

# Reading Note 2: Internal Governance of Living Landscapes

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### 0. Introduction

This Note is the second of a series of reading notes reviewing selected literature on concepts, approaches, methods, and experiences that the Agroecology Initiative (AE-I) and particularly its WP1 employs for the emergence and consolidation of Agroecological Living Landscapes or Living Labs (ALLs) aimed at fostering Agroecological transitions. Each reading note provides insights and reflexive questions on one aspect of the ALLs functioning. This note focuses on the Internal Governance of

ALLs as a key aspect of how stakeholders interact in LLs and make decisions.

The Notes do not provide detailed methodological guidance or a formalized analytical framework, nor do they constitute an exhaustive literature review for academic purposes. To know better how the notes are developed, please refer to the Methodological Note at the end of the document.

### 1. Defining the Governance of Living Landscapes

Governance refers to the rules that organize interaction, decision-making, and management processes in specific social situations (Ostrom, 2009). Rules are shared understandings about enforced prescriptions regarding the actions required or prohibited by participants in specific social situations (Ostrom, 2005). Rules can be formal and, therefore, the product of established procedures, with clear (usually, written) statements about what is expected (e.g., prohibited and permitted) in given situations. Rules can also be informal, as in the case of customs and habits, in which social sanctions play an essential role. Rules simplify information for people to help them manage expectations about the behavior of their counterparts in specific situations, enhancing mutual understanding and

decreasing conflict (Röling, 2016; Wellbrock & Knierim, 2014). Trust grows when actors in an interaction can expect others to behave collaboratively.

The literature has developed at least two approaches to governance related to LL functioning. The first approach focuses on the interaction between the LLs and their context, either how the context affects LL functioning, or on the contrary, how the LLs intervene in the context (Ratner et al., 2022; Sarmiento Barletti & Larson, 2021). For instance, institutional embeddedness literature addresses the surrounding formal and informal institutions in the broader social context in which the LL is anchored, which can either enable or disable the LL endeavors (Adjei-Nsiah & Klerkx, 2016; Totin et al., 2018; Van Mierlo & Totin, 2014). Natural resource and value chain literature, instead, explores how the LL can enhance the collective management of resources and provide non-market forms of value chain coordination to improve transactions between farmers and

buyers (Mulema et al., 2017; Ratner et al., 2022; Turyahikayo et al., 2021; Willy et al., 2017).

A second approach addresses the internal governance of the LLs, which refers to the institutional arrangements among stakeholders, meaning the set of internal rules and procedures that enhance collaboration by specifying expected behaviors thus increasing trust (Galway et al., 2021; Van Paassen et al., 2014). These rules aim to clarify the roles and positions of stakeholders in the LL, how to make decisions, how stakeholders should communicate, how to deal with conflicts, and how to administer composition and membership. Considering internal governance as an “arrangement”, highlights that it results from a collective construction based on the participation of multiple stakeholders.

Although the distinction between the contextual and internal approaches is analytical and in reality, they are intertwined, this Note focuses on internal governance as WP1 directly mobilizes this approach in the AE-I.



Vision to Action Workshop Zimbabwe  
Source: WP1 Country Team Report 2023

## 2. Key Aspects of Internal Governance and Collaborative Governance in Living Landscapes

Box 1 lists and briefly defines the basic aspects of the internal governance of the LLs. Some of these aspects have been explicitly tackled in the context of the AE-I, at least in some countries, such as alignment, visioning, planning, and probably

communication. Other aspects may still be pending or implicit in the ALLs, and remain underexplored in the literature (Galway et al., 2021). Formalization (section 3), transparency, particularly related to decision-making (section 4), power dynamics (section 5), and conflict management (section 6) are rather covered by the literature.



### Box 1. Some Mechanisms to Consider for the Internal Governance of LLs According to the LL Literature

- **Alignment and Shared Understanding** refer to identifying a clear mission, defining the common problem that requires a collaborative approach, and identifying common values (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Alignment specifically entails developing needs-driven LL objectives, which are rooted in the interests and needs of the stakeholders, expectations, interests, knowledge, and values. Alignment has different temporalities: short, mid, and long-term alignment. As a part of the alignment process, Arnould et al. (2022) propose “to start the first collective work which aims at adjusting and validating collectively the guidelines of the Living Lab, i.e. the problematic (and the research questions), the objectives (and the ambitions), the deadlines, and the necessary means (technical, human, etc.)”.
- **Visioning and Planning** or devising a “roadmap” of what the platform is looking to achieve and how. Importantly, visioning is also considered an opportunity for stakeholders to dream about the future (Bouwma et al., 2022). However, planning executable activities and actions toward realizing the vision must follow the visioning.
- **Formalization** or the definition of clear rules and procedures for LL functioning. Formalization may include the creation of permanent **structures** such as organizations or institutions (e.g., voluntary sustainability standards) (Dentoni & Ross, 2013; Wellbrock & Knierim, 2014).
- **Trust-building** concerns all practices attempting to establish, develop, and maintain trust between stakeholders. It further considers establishment of a trusted network and interventions.
- **Communication** concerns the clear articulation of information following appropriate formal and informal communication channels. Communication must create understanding between stakeholders and includes different types of media, such as formal meetings and newsletters, but also radio (allowing to reach stakeholders in rural areas), phone calls, and informal encounters (Lamers et al., 2017).
- **Managing Power Dynamics** to mitigate the effects of power plays in the LL. Biases can obstruct the participation of certain stakeholder groups.
- **Conflict Management** refers to efforts to mitigate all forms of conflict between stakeholders. It aims to maintain a collaborative mood within the stakeholder network despite their different and even colliding interests. By evidencing conflict new and strong agreements among stakeholders can emerge (Totin et al., 2018).
- **Transparency** considers how visible are the internal dynamics of the LL and its interventions to the stakeholders and the public. It may include the sharing of information and decision-making procedures. It is concerned with the integrity of the LLs and the stakeholders it represents.
- **Racial and gender dynamics** refer to the effects of the stakeholders’ potential racial and gender biases on the LLs. Biases can obstruct participation of specific stakeholder groups, among other effects.

Source: Modified from (Edlmann & Grobbelaar, 2021)

The desired outcome of governance practices is to enhance collaboration, which revolves around the importance of working together, achieving a common goal, and assuming shared responsibility. Collaboration requires mutual commitment, the recognition of interdependence among stakeholders, and trust, which boost stakeholder participation in decision-making, implementing actions, and mobilizing resources/capacities. Besides setting in motion the LL toward achieving its objectives, governance aims to legitimize the actions of the LL thanks to its participatory bases (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Edlmann & Grobbelaar, 2021).

In the case of citizen-centric LLs (see Note 1), governance could be considered a collaborative

process in which rules and decisions are collectively made. Box 2 introduces several definitions related to Collaborative Governance as an optimal mode of governance in LLs that implies the participation of diverse stakeholders ideally representing government, civil society, private sector, and academia (Lupp et al., 2020).



## Box 2. Definitions of Collaborative Governance for Citizen-Centric Living Labs

- "The rules and forms that guide collective decision-making. That the focus is on decision-making in the collective implies that governance is not about one individual making a decision but rather about groups of individuals or organizations or systems of organizations making decisions" (Stoker, 2004: 3 cited in (Ansell & Gash, 2008)).
- "The processes and structures of public policy decision-making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished" (Mikwamba et al., 2021).
- "A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets" (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 544)



Co-design of AE Technical Innovations Senegal  
Source: WP1 Country Team Report 2023

### 3. When should the Governance of LLs be formalized?

Formalization, understood as the definition and enforcement of clear rules and procedures for LL functioning, is a contested issue in LL literature. Whereas authors agree that at least a certain degree of formalization is not only desirable but necessary, disagreements emerge concerning *when* formalization should be developed. In this debate, however, formalization should always be considered a process. Indeed, formalization and non-formalization of rules co-exist, as all rules cannot be foreseen in advance or necessarily formalized. This aligns with the definition of internal governance as an *arrangement*, meaning that it is more fluid and malleable than rigid institutions.

The literature tries to answer the following question regarding formalization: Is it better to have some ground rules from the beginning, or should formalization be tackled in later stages

once interactions, needs, and dynamics of the LLs are better known by stakeholders?

Some scholars argue that ground rules should be agreed from the very beginning to foster stakeholder engagement, commitment, and mutual understanding (Arnould et al., 2022; Edlmann & Grobbelaar, 2021; Lundsgaard-Hansen et al., 2022). Edlmann & Grobbelaar (2021) found that even when informal processes are valuable,

Formalized engagements [create a favorable] environment for addressing misunderstandings and resolving concerns. Some stakeholders may be more prone to competition and less so to collaboration, and formalized engagements must focus on managing the power dynamics of a [certain] stakeholder group to prevent power plays and promote a non-threatening environment. [Formalized engagements] culminate in the development of trust (p.14).

From this standpoint, clear rules help manage expectations, which furthers stakeholder commitment and decreases potential conflicts. Managing expectations also enhances the transparency of the activities in the LLs. In the case of a Multistakeholder Platform in Myanmar addressing land conflicts generated by oil palm cultivation, Lundsgaard-Haasen et al. (2022) found that not having clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and decision-making procedures from the beginning resulted in frustration and

disengagement of civil society organizations and other stakeholders (see Box 5).

Conversely, others argue that formalization should take place as the result of the maturation of the LLs, and thus, cannot be established too early (Dentoni & Ross, 2013; Turyahikayo et al., 2021; Wellbrock & Knierim, 2014). Wellbrock & Knierim (2014) posit that an “institutional void” is necessary at initial stages. Institutional void refers to a “situation without ‘clear rules and norms’ [...] and [in which] measures are to be agreed upon”. Informality provides a non-threatening atmosphere to exchange, develop new ideas, and learn about each other. Feche et al. (2021) also argues that not having a formal steering committee allows the participation of more partners.

Formalization also refers to creating permanent structures such as organizations or institutions (i.e., conglomerates of rules) that guarantee the long-term stability of the LL efforts (see Box 2). Whether and to which extent organizations or institutionalization are required depends on the trajectory of the LL and its objectives. If the objectives are limited in time, these types of formalization may be unnecessary. If long-term sustainability is important then organization or institutionalization may be required. Stakeholders may realize they should constitute a formal management body such as a council or steering committee, for example, for a river basin. Or they

may wish to develop stringent rules (e.g., voluntary sustainability standards) requiring high levels of coordination among them (Dentoni & Ross, 2013). Under this perspective, LLs are spaces for negotiating norms rather than mere forums for planning and implementing pre-identified objectives. In other words, LLs must create institutions deliberately, in a process in which ideally all stakeholders can participate and make decisions jointly. In this sense, governance arrangements, or ‘place-specific customs and procedures that shape interaction’ (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013, p 1042), are the outcomes of an institutional learning process (Wellbrock & Knierim, 2014).

Interestingly, in both cases of early agreement on ground rules or formalization after the maturation of LL processes, authors recognized that some rules are not pre-defined and are progressive, resulting from the evolution of the LL, either responding to specific or emerging needs or due to spontaneous processes. Moreover, the literature recognizes that formal and informal rules coexist and are necessary for LL governance.

This discussion suggests that there is not a recipe regarding formalization. Instead, formalization must be thought through according to the context and processes of each LL. Box 3 invites country teams to reflect on how formalization has developed or might evolve in their ALL(s).



### Box 3. To reflect: Formalization of rules

- According to the context and processes of the LL, when would it be helpful to proceed with formalization?
  - ✓ In cases when a level of formalization was indeed defined from the beginning, what are the advantages of having developed clear rules and procedures? What are the disadvantages? Have the rules and procedures already changed? Or should they change to reflect the gradual maturation of the LL? Have new ones emerged? Which ones? Why?
  - ✓ In cases when formalization has been low and further formalization was not considered until now, what have been the advantages of operating under informal rules and procedures? What have been the disadvantages? What rules if any have emerged so far (formally and spontaneously)?
  - ✓ In both cases, who has participated in the designing of rules? Have some stakeholder groups been excluded or somehow forgotten from rulemaking? Could some rules, formal or informal, be helpful now that were perhaps not thought of at the beginning of the LL emergence process?

#### 4. What is Power in the Living Landscape context? How to Identify Power Asymmetries?

Following Turner et al. (2020), power in LLs is defined as the capacity of stakeholders to mobilize resources to achieve individual or collective goals, rather than a pre-established external force or structure that restrains or permits the acts of individuals and other collective stakeholders. Resources can be material (e.g., economic, or technological resources) or symbolic (e.g., knowledge) (Bui, Sybille & Adanella, Rossi, 2019). Resources are neutral and only become a power source when they are mobilized. Once access to resources exists, mobilization additionally implies strategies to use resources, skills to apply those strategies, and the willingness to use both to reach a specific goal (Avelino & Rotmans, 2011).

This definition encompasses power as 1. **A force exerted on others**, either enhancing or restraining their actions. 2. **A dynamic force shaping outcomes** (Turner et al., 2020). In the first case, power results from specific directionality, either one-sided dependency, when an actor exerts power over another, or antagonism when several actors exert power over each other. In the second case, stakeholders in LLs may use their power to trigger or conversely resist change. Power is the result of the interplay between the past relations among stakeholders in the broader context before / outside the formation of a LL and the emergent dynamics of those relations within the LL (Bancerz, 2021; Mikwamba et al., 2021).

Different types of power relations develop as all stakeholders can mobilize and exercise a certain degree of power over each other depending on the situation (Avelino & Rotmans, 2011). For instance, a priest could wield more power in solving conflicts among community members than a politician, but the politician can mobilize more power in defining which infrastructure is built for the benefit of that community.

Cullen et al. (2014) applied the power cube to understand power asymmetries in LLs (Fig. 2) - The power cube is composed of three dimensions, namely, levels, spaces, and forms of power. Their interaction creates different power configurations.

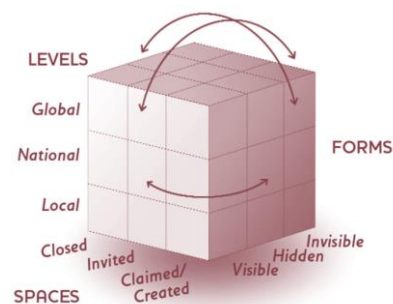


Figure 2: The Power cube

Source: Cullen et al. (2014) originally in Gaventa (2006)  
[Note: Arrows represent interaction among the different dimensions]

**Levels** are the various layers of decision-making and authority, and range between global, national, and local.

**Forms** represent how power manifests itself and they could be:

- a. *Invisible*: This refers to the social and political culture that shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation (e.g., gender-based discrimination making women refrain from participating in LLs).
- b. *Hidden*: This refers to how powerful actors and institutions retain their power and privilege. Hidden power makes certain voices or issues more important than others (e.g., the prevalence of technical knowledge to the detriment of farmer knowledge).
- c. *Visible*: This refers to the observable aspects of decision-making, which usually take place in public (e.g., a government spokesperson setting the agenda and decisions within a LL).

Finally, **spaces** refer to the potential arenas for participation and actions and can be:

- a. *Closed*: when these arenas are controlled by a powerful group or selected stakeholders and are difficult or impossible for outsiders to influence as they are indeed sidelined.
- b. *Invited*: when powerful stakeholders (e.g., policymakers) invite outsiders to contribute their views to decision-making, allowing influence but within a pre-defined perimeter. This is typical of platforms created for consultation but not for decision-making.
- c. *Claimed/created*: when the less powerful can 'develop their agendas and create solidarity without control from power holders'. This applies to LLs in which stakeholders can voice concerns, views, and experiences and thus effectively influence and participate in decision-making.

Additionally, less powerful stakeholders may develop strategies to resist innovations and modify these situations of power imbalances. These stakeholders can exert power by non-engaging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, or sabotage (Cullen et al.,

2014). This is the case of farmers who defect or refuse to engage in trials. These are hidden forms of power, as they occur outside public decision-making arenas and underscore the fact that no stakeholder is completely powerless (Avelino & Rotmans, 2011).

These reflections remind us that the transformative outcome of LLs should not be taken for granted. LLs could reinforce pre-existing power configurations, as established powers may coopt innovations, or unleash hidden forms of power. However, LLs can indeed foster the necessary power reconfiguration toward sustainability transition in agriculture (Castella et al., 2022). This happens when LLs develop as collaborative networks that create arenas for common knowledge, shared learning, visions, and goals, and innovative and systemic understandings of sustainability challenges and the roles different stakeholders play in dealing with them (Rossi, 2019).

Box 4 presents some reflexive questions that may help to unpack how existing power relations contribute to defining the boundaries of LLs.



#### **Box 4. To reflect: Power relations within an ALL**

Agroecological transitions intend to produce a systemic change that entails the transformation of power relationships among stakeholders. Therefore, power issues must be tackled within the LLs and in their interaction with stakeholders at the local, national, and global levels. To understand the interplay of these two dimensions (inside and outside the LL), thinking about how the boundaries of the LLs are defined through the following questions may be useful:

- Who were the most powerful stakeholders before the LL were formed?
- Who was invited to participate? Who was excluded?
- What actions have been taken to include discriminated or marginalized stakeholders (e.g., women, ethnic groups)?
- Who controls the LL space? Who makes decisions in the LLs? Who benefits or loses from the actions resulting from those decisions?
- How do the local level LLs relate and influence the different levels of power (levels as in Fig. 2), and vice versa?
- How do the LLs help to change pre-existing power asymmetries and dynamics?

Source: Modified from Cullen et al. (2014), based on Mikwamba et al. (2021) & Bancercz (2021)

## **5. Why should Conflict be Managed in LLs?**

Besides power asymmetries among stakeholders, conflict management is a major interrelated challenge in LLs. Power and conflict are

interrelated because power asymmetries fuel conflict and stakeholders will mobilize resources to advance their interests. Usually seen as

something to be avoided, conflict in LLs can instead be addressed as a way to unveil power asymmetries and trigger their reconfiguration to contribute to more sustainable agri-food systems (Bui, Sybille & Adanella, Rossi, 2019).

Turner et al. (2020) specifically define LLs as spaces to “intentionally play out conflicts of interest arising from differences in how actors benefit or lose from changes in access, use, and distribution of resources, and hence reshape roles and power relations leading to systemic change in the incumbent regime”.

The literature outlines two main scenarios when conflict arises. LLs navigate between these two situations, and they may be less or more successful as a result:

- a. Conflict is not properly managed or simply ignored. This happens when power asymmetries among stakeholders in LLs are neglected. The probable outcome is that the adoption of innovations and the

objectives of the LL cannot be (fully) achieved (see Box 5)

- b. Conflict is satisfactorily managed and thus change is possible. The transformative potential of conflict is unleashed because stakeholders change their perception about the roles they can play to balance power relations, finding common ground to reach win-win agreements.



Vision to Action Workshop Perú  
Source: WP1 Country Team Report 2023



### Box 5. Consequences of managing conflict unsuccessfully in LLs

#### Denying Conflicts: The Case of a Multi-stakeholder Platform for Addressing Land Conflicts around Oil Palm Concessions in Myanmar

In the context of the civil war that has affected Myanmar since 1962, land conflicts around oil palm concessions have been a highly contested topic. These concessions were perceived as forms of land grabbing as they mainly favored military-backed companies, fueling discontent among the local population as the concessioned land was under ethnic and customary arrangements, or was abandoned due to the forced displacement of ethnic groups. Oil palm concessions contributed to deforestation and did not benefit the local population who were prohibited from accessing natural resources.

With the relative democratization in 2015, opportunities for addressing these conflicts through multistakeholder platforms opened. A state-led platform was formed with the support of the central and regional governments and international donors in the southern Tanintharyi region. The platform had problems around trust-building from the beginning, as its purpose and the role of its members were not clearly defined, and communication channels were unclear. It emerged that the platform was only a consultative body and not a decision-making arena. Several stakeholders were unable to take part in the platform meetings due to poor and delayed communication. Moreover, the platform facilitator proposed decisions and measures on highly sensitive issues that the stakeholders would simply validate while refraining from making comments because of a very hierarchical, formal context. The only staged conflict was between civil society organizations, on the one hand, and government and companies' representatives, on the other, because of the lack of clarity in the rules, vision, and objectives of the platform. Civil society organizations had little influence in decision-making and hence the conflict remained unaddressed. Other internal and external tensions and conflicts, including the one between ethnic groups and companies, remained hidden / unaddressed, culminating in the crumbling of the platform.

Summarized from (Lundsgaard-Hansen et al., 2022).

The literature focuses on the pre-history of conflict among stakeholders outside the LL, assuming these conditions were automatically transferred to the LL setting (Bancerz, 2021). However, conflict is not solely the result of pre-existent social conflict. Even when power plays are regulated, conflict can result from insufficiently defined operational rules in the LL or even inappropriate personal behavior. This directly affects the quality of interactions among stakeholders. Hence, the importance of acquiring skills in conflict management to identify the causes of conflict, find appropriate solutions, and trigger a learning process.

## 6. How are Decisions Made in the Context of LLs?

The decision-making process in LLs varies depending on the nature of the stakeholder participation: it can range from simple consultation to genuine co-decision (which is what is sought in a LL governance process). Co-decision requires appropriate **rules**. Although decision-making rules have not received systematic treatment in the literature, this section presents some mechanisms and structures identified in the review.

### 6.1. Decision-making Mechanisms

Three decision-making mechanisms have been identified in the literature:

1. *Majority rule*, which may invigorate power asymmetries due to potential coalitions of powerful actors (Dentoni & Ross, 2013).
2. *Consensus*, which may allow broader discussions among stakeholders but simultaneously jeopardize decision-making as a complete agreement may be difficult to reach.
3. *Consent* grounded on the "living with" rule. If there is no consensus, those who are outnumbered are asked if they can "live with" the other group's proposal. This encourages cooperation and reciprocity without blocking the process or engaging in endless discussion (Piroux & Tonneau, 2023).

In general, LL literature supports holding face-to-face meetings to make decisions and boost trust among stakeholders, regardless of the decision-making mechanism (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Mutebi Kalibwani et al., 2018; Ragasa et al., 2016). However, the literature recognizes that few stakeholders may monopolize decision-making even if face-to-face meetings are held. This monopoly, besides reinforcing power asymmetries, negatively impacts innovation behavior, meaning that as actors perceive powers to be gripped in a few hands, their capacity to generate and implement new ideas is limited (Mikwamba et al., 2021; Willy et al., 2017).

Decision-making is particularly sensitive in the case of some LLs created in hosting organizations or "incubators", as the LL might replicate some of the rules from its hosting organization. Two situations illustrate this (Sarmiento Barletti & Larson, 2021). First, when an external organization promoting or funding LLs looks for a hosting organization as a suitable strategy to anchor LLs in local dynamics, with the expectation of both gaining legitimacy for the LL actions and long-term sustainability. In the long term, this might encourage wider participation in the decision-making process by local stakeholders. Second, when specific organizations (e.g., state agencies) create LLs to stimulate stakeholder participation to address issues (e.g., deforestation in a natural park) for which they are directly responsible (Sarmiento Barletti & Larson, 2021). A major risk in governance terms is that participation may be reduced to validation by vulnerable stakeholders of pre-defined solutions. Indeed, the leading organization of a LL makes most of the decisions without consultation, as Galway et al. (2021) noted.

### 6.2. Decision-making Structures

Structures in LLs, whose role is to organize the decision-making process, may vary according to how they are formed, either top-down or bottom-up.

In **top-down initiated LLs** (e.g., state- or some research-led LLs), two types of decision-making structures that may overlap can be identified:

1. *Multi-level structure.* Platforms are organized at different levels, depending on the territoriality of the ALL to allow stakeholder interaction across the national, regional (state or department), and local levels. Multi-level structures enable to organize the interaction among stakeholders, who are formally entitled to influence decision-making at a given level through continuous face-to-face meetings (Magala et al., 2018; Mutebi Kalibwani et al., 2018; Ragasa et al., 2016; Tiftonell et al., 2012). The degree of participation may vary largely at each level. For instance, the local-level LLs could be akin to simple executors and considered only consultative bodies by the upper levels, without direct participation in decision-making.
2. *Chamber structure.* Participation is organized according to stakeholder categories; each category being represented in a “chamber”. This structure allows representatives to consult decisions with the members of their category/group and voice out the corresponding opinions or positions to the steering committee in which representatives of the various stakeholders participate and make decisions (Cadilhon, n.d.; Dentoni & Ross, 2013; Toffolini et al., 2021). Dividing stakeholders into categories may facilitate the

participation in decision-making of frequently sidelined actors such as farmer women in patriarchal contexts, as they may feel more comfortable when interacting with their pairs.

In **bottom-up initiated platforms**, the main structure for decision-making is local face-to-face meetings that usually include most stakeholders, thus allowing, under certain conditions, further trust-building for collective action (Fèche et al., 2021; Wellbrock & Knierim, 2014). A potential drawback or challenge for bottom-up LLs is the lack of connection with the regional and national levels, as they usually do not develop multi-level structures from the beginning.

Decision-making could be developed under varied structures beyond the bottom-up or top-down character of the LL formation, or other rules beyond those identified in the literature. Other factors that may shape decision-making are the weight given to collective negotiation within the LL, how the representation of stakeholders works in the LLs (considering that members of the LLs are usually representatives of their stakeholder categories, as it may be difficult to engage all the stakeholders), and therefore, the number of stakeholders involved, their diversity, the complexity of themes tackled in the LL, and the social context.

Box 6 invites you to reflect on a few issues related to decision-making in LLs.



#### **Box 6. To reflect: Decision-making in ALLs**

The varied experiences with LLs in the AE-I can illuminate unexplored aspects in the literature and provide relevant knowledge for future experiences aiming to enhance sustainability in agriculture. Related questions country teams can reflect on include:

- What decision-making structures and rules have been used in the ALL(s)?
- Do you differentiate between arenas for collaboration with stakeholders, each one with a specific decision-making process and structure?
- Which ones have worked best, or not, and why?
- Which stakeholders have yielded more power in decision-making, which ones have yielded less, and why?
- How can we improve decision-making in our ALLs?

## **7. Concluding Remarks**

This Note presented selected aspects of LL internal governance that might be useful for country teams to think about and act on how they engage in, (co)design, and adjust governance of

their respective ALL as part of ALL emergence and consolidation: how governance works has many implications not only for the way the AEI teams interact with stakeholders but also for the

transformative goals of any genuine agroecological transition, including its social dimensions. Whatever the specific context of the ALL, there is no blueprint or single recipe to be applied for internal governance to work. Also, while many elements of LL governance are highlighted, developing those elements, or identifying who in the LL bears the responsibility for what may be difficult. The upcoming Reading Note 3, focusing on stakeholders' roles and participation, will shed light on some of these aspects.

### Want to know more?

If you wish to delve into specialized literature, these are some basic references:

#### About general governance aspects of LLs

- Edlmann, F. R. P., & Grobbelaar, S. (2021). A Framework of Engagement Practices for Stakeholders Collaborating around Complex Social Challenges. *Sustainability*, 13(19), 10828. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910828>

This article presents an overview of the aspects to consider for developing the internal governance of LLs. It is positioned in the "formalization from the beginning" strand.

#### About the Evolution of Governance in LLs

- Wellbrock, W., & Knierim, A. (2014). Unravelling Group Dynamics in Institutional Learning Processes. *Outlook on Agriculture*, 43(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.5367/oa.2014.0173>

## Methodological Appendix

Following the creation of a library containing more than 450 resources on Living Labs (LLs), Innovation Platforms, and Multistakeholder Platforms related mainly to agriculture and rural development, thematic reading notes focus on reviewing a subset of references (at least 20). In this note, we use the generic LL label to refer to literature on LLs, innovation, and multistakeholder platforms to facilitate the reading. For the protocol and methods applied to develop the Notes please refer to the document "Protocol of the Literature Review on LLs, Innovation Platforms, and Multi-stakeholder Platforms and Searching Strategies" available in the Zotero Library created by WP1 Global Team. The main method for analyzing the information was content analysis based on a set of variables resulting from questions elaborated by the WP1 Global Team and specified in the Protocol.

Considering the above, LLs are arenas for collectively innovating with and adapting governance arrangements and decision-making most appropriate to the local context and challenges.

Finally, for learning and scaling purposes, it will be useful for the country teams, ALL stakeholders, and the AE-I, in general, to properly document and assess the process followed for developing and adjusting governance, results obtained (good or perhaps not so good), and remaining challenges and perspectives.

This is a short article that develops very clearly the concept of institutional void.

#### About Power Asymmetries in LLs

- Cullen, B., Tucker, J., Snyder, K., Lema, Z., & Duncan, A. (2014). An analysis of power dynamics within innovation platforms for natural resource management. *Innovation and Development*, 4(2), 259-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2157930X.2014.921274>

This article introduces the power cube framework by developing cases in a low-income country, showing how different power configurations may jeopardize LLs outcomes.

- Bui, Sybille, M., Terry, & Adanella, Rossi. (2019). Redefining power relations in agrifood systems. *Journal of Rural Studies*(68), 147-158.

This article develops the elusive concept of power in relation to sustainability transitions, providing three clear examples from different types of stakeholders on how power asymmetries in agrifood systems can be balanced.

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