

A Plea for Supporting Development Management for Rural Policy embedded in the European Agricultural Policy

The Problem: A Systemic Conflict

Across Europe, villages and rural communities are working on initiatives in energy, healthcare, agriculture, community life and suchlike.

They shape the objectives of European rural and transition policy: economic opportunities, resilience, sustainability, and so on, but also experiencing, collaboration, participation, and local responsibility.

Unfortunately, these initiatives are implemented within systems designed for European income policy, associating ICT platforms, equivalent forms, and verification procedures, focused on veracity, compliance, and equality before the law.

This has turned experiencing into accountability and participation into ticking the box.

A bottom-up ambition thus is trapped in a top-down mechanism.

The Cause: One Logic for Two Worlds

Development policy requires a different implementation logic than income policy. While income policy is based on equal treatment, evidence-based practices, and standardization, development policy moreover requires boldness, room for experimentation, adaptation, and experiencing. A tax-form versus a business plan.

Because Europe has never established its own *development system* within its agricultural policy, the funds in question are deployed within the reflexes of *income policy*.

Digitalization has further exacerbated this disparity, the gap between rules and reality has only widened.

The Solution: A Dedicated Architecture for Development

If the EU is serious about its rural transition, it must build its own development management architecture within its agricultural policy. One that also allows for experiencing, proportionate verification, and gradual accountability. Digital systems and algorithms should support a dialogue in this process, not replace it.

This requires a cultural development that may take years and determination and perseverance from the administrators and managers involved. But without a clear starting signal, we will remain stuck in a box-ticking culture.

Where management serves development, Europe renews itself.

Where development serves box-ticking management, it slowly dies out.

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