

PAths for Rural Innovation - PARI

Implementing Clusters for Social and Ecological innovation to improve quality of life in rural areas

Evidence from Spain · Portugal · Sweden

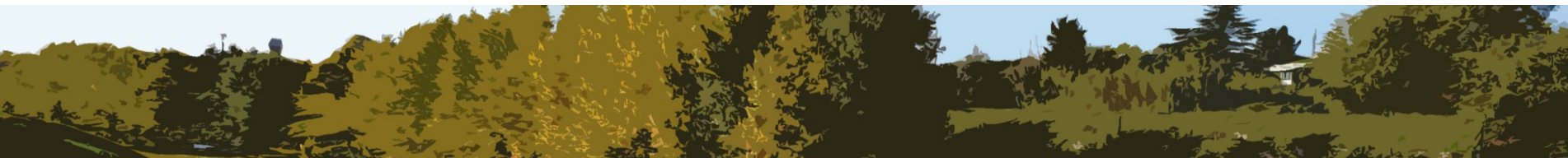
REVES



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The project team

- **Countries:** Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Sweden
- **Partners**
 - REVES Aisbl (EU - Coordinator)
 - DIESIS Network (EU)
 - Câmara Municipal de Torres Vedras (PT)
 - Comunidad Foral de Navarra – Gobierno de Navarra (ES)
 - ANEL (ES)
 - Region Östergötland (SE)
 - Coompanion Östergötland Ekonomisk (SE)



Project factsheet

- **Duration**

- 24 months (01/09/2024 – 31/08/2026)

- **Project objective**

- **Accelerate the creation of CSEIs** (clusters of social and ecological innovation) in rural areas by improving capacities and operational frameworks for **social economy actors**, in partnership with **local public authorities, businesses, academia, and other stakeholders**

- **Key words**

- Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs)
- Rural innovation
- Mutual learning
- Co-design
- Local development



Understanding *Clusters*

- **Groups of interconnected actors**
- Collaboration by **pooling resources** and **expertise**
- **Collective effort** to achieve goals they couldn't reach as effectively on their own
- Clusters foster:
 - **innovation**
 - **productivity**
 - **growth** and **competitiveness**

What is a Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation - CSEI?

Beyond Conventional Cluster Models



Multi-Actor Networks

Social economy entities, local governments, businesses, research institutions and citizens



Dual Integration

Social **AND** ecological dimensions built into both operations and strategy



Collective Agency

Governance platforms, trust-building, shared data, enabling legal frameworks >> **proximity, shared values and mutual accountability**

Different and place-based patterns across Spain, Portugal and Sweden

"Supporting CSEIs means investing in connective infrastructure, not just subsidising individual organisations"

Governance as a strategic asset

01



Participatory decision-making

Governance structures that are inclusive by design — not consultation, but genuine co-production of strategy and outcomes.

02



Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Quality partnerships with co-investment of resources, co-production of knowledge and co-responsibility for results.

03



Public authority as enabler

Local government provides legitimacy and funding access while multi-stakeholder deliberation shapes substance.

04



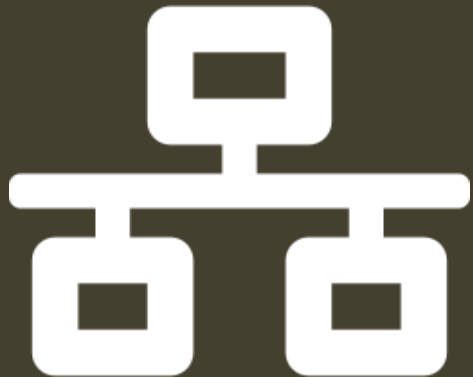
Trust-based network architecture

Informal or semi-formal governance grounded in shared values rather than rigid statutes — building social capital.

SPAIN

Governance through a Network of Networks

Navarra Region



RURALLINK

A Trust-Based Network of Networks

RURALLINK operates in Navarra as a **'network of networks'** organised around four thematic poles, each managed by a specialist social economy organisation.

Its governance architecture is deliberately informal, grounded in a shared **'white paper'** rather than a formal statute.

This trust-based approach prioritises collective objectives over institutional self-interest, demonstrating that strong governance does not require bureaucratic formalism.

Four Thematic Poles:

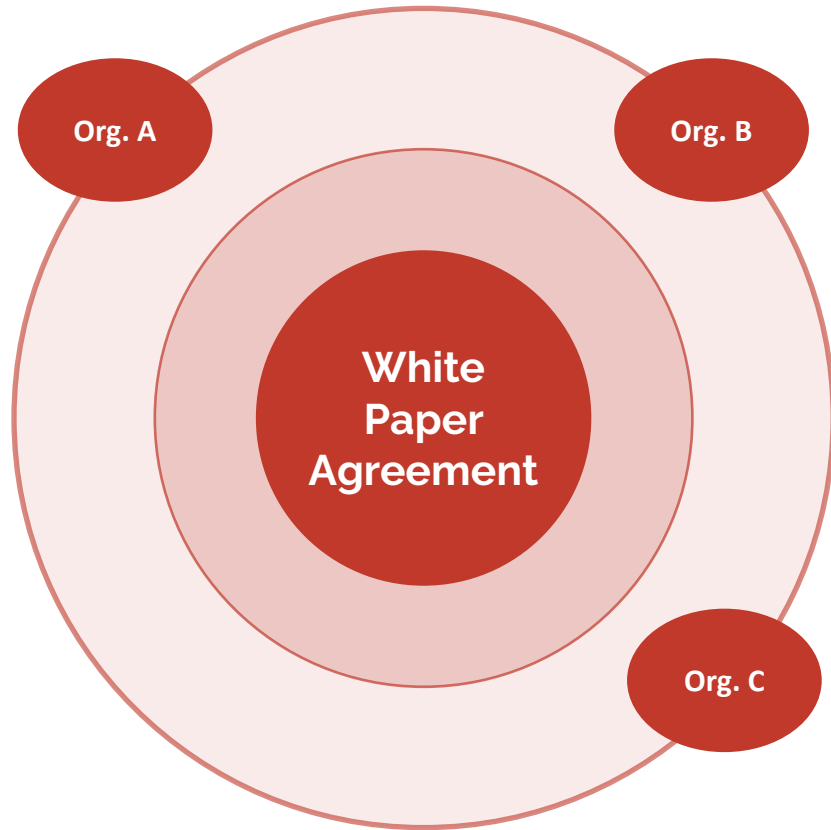
Circular Economy

Active Ageing

Accessibility & Care

Social Entrepreneurship

Trust-based governance in action: the HIZKETAN model



*RURALLINK
Trust Architecture*



Informal by design

A shared 'white paper' rather than formal statute forms the governance backbone. **Trust** replaces bureaucracy



HIZKETAN Project

Three RURALLINK members collaborate to deliver accessible environmental heritage engaging training for people with disabilities and those at risk of exclusion



Networked Social Innovation

No single organisation could generate this independently: the governance architecture is what makes collective innovation possible

The Municipality as governance anchor

Torres Vedras



Torres Vedras

Anchoring collaborative governance without monopolising it

The municipality of Torres Vedras demonstrates how public sector actors can **anchor collaborative governance without monopolising it**

Municipal leadership provides:

- Institutional legitimacy
- Administrative capacity
- Access to funding streams

...while genuine **multi-stakeholder deliberation** shapes the substance of what is actually done

SmartFarmCoLab

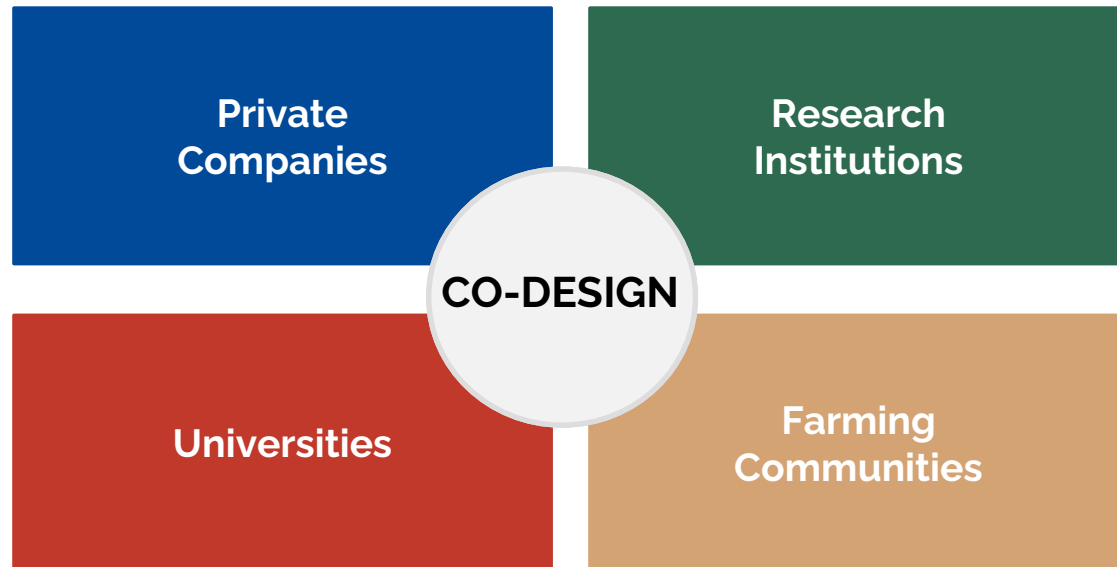
Digital agriculture: quadruple helix model

Encosta Programme

Urban regeneration: community co-design

SmartFarmCoLab: quadruple helix governance in agriculture

The Quadruple Helix Model



Social Innovation at the Intersection

SmartFarmCoLab is approved by Portugal's Foundation for Science and Technology and operates as a **quadruple helix entity** encompassing private companies, research institutions, universities, and farming communities.

Its fundamental contribution is the institutional model it embodies: **digital innovation in agriculture** pursued collaboratively, with **small farmers as co-designers rather than passive beneficiaries**.

Outputs include sensor-based monitoring systems, climate adaptation tools, and circular economy applications specifically calibrated for small and medium-sized agricultural units.

SWEDEN

Community-led resilience and mutual support

Offerdal · Jämtland County



Offerdal, Jämtland County

Community-led action to preserve essential services

Early 2000s

Cooperative Health Centre established

Community-led response when the facility faced closure due to centralisation pressures — social innovation in its most practical form.

2018

Krokom's Växtkraft Platform launched

A structured mechanism for joint community-municipal planning and resource mobilisation, formalising decades of collaborative tradition.

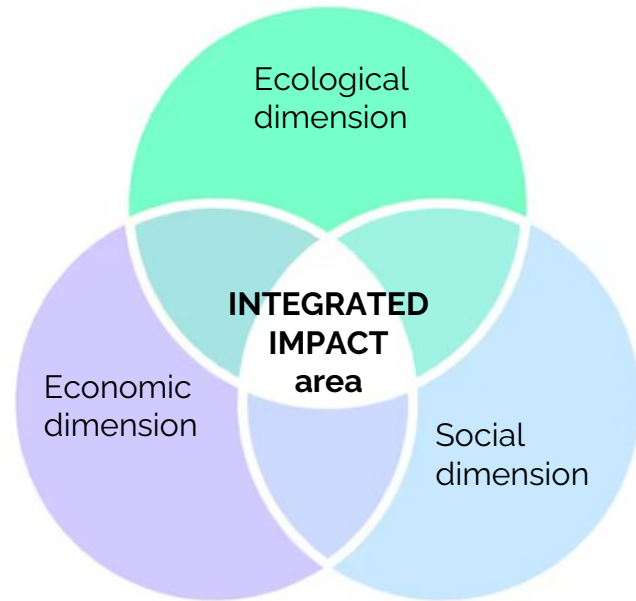
Ongoing

Schools, healthcare and retail preserved

Deep social capital enables sustained collective action to maintain essential services no single actor could protect alone.

Egnahemsfabriken: triple-impact social innovation in housing

Egnahemsfabriken modernises Sweden's historic 'Egnahem' self-build movement to address housing affordability through community-based construction of eco-friendly homes using recycled materials.



Community Self-Build

Revives the historic Egnahem movement — people building their own homes collectively with mutual support and shared skills



Circular Construction

Recycled and sustainable materials embedded throughout: ecological principles are not added on, they are constitutive



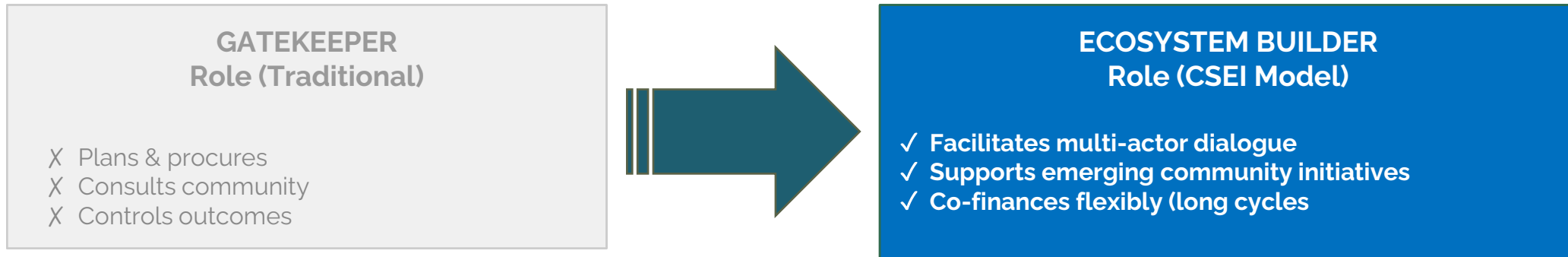
Social Inclusion by Design

Targets those excluded from conventional housing markets, combining affordability with capability-building

Some reflections on the governance patterns

Dimensions	Spain · RURALINK	Portugal · Torres Vedras	Sweden · Offerdal
Governance Form	Informal white paper; trust-based network	Municipal-anchored; multi-stakeholder deliberation	Community-municipal partnership platform
Decision Model	Distributed across specialist poles	Co-produced; municipality enables, not directs	Bottom-up; public authority as co-facilitator
Innovation Type	Networked social innovation (HIZKETAN)	Quadruple helix digital & agricultural	Community self-build and cooperative services
Key Strength	Flexibility; collective intelligence	Scale; institutional anchoring	Social capital; long-term resilience
Formality Level	Low / intentionally informal	Medium / public sector backbone	Medium / formalised in 2018 (Växtkraft)

Public authorities: from gatekeepers to ecosystem builders



New Institutional Competencies Required

Facilitate Dialogue

Enable multi-actor platforms where diverse stakeholders co-design rural strategies

Support Early Initiatives

Identify and resource emerging community-led innovation before formal funding is accessible

Patient Co-Financing

Flexible funding mechanisms that respect long development cycles of social economy organisations

Enabling Regulation

Create legal and regulatory environments where collaborative clusters can operate effectively

Towards Local Plans: a pilot in PARI

- Local participatory processes to co-design the local rural CSEI
 - In Torres Vedras, Region Östergötland, Navarra
 - Launched in November 2025
 - Due to end in June 2026
- Local participatory processes include and actively engage **key stakeholders**, ensuring **their input shapes project outcomes and fosters collaboration at the community level**

Thank you!

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