lda.). Act as micro-lubricants by ensuring that macro-policies from the central municipality are quickly distributed and operationalized at the ground level without getting stuck in -bureaucracy.

#ENGAGEMENT | Brokerage Analysis



To identify the ultimate brokers capable of translating value between the monetized market (blue lines) and the non-monetized community/knowledge sectors (green and violet lines), we deemed necessary to consolidate standard centrality analysis with specialized metrics designed for multi-layer and clustered networks. We requested Gemini Pro to apply the mathematical principles of Edge-Color Diversity, Burt's Structural Holes, and Gould-Fernandez Brokerage Typologies to the topology of our map.

Node	Brokerage Role	Metric Signature	Systemic Vulnerability / Power
CM Torres Vedras	The Universal Liaison	Min. Constraint Max. Betweenness	High Fragility Point: If overloaded or bureaucratic, it slows down the entire regional ecosystem. It is the only node preventing a total split between market and community.
Smart Farm Colab	The Innovation Synthesizer	Max. Edge Diversity	Value Multiplier: Uniquely capable of transforming raw academic capital (violet) into practical, structural regional outcomes (green/blue).



Node	Brokerage Role	Metric Signature	Systemic Vulnerability / Power
PSAE	The Market Gatekeeper	Directed Bridge Boundary	Economic Conduit: Controls the monetization interface. If this node fails, the commercial sector loses its structured alignment with public governance.
Académico de Torres Vedras	The Social Capital Anchor	High Degree High Diversity	Sustainability Model: Demonstrates how to leverage heavy non-monetized reputation (violet) to anchor a self-sustaining web of transactional support (blue).



1. Strategic Vulnerabilities (systemic risks)

- **The "Monetization Chasm" (financial sustainability risk):** nodes dominated by violet (knowledge/reputation) and green (non-monetized goods/services) edges—such as *Live With Earth* or grassroots academic partnerships—generate massive social and ecological value. However, because they lack sufficient blue edges (monetized transactions), they operate under constant financial precarity. Their social value does not automatically translate into operational liquidity.
- **The Single Point of Failure (CM Torres Vedras bottleneck):** as the ultimate liaison broker with the lowest network constraint, the *Câmara Municipal* carries the structural weight of the entire region. It is the primary bridge preventing the social fabric (left) and the commercial market (right) from completely decoupling. If municipal processes become bogged down in bureaucracy or face budget constraints, the entire ecosystem's cross-sector collaboration gridlocks.



- **Commercial Isolationism (the monochrome silo):** the *Fornecedores* (Suppliers) and *Distribuidores* (Distributors) within the PSAE cluster on the right operates exclusively on blue edges. While economically efficient, this cluster is culturally and operationally isolated from the region's rich intellectual capital (*Smart Farm Colab*) and civic trust (*Académico de Torres Vedras*). It extracts economic value from the territory without directly feeding into its social or knowledge reserves.
- **The PSAE Gatekeeper Chokepoint:** the PSAE node serves as a thin, highly specialized pipeline connecting the commercial market to public governance. Because it relies on a very narrow set of directed blue connections, any regulatory or operational failure at this node completely severs the commercial supply chain's alignment with municipal public programs.

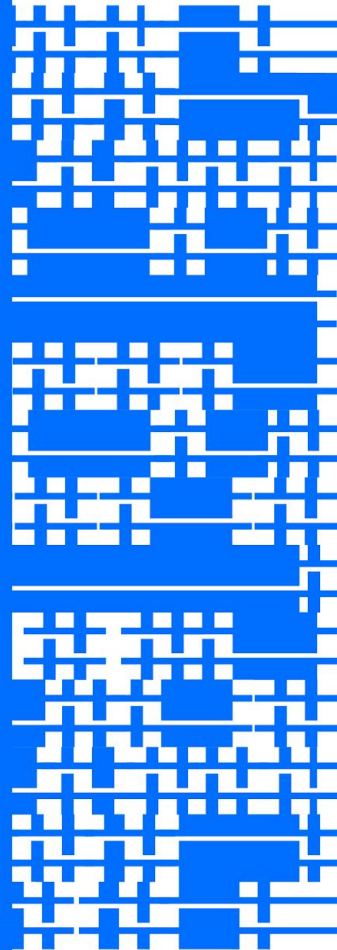


2. Strategic Opportunities (ecosystem strengths)

- **Ambidextrous Value Multipliers (the three-color mixers):** nodes like Smart Farm Colab and Académico de Torres Vedras possess maximum edge-color diversity. They are uniquely skilled at capturing intangible value (volunteer spirit, R&D data) and converting it into structured outcomes supported by transactional monetization. They represent the operational blueprint for a modern, resilient regional ecosystem.
- **Untapped CSR and ESG Cross-Pollination:** the proximity of a hyper-monetized commercial cluster (right) to an eco-sustainability and social cluster (left) creates an ideal environment for direct, corporate-funded regional development. Bypassing municipal mediation to link these clusters would relieve pressure on public funds.
- **Decentralized Micro-Lubrication via Local Parishes:** the *Juntas de Freguesia* (e.g., Ventosa, Turcifal) possess high closeness centrality at the micro-level. They can bypass macro-bureaucracy to rapidly scale non-monetized resource sharing (green lines) directly to smaller, localized private actors (like *Amaro & Reis Lda.*).



Action Plan



#Strategic Action Plan for CSEI Torres Vedras



This Strategic Action Plan translates the multi-layered social-ecological Theory of Change (ToC) into an operational framework targeted at 2030. Six Pillars anchor the consolidated vision into concrete, time-bound initiatives, organised across the six areas of systemic change identified through the participatory process — from stakeholder mapping and interviews to the two engagement sessions conducted in May and June 2026.

Each Pillar is structured around four components: objectives, strategic actions, key performance indicators (KPIs), and stakeholders. The 6 Pillars are sequenced to address governance and financial infrastructure first, then programmatic content, and finally evaluation and scaling.

The plan aligns with municipal policy priorities and the strategic instruments already in place — including PEDU, PAICD, PAMUS, and PAESC 2050 — ensuring coherence rather than duplication. Leadership across all 6 Pillars is grounded in the capacity and mandate of the Municipality of Torres Vedras and Valor Partilhado. Civil society organisations are positioned as active contributors and co-creators, consistent with their current capacity and the evidence from the participatory process.

1 Territorial Balance & Rural-Maritime Vitality



Strategic Objective: Rebalance structural socio-economic asymmetries between the coast and interior parishes by decentralizing agrotech innovations and anchoring localized value chains.

2030 Strategic Actions

- Establish a physical and digital “Gabinete de Apoio ao Mundo Rural” to serve as a streamlined administrative interface for regional farmers, offering integrated support for EU structural fund applications .
- Formally expand the operational network of the Smartfarm Colab to systematically co-develop precision agriculture tools, drone diagnostics, and circular economic systems tailored for small and medium-sized farming units.
- Scale up the participatory governance models verified during the Horizon Europe HuMUS pilot project (2023–2025) in Ventosa, creating localized living laboratories to manage and monitor long-term soil health across all 15 agricultural parishes .
- Launch structural modernizations across regional maritime anchor nodes, focusing on maintaining traditional, decarbonized fishing activities at the Assenta and Porto Novo ports .

1 Territorial Balance & Rural-Maritime Vitality



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes:
 - Tech literacy pipelines securely link scientific hubs to interior farmers
 - Smallholders operate within stable, high-value regional supply chains.
- Suggested KPIs:
 - Percentage increase in smallholder farm holdings adopting precision agriculture technologies
 - Metric tons of organic, locally processed agricultural products distributed through regional market paths.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders:
 - Municipality of Torres Vedras (MTV),
 - Smartfarm Colab steering committee, .
 - INIAV's Dois Portos Innovation Hub,
 - Parishes (such as Ventosa)
 - Local agricultural cooperatives (such as Adega Cooperativa da Carvoeira)

2 # Decarbonized Soft Mobility & Connected Infrastructure



Strategic Objective: Build a continuous, energy-efficient transport network that provides low-emission transit links to peripheral, marginalized, and rural communities .

2030 Strategic Actions

- Build and connect a continuous Urban Network of Pedestrian and Cycle Paths, expanding soft mobility corridors to form a green network running directly from the urban center to rural perimeters.
- Upgrade existing public transport infrastructure by building permanent intermodal interfaces and deploying intelligent road traffic management systems, including real-time waiting panel updates.
- Introduce dedicated public transport lines - such as a specialized vehicle transport fleet - specifically to support rural parishes and low-income residential zones currently cut off from transit .
- Implement a shared mobile software application to provide open-access tracking of regional scheduling, micro-mobility rentals, and local ride-sharing options.

2 Decarbonized Soft Mobility & Connected Infrastructure



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes:
 - Total reliance on individual fossil-fuel motor vehicles is reduced through connected multi-modal alternatives;
 - Carbon footprints from daily urban-rural commuting drop significantly.
- Suggested KPIs:
 - Total linear kilometers of newly constructed, continuous pedestrian and cycle tracks.
 - Metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions avoided per year across the transport sector.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders:
 - MTV (acting as the localized Urban Authority)
 - OesteCIM
 - Regional road transit companies (Barraqueiro),
 - Commuter networks.

3 #Active Human Equity & Psychosocial Inclusion



Strategic Objective: Revitalising the social fabric of vulnerable urban neighbourhoods and isolated rural villages through community care infrastructure and public-civic solidarity networks is identified as a priority area for intervention.

2030 Strategic Actions

- Priority should be given to the development of the Porta do Bairro multi-purpose community house model, establishing physical centres capable of providing psychosocial care, vocational training, and social innovation programming at neighbourhood level.
- It is recommended that the Somos Comunidade network be expanded, leveraging community-led media platforms (print and digital television) and arts participation to systematically reduce isolation among senior citizens.
- Consideration should be given to launching a decentralised Loja Social (Social Store) network combined with a localised Banco do Tempo (Time Bank) framework, enabling non-monetised exchanges of goods and services across generations.
- It is further recommended that investment be directed towards inclusive public parks and multi-generational spaces equipped with universally accessible exercise facilities, with coverage extended progressively across all parishes.

3 #Active Human Equity & Psychosocial Inclusion



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes:
 - Isolated senior citizens are actively connected with local neighborhood support groups ;
 - vulnerable families gain access to structured care pathways.
- Suggested KPIs:
 - Number of vulnerable or senior citizens regularly participating in weekly community center activities.
 - Total annual hours recorded and exchanged through the localized Time Bank framework.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders:
 - MTV Division of Information, Innovation & Development and the Division of Social Cohesion and Longevity,
 - Académico de Torres Vedras (ATV)
 - Centro Social e Paroquial de Torres Vedras
 - Social and Solidarity Private Institutions located in several parishes

4 Affordable, Regenerative, & Sustainable Housing



Strategic Objective: Address spatial segregation and substandard housing through sustainable public property rehabilitation and cooperative, self-build construction models.

2030 Strategic Actions

- Scale the Programa Municipal de Habitação Social by acquiring and restoring degraded properties to provide dispersed, energy-efficient social housing within historical centers .
- Set up a Cooperative Self-Build Housing pilot model (inspired by successful European examples like *Egnahemsfabriken*), where the municipality grants land access and technical building guidance to help families construct their own homes .
- Create a localized Rede de Arrendamento Jovem Municipal linked directly to property tax exemptions to expand access to affordable rentals for younger demographics .
- Establish a mandatory Program to Support Energy Retrofits in low-income neighborhoods, funding updates to interior insulation, lighting, and consumption monitoring systems.

4 Affordable, Regenerative, & Sustainable Housing



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes: Vulnerable families transition out of degraded properties into secure, long-term housing ; vacant historical assets are systematically returned to the public housing stock.
- Suggested KPIs: Total number of residential property units re-engineered and certified as affordable or social housing. Percentage reduction in the municipal waiting registry for affordable housing assets.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders: CMTV Urban Regeneration and Housing divisions , private property owners , non-profit housing cooperatives, and green building networks.

5 #Circular Economy & Environmental Sustainability



Strategic Objective: Eliminate systemic resource waste by transforming municipal procurement, scaling up community composting loops, and restoring natural water networks.

2030 Strategic Actions

- Embed strict circular economic mandates within the School Food Sustainability Programme (PSAE), requiring municipal kitchens to sort and weigh leftovers daily to adjust school menus and lower food waste .
- Set up a Centro Municipal de Compostagem supported by neighborhood composting stations in every village, converting organic garden and farm residues into high-grade organic fertilizer .
- Implement a mandatory Zero-Glyphosate and Chemical-Free Policy for public spaces, replacing synthetic treatments with native plantings and natural river corridor vegetation.
- Execute complete environmental naturalizations across regional waterways, focusing on riverbanks like the Vala dos Amiais to create public spaces that manage storm drainage while protecting local biodiversity .

5 #Circular Economy & Environmental Sustainability



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes: Institutional public food loops are firmly grounded in short, organic smallholder networks ; organic consumer materials are diverted away from central landfills into agricultural fertilizer loops.
- Suggested KPIs: Total annual metric tons of organic food scraps collected and processed via community composting hubs. Percentage of total school kitchen procurement sourced entirely from certified organic regional growers.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders: CMTV Environmental and Educational divisions , regional school clusters , local organic growers (cooperative distribution networks), and conservation organizations.

6 #Decentralized Governance & Data Transparency



Strategic Objective: Modernize administrative systems to support transparent, evidence-based policy co-creation by launching open-data portals and decentralized local assemblies .

2030 Strategic Actions

- Launch the CITE - Centro de Informação e Tratamento Estatístico as an open-access digital portal that updates local sustainability, financial, and climate indicators under international standards (ISO 37120 / 37122 / 37123) .
- Fully integrate the 'Good Practices' Research within the municipal quality auditing department to systematically document, evaluate, and scale up successful grassroots eco-social innovations.
- Embed the "Freguesias Sede de Concelho" decentralization model into official workflows, requiring executive council members to spend an operational month in each parish twice per mandate to co-create localized budgets.
- Formally include grassroots representatives, cultural collectives, and social enterprise anchors with binding voting rights inside the Local Council for Urban Development (CLDU) framework.

6 #Decentralized Governance & Data Transparency



Verifiable Outcomes, KPIs, and Stakeholders

- Verifiable Outcomes: Public data sets are accessible to citizens and local businesses, removing administrative blockages ; policy decisions are co-created directly with local community groups.
- Suggested KPIs: Real-time accessibility rating of local environmental and socioeconomic performance indicators on the CITE data network. Citizen satisfaction tracking metrics measuring public trust in local governance platforms.
- Key Actors & Stakeholders: MTV (acting as the coordinating Urban Authority), 15 baseline Parish Councils (*Juntas de Freguesia*), and local civic associations.

#Framework of Monitoring and Evaluation



The monitoring and evaluation framework for the CSEI will be developed in a subsequent phase, in formal articulation with the Municipal Executive and key stakeholder representatives. It will build upon the key performance indicators already embedded within each of the six Pillars, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication across reporting instruments.

Social Inclusion - Number of individuals from marginalised groups benefiting from CSEI initiatives, disaggregated by age, gender, and parish · Access to social canteen network across all parishes · Youth employment and entrepreneurship in agricultural and creative sectors · Volunteering linked to skills acquisition and employability.

Ecological Sustainability - Hectares under agroecological management · Soil health index (Smart Farm Colab) · Percentage of local produce in institutional procurement · Carbon footprint reduction of municipal operations and cultural events · Biodiversity indicators in Geopark partner territories · Circular economy adoption rate among CSEI member organisations.

Governance Quality - Stakeholder satisfaction with co-governance processes (annual survey) · Representativeness of CSEI governance body across sectors, geographies, gender, and age · Number of decisions taken through co-deliberation · Citizens' Observatory independence assessment.

Financial Resilience - Ratio of diversified (non-EU, non-municipal) funding in the CSEI portfolio · Number of organisations with multi-year financial security · Leverage ratio of public investment to private and cooperative co-financing · GVA growth in the local agri-food sector.

#Framework of Monitoring and Evaluation

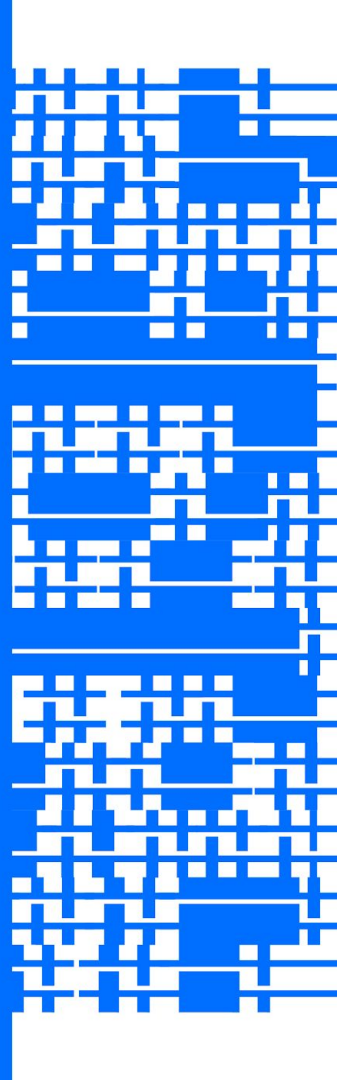


The plan follows a structured revision cycle aligned with the implementation timeline and the three-layer M&E framework

Annual light-touch reviews are conducted by the CSEI governance body to assess progress against agreed indicators, flag emerging risks, and adjust activities where needed. A comprehensive mid-term review takes place in 2029, incorporating all three M&E layers — output tracking, outcome assessment, and systemic change indicators — and drawing on data from the Terra.MIND / CITE open data platform. A full ex-post evaluation is carried out in 2032 to assess overall impact and inform the next municipal planning cycle.

The Citizens' Observatory has a formal role in all three revision moments, ensuring independent assessment and community accountability throughout the plan's lifecycle. Revision findings are made publicly available and feed directly into the CSEI's annual governance agenda.

4. Conclusions and Pathways





Proposed Strategic Actions (March 2025)	Action Plan Pillar	Key Activities (2026-2030)	Expected Systemic Outcomes
Action 1: Enhance and systematize inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms for CSEI co-creation.	Pillar 6: Decentralized Governance & Data Transparency	* Formally include grassroots representatives, cultural collectives, and social enterprise anchors with binding voting rights inside the Local Council for Urban Development (CLDU) framework . * Embed the "Freguesias Sede de Concelho" decentralization model into official workflows, requiring executive council members to spend an operational month in each parish twice per mandate to co-create localized budgets.	Open, Collaborative Governance: Public accountability increases by making data pipelines accessible, removing bureaucratic friction, and involving citizens in decision-making.
Action 2: Develop and implement targeted financial mechanisms for socially-inclusive ecological innovation.	Pillar 4: Affordable, Regenerative, & Sustainable Housing	* Scale the Programa Municipal de Habitação Social by acquiring and restoring degraded properties to provide dispersed, energy-efficient social housing within historical centers . * Establish a mandatory Program to Support Energy Retrofits in low-income neighborhoods, funding updates to interior insulation, lighting, and consumption monitoring systems.	Regenerative Housing Models: The availability of high-quality, eco-friendly housing expands through collaborative building networks and the systematic rehabilitation of older property assets.

#Conclusions | Strategic Overview



Proposed Strategic Actions (March 2025)	Action Plan Pillar	Key Activities (2026-2030)	Expected Systemic Outcomes
Action 3: Invest in continuous capacity building and knowledge exchange for CSEI Actors.	Pillar 1: Territorial Balance & Rural-Maritime Vitality	* Establish a physical and digital “Gabinete de Apoio ao Mundo Rural” to serve as a streamlined administrative interface for regional farmers, offering integrated support for EU structural fund applications . * Formally expand the operational network of the Smartfarm Colab to systematically co-develop precision agriculture tools, drone diagnostics, and circular economic systems tailored for small and medium-sized farming units.	Decentralized Territorial Balance: The economic gap between the coast and the interior is minimized. Smallholder agriculture and rural professions are valued as essential, highly technical contributors to regional development.
Action 4: Strengthen data-driven, participatory monitoring and evaluation for CSEI Impact.	Pillar 6: Decentralized Governance & Data Transparency	* Launch the CITE - Centro de Informação e Tratamento Estatístico as an open-access digital portal that updates local sustainability, financial, and climate indicators under international standards (ISO 37120 / 37122 / 37123) . * Fully integrate the ‘Good Practices’ Research within the municipal quality auditing department to systematically document, evaluate, and scale up successful grassroots eco-social innovations.	Open, Collaborative Governance: Public accountability increases by making data pipelines accessible, removing bureaucratic friction, and involving citizens in decision-making.



#Conclusions | Strategic Overview



Proposed Strategic Actions (March 2025)	Action Plan Pillar	Key Activities (2026-2030)	Expected Systemic Outcomes
Action 5: Integrate and scale successful pilot initiatives into mainstream policies and programs.	Pillar 5: Circular Economy & Environmental Sustainability	* Embed strict circular economic mandates within the School Food Sustainability Programme (PSAE), requiring municipal kitchens to sort and weigh leftovers daily to adjust school menus and lower food waste . * Set up a Cooperative Self-Build Housing pilot model (inspired by successful European examples like Egnahemsfabriken), where the municipality grants land access and technical building guidance to help families construct their own homes . * Create a localized Rede de Arrendamento Jovem Municipal linked directly to property tax exemptions to expand access to affordable rentals for younger demographics.	Thriving Natural Capital: Soil systems are protected, local waterways are restored to the urban fabric, and synthetic agricultural chemicals are phased out in favor of robust biodiversity. Regenerative Housing Models: The availability of high-quality, eco-friendly housing expands through collaborative building networks and the systematic rehabilitation of older property assets.

#Conclusions | Strategic Overview



Proposed Strategic Actions (March 2025)	Action Plan Pillar	Key Activities (2026-2030)	Expected Systemic Outcomes
Action 6: Amplify public awareness and education on the interlinkages between social equity and ecological sustainability.	Pillar 3: Active Human Equity & Psychosocial Inclusion	* Fully execute the Porta do Bairro multi-purpose community house model, establishing physical centers to provide direct psychosocial care, continuous vocational training, and social innovation programming . * Expand the Somos Comunidade network, using community-led media platforms (print and digital television) and weekly arts participation to reduce isolation among senior citizens . * Launch a decentralized Loja Social (Social Store) network combined with a localized Banco do Tempo (Time Bank) framework to organize non-monetized exchanges of goods and services across generations . * Build inclusive public parks and multi-generational spaces equipped with universally accessible exercise facilities across all parishes.	Empowered Social Inclusion: Systemic isolation among vulnerable populations is directly reduced through civic media networks, neighborhood care services, and community centers.

#Conclusions | Risks, Mitigation and Resilience



Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Funding discontinuity — short-term or project-tied funding dissolves fragile collaborative relationships and undermines the CSEI's long-term sustainability.	High	High	Negotiate multi-year agreements with core partners; diversify the funding portfolio across EU, national, and cooperative sources; establish a CSEI stabilisation fund drawing on municipal budget commitments.
Over-reliance on the Municipality — the Municipality's role as universal liaison and primary funder creates a single point of failure for the entire ecosystem.	High	High	Progressively transfer governance functions to the CSEI body; formalise co-leadership roles for civil society and private-sector actors; develop an autonomous CSEI secretariat with dedicated operational budget.
Weak private-sector and farmer engagement — producers and businesses remain peripheral to CSEI governance, limiting economic sustainability and circular value chains.	Medium	High	Deploy targeted outreach through Smart Farm Colab and PSAE networks; create concrete financial incentives (procurement contracts, Selo Verde label, fiscal benefits) that demonstrate tangible value for private actors.
Unequal organisational capacities — significant differences in technical, financial, and governance capacity across CSEI members risk marginalising smaller or less resourced organisations.	Medium	Medium	Implement a differentiated capacity-building programme; pair stronger organisations with emerging ones through mentoring arrangements; design participation mechanisms that do not require high technical capacity to engage meaningfully.

#Conclusions | Risks, Mitigation and Resilience



Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Scope creep — the CSEI attempts to address too many priorities simultaneously, dispersing resources and diluting impact.	Medium	High	Maintain a focused portfolio of six strategic actions; apply a formal prioritisation protocol at each annual review; use the Theory of Change to test whether proposed additions are causally connected to the agreed vision.
Political short-termism — changes in municipal leadership or funding priorities undermine long-term ecosystem investment and institutional memory.	Medium	High	Embed CSEI commitments in formal municipal planning instruments (PEDU, PAICD, PAESC 2050); ensure the Citizens' Observatory provides independent monitoring continuity across political cycles.
Rural depopulation and ageing — continued demographic decline in interior parishes reduces the pool of active local participants and weakens the territorial balance objective.	High	Medium	Anchor rural actions in existing parish structures (Juntas de Freguesia); design programmes with low participation barriers for older residents; prioritise youth employment and entrepreneurship incentives in agricultural and creative sectors.
CSEI captured as a policy badge — the CSEI risks becoming a formal label without genuine co-governance substance, losing community trust and participatory legitimacy.	Medium	High	Establish binding governance rules that require multi-stakeholder deliberation for all strategic decisions; ensure the Citizens' Observatory has formal standing and independent assessment rights; conduct annual community satisfaction surveys.

#Conclusions | Remarks and Pathways for Implementation



Torres Vedras enters this next phase with a rare combination of assets: a comprehensive municipal programme committed to rural innovation, ecological transition, social inclusion, and participatory governance; an increasingly coherent social and ecological innovation ecosystem, mapped and validated through the PARI process; and transnational learning — including the peer exchange with Charleroi's Ceinture Alimentaire and the hosting of the PARI study visit — that both connects local actors to established European CSEIs and demonstrates that Torres Vedras is itself a source of replicable good practice.

The critical added value that the CSEI brings to the municipal policy agenda is the participatory dimension. The governance body, the Citizens' Observatory, and the community-owned communication ecosystem ensure that the Municipality's ambitions are co-created with communities, not merely delivered to them. The transnational learning from Charleroi, Navarra, and Östergötland consistently demonstrates that CSEIs without genuine community ownership do not sustain their social and ecological objectives over time.

The values expressed by community members and local stakeholders in the participatory sessions — equity, harmony, dignity, community, adaptability, ecological balance — are the normative core of the CSEI. If all six action lines serve those values, Torres Vedras will have built something worth learning from and replicating across the PARI network and beyond.

#Conclusions | Remarks and Pathways for Implementation



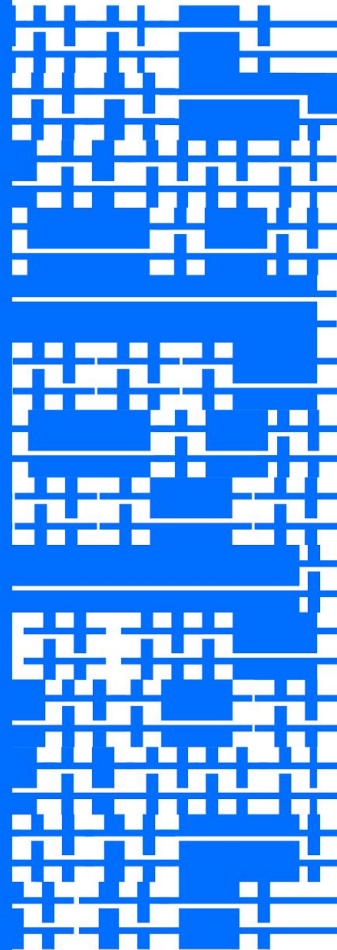
The six actions are deliberately sequenced: governance first (Action 1), financial resilience (Action 5), and community ownership (Action 6) as structural foundations, alongside the thematic clusters that give this CSEI its distinctive identity — the food systems cluster (Action 2), knowledge and capacity (Action 3), and the culture–ecology integration unique to Torres Vedras (Action 4).

The task ahead requires patience, sustained commitment, and the willingness of all involved to share power and adapt. The PARI process has demonstrated that these qualities are present in Torres Vedras. The foundations are solid. The vision is shared. The work can begin.

Document information

This draft Action Plan was produced within the framework of the PARI — Paths for Rural Innovation project, co-funded by the European Union through the URBACT IV programme. It draws on fieldwork, stakeholder consultation, network mapping, and transnational learning conducted between November 2024 and June 2026, as well as the municipal strategic programme of Torres Vedras. The plan is a living document subject to revision through the participatory governance cycle previously described.

5. References



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[Programa Unidos Por Torres Vedras](#)

[Economia Social, Redes e Parcerias para a Coesão e Desenvolvimento Local](#)

[Torres Vedras e os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável](#)



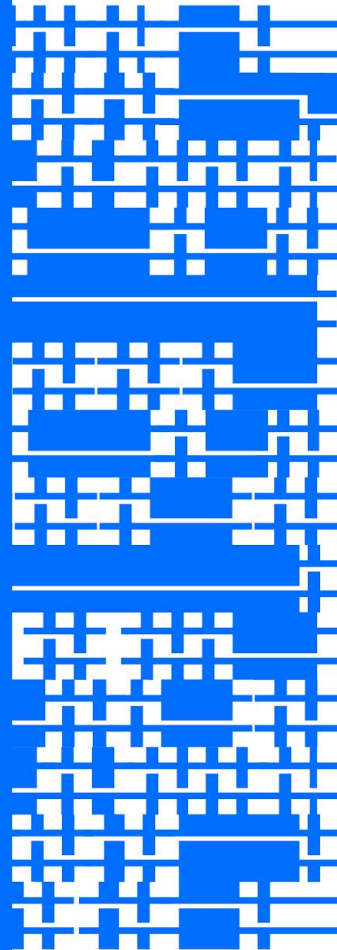
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5. Annexes

- I. workshop session plan
- II. ecosystem map





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Action Plan

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