



WONDER COMMONLANDS
**CLOSING MEETING
MINUTES**

SEPTEMBER 13TH-16TH, 2025
ANVERSA DEGLI ABRUZZI - TERAMO (ABRUZZO, ITALY)



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PREFACE

This Consortium was formally set up at the opening meeting held in Montes de Couso (Spain) at the kick off of the project.

One year later, the meeting held in Abruzzo (Italy) from September 13th to 16th marked the closing moment of this project cycle, offering a space to reflect collectively on the path travelled on, and on the relationships built over time.

Curated jointly by Slow Food Abruzzo and the Department of Political Science of the University of Teramo, the event was conceived not merely as a formal conclusion, but as a moment of synthesis and consolidation. It brought together experiences, perspectives and learnings that had matured throughout the year, allowing the group to reconnect them within a shared, situated context.

The choice of the location of Anversa degli Abruzzi (in the province of L'Aquila) was deeply connected to this intention. Located in the heart of the Abruzzo Apennines, Anversa is a small mountain municipality embedded in a territory historically shaped by collective land use, pastoral practices and long-standing relationships between communities and natural resources. Like many other villages in the Apennines, Anversa was deeply affected by major waves of emigration. Today, the village counts only 301 residents, whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1901, its population was close to 2,000 inhabitants.

Hosting the meeting there made it possible to situate reflection within a living inner area, marked at once by structural fragilities and by strong heritage of social, ecological and cultural knowledge.

In particular, the possibility of spending time within the farm of one of the *comuneras* involved in the project — who had already participated in the opening meeting and who brings more than thirty



years of experience in the collective management of mountain common pastures — gave concrete continuity to the project's trajectory. This direct immersion highlighted how common land governance is not only a legal or institutional framework, but a daily practice rooted in care, labour and intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

Moreover, the involvement of the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Teramo further strengthened this grounding. The Department has a long-standing commitment to research on rural sociology and on public policies addressing the regeneration and requalification of inner areas, with particular attention to community-based governance, territorial inequalities and socio-ecological transitions. Alongside research, the Department is also actively engaged in third mission activities, fostering dialogue with local communities, institutions and civil society actors, and supporting processes of social innovation in marginal and mountain territories.

Within this framework, the closing meeting became a space where academic reflection, grassroots experience and territorial practices could meaningfully intersect.

Discussions let the Consortium to move beyond theorization, anchoring analytical perspectives in lived realities and reinforcing the project's orientation towards applied, relational and territorially embedded knowledge.

Experiences are not always easily translated into words. What follows is therefore an attempt to gather and give shape to what can be shared on paper, while remaining faithful to the depth and density of what was lived together in those days



EXPECTATIONS

Originally, the meeting had been planned to take place in conjunction with the CHEESE 2025 event in Bra (Piedmont, Italy). However, due to financial constraints and organisational considerations, the consortium was required to revise this plan and to identify a more suitable and sustainable setting aligned with the project's objectives.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING A NEW VENUE

The decision to hold the meeting in Anversa degli Abruzzi was motivated by several interconnected factors:

- **Budget issues**
Participation in the CHEESE event, given the exceptionally high number of attendees in the current edition, would have required a significantly greater organisational effort, with increased economic costs that would have largely fallen on the participants themselves. The event organisers could not guarantee the availability of a dedicated space for internal meetings, making it difficult for the consortium to secure moments of focused discussion and collective reflection.
- **The setting**
The scale and dynamics of CHEESE would likely have resulted in a more dispersed form of participation, limiting the possibility of sustained dialogue among project partners. Given the need to hold a meeting specifically devoted to assessing the state of play of the project, reflecting on its trajectory and strengthening internal cohesion, a more contained and context-oriented setting was considered preferable.
- **The atmosphere**
The availability of accommodation at the bio-agritourism La Porta dei Parchi offered a concrete opportunity to host the entire group in one place, facilitating continuity between formal working sessions, informal exchanges and immersion in the local context.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- **In-depth discussion**
The closing meeting represented a key moment to assess the project's overall progress and to consolidate the collective work carried out throughout the previous year. Expectations for this meeting were not limited to the formal presentation of results, but were oriented towards creating a dedicated space for in-depth discussion about Italian and Appennines common lands context related to pastoralism, collective evaluation and strategic reflection on lessons learned, emerging challenges and future perspectives for the Consortium.

- **Network consolidation**

In particular, the meeting was an occasion to strengthen internal coordination within the consortium and to lay the groundwork for possible follow-up actions and future collaborations within the network. By bringing together partners in a smaller, more focused setting, the meeting aimed to encourage meaningful dialogue between grassroots experiences, academic perspectives and territorial practices, ensuring that reflection could remain grounded, participatory and closely connected to lived realities.

Finally, Anversa degli Abruzzi provided a meaningful territorial framework, coherent with the project's focus on rural areas, common land governance and long-term community-based practices, allowing expectations for the meeting to be fully aligned with both its analytical and relational objectives.



SEPT 14TH

FIELD VISITS

Following the welcoming dinner held the previous evening at a local restaurant—where partners were greeted by a small folk orchestra performing traditional Apennine songs and had the opportunity to taste local products closely linked to pastoral practices—the second day of the meeting was entirely dedicated to field visits in the commonlands of the area. These visits were specifically designed to introduce participants to different typologies of common land governance: **usi civici** in the case of the high mountain pastures (Visit 1), where collective grazing rights are still actively regulated and practised, and a **difesa** in the case of the Bosco di Sant'Antonio (Visit 2), representing a distinct form of collective protection and management of forest resources.

VISIT 1: CHIARANO HIGH PASTURES

The day began with the traditional shepherd's breakfast, based on organic products from the hosting farm, reinforcing the connection between food, pastoral culture and local knowledge. From there, the comuneras and project partners travelled to the high-altitude pastures of Chiarano, a mountain area where regulated transhumance (monticazione) is still practised today under the legal framework of *usi civici* (civic uses).

The visit to the Chiarano pastures was jointly guided by **Alessio Rotellini**, historian and researcher with expertise in commonlands, and **Manuela Cozzi**, agronomist, project partner, one of the comuneras and co-founder of the agricultural cooperative ASCA in Anversa degli Abruzzi and **Nunzio Marcelli**, economist and shepherd, co-founder of the agricultural cooperative ASCA, too. Their complementary perspectives—historical, institutional, ecological and technical—provided participants with a multi-layered understanding of the territory.

Through their contributions, participants learned that the commonlands of Chiarano-Sparvera State Forest complex represents a strategic area for conservation in Abruzzo. In 2021, the Abruzzo Region passed its management to the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park (PNALM) in order to strengthen protection beyond the Park's formal boundaries. In recent decades, the area has been increasingly valued as a key ecological corridor for the Marsican bear, at risk of extinction.

Several key aspects of the area's history and current governance were highlighted:

- **Geography and environment**

Located between the PNALM and the Cinque Miglia Plateau, the landscape bears clear traces of Quaternary glaciation, including glacial cirques, moraine deposits and widespread karst phenomena. The presence of Lake Pantaniello, a rare glacial relic at these latitudes, represents an exceptional environmental feature, very important for pastoralism up in the mountains.

- **Strategic management shift and pastoral regulation**

In 2021, the transfer of management responsibilities from the Region to the PNALM aimed to ensure stronger conservation measures and coherent ecological governance. Conservation and monitoring: the area is subject to continuous monitoring of flora and fauna, with particular focus on the protection of the Marsican brown bear, in line with the objectives of the PATOM (Action Plan for the Protection of the Marsican Bear). The entire forest complex is reserved exclusively for pastoral activities and divided into grazing lots assigned to local breeders, mainly small ruminant (sheep and goats) farmers. Grazing is officially permitted from 15 June to 30 October, with possible extensions—subject to favourable weather conditions—until no later than 15 November, when snowfall typically begins.

Active stewardship of these high mountain areas through ethical, extensive and sustainable livestock farming also supports the development of responsible tourism, particularly trekking and nature-based tourism connected to organic, short-chain food production. Picnic areas created by the Regional Forest Administration as early as the 1970s, at altitudes between 1,600 and 1,800 metres, have facilitated the development of complementary activities linked to pastoralism, often managed directly by farmers, their families and employees.

- **Ecological relevance and biodiversity: the role of women**

The area functions as a vital habitat and movement corridor for wildlife, enabling connections between the PNALM, the Majella National Park and the Monte Genzana Regional Reserve, of which it constitutes a crucial ecological link. Beyond large fauna, the area hosts rich botanical diversity, including gentians, primroses, orchids and lilies during the warmer seasons. Beyond large fauna, the area hosts rich botanical diversity, including gentians, primroses, orchids and lilies during the warmer seasons. This biodiversity is fundamental not only for ecosystem health, but also for the quality of mountain pastures and, consequently, for local cheesemaking traditions. The variety of grasses and wild herbs directly influences milk characteristics, shaping flavours, aromas and textures that are central to high-quality artisanal cheese production.

In this territory, women often become the most direct interpreters of this ecological richness. While they rarely hold formal governance roles in the management of pastures and commonlands, they have carved out a significant space within the local economy as custodians and transmitters of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. While livestock farming remains predominantly a male activity, the management of agritourism services, hospitality, tastings and direct sales of products is carried out almost exclusively by women. These women have played a decisive role in introducing innovation, diversification and multifunctionality into a sector that was in urgent need of renewal.

Cheesemaking and hospitality, in particular, is frequently entrusted to women. A notable example is **Viola Marcelli**, a young cheesemaker who, after travelling and working abroad, chose to return to Anversa degli Abruzzi to produce cheeses of outstanding quality. Her products have received numerous awards and are now exported internationally, also through innovative initiatives such as “Adopt a Sheep”, which strengthen the link between pastoral practices, biodiversity and global markets.



VISIT 2. SAINT ANTHONY’S WOODLAND: A DEFENSE

The second field visit of the afternoon was guided by **Aurelio Manzi**, a renowned ethnobotanist, whose contribution allowed participants to explore a different typology of public commonland. Through his guidance, the Bosco di Sant’Antonio emerged as a paradigmatic example of a *difesa*: a historically protected and regulated form of collective land use which functioned as an arborated pasture. A closed and protected public domain area designated for grazing and wood collection to meet the subsistence needs of resident families.

Located in the municipality of Pescocostanzo, the Bosco di Sant'Antonio is a Regional Natural Reserve, the first to be established in Abruzzo in 1985, and has been part of the Maiella National Park since 1991. Its origins are deeply rooted in history and spirituality. In Roman times, the site was a sacred grove dedicated to Jupiter; following Christianisation, it was consecrated to Saint Anthony Abbot. Within the forest stands the Hermitage of Sant'Antonio, built between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and documented since 1536, with a restoration in 1577 attested by an inscription on its façade.

From an environmental and ethnobotanical perspective, the forest is characterised by monumental beech trees with distinctive “candelabra” shapes. These forms are the result of ancient pruning practices and clearly testify to the historical use of leafy branches as fodder for livestock during periods when grass was scarce.

Today, the Regional Natural Reserve covers approximately 550 hectares of land historically withdrawn from intensive logging in order to ensure shelter and resources for livestock. The area hosts remarkable biodiversity, including field maples, wild pear trees and rare floral species such as the *Epipactis purpurata*. The ancient beech forest creates an almost fairytale-like landscape, which is now enjoyed by both local residents and visitors engaged in forms of outdoor and nature-based tourism, ranging from hiking and horse riding to cross-country skiing in winter.

Over time, changes in pastoral practices and a reduction in livestock numbers have led grazing activities to move towards the peripheral areas of the forest, closer to the village of Pescocostanzo. As a result, the Bosco di Sant'Antonio has increasingly become a destination for seasonal tourism: in summer for its cool climate at over 1,300 metres above sea level, in autumn for its striking foliage, in winter for snow-based activities such as snowshoeing, and in spring for the extraordinary flowering made possible by its rich and well-preserved biodiversity.



LESSONS LEARNED AND CRITICAL ISSUES FROM FIELD VISITS

- **Biodiversity conservation and women**

These visits offered participants a valuable opportunity to understand how different historical forms of commonland governance—such as the state forest, the pastures and the defense —have shaped landscapes, ecological practices and collective relationships between communities and natural resources, and how these legacies continue to influence contemporary uses and meanings of common lands. They also highlighted the strong potential of commonlands to integrate biodiversity conservation, pastoral practices and sustainable local development. The combination of regulated grazing, ecological protection and women-led multifunctional activities emerged as a powerful model of resilience and territorial innovation.

- **Management and governance: a critical issue**

A major critical issue was clearly identified during the visits. Neither the Abruzzo Region in the past nor the National Park Authority at present has involved local livestock farmers in the definition of management policies for the Chiarano–Sparvera area or for the Saint Anthony's woodland. Breeders are required to comply with regulations and decisions

imposed from above, without structured mechanisms for dialogue, negotiation or co-decision. This lack of participation raises important questions regarding governance, legitimacy and long-term sustainability, and directly connects to the core themes of the project concerning inclusive governance, common land management and the role of local communities—particularly women—in decision-making processes.





SEPT 15TH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP





TRANSIZIONE
ECOLOGICA,
SOSTENIBILITÀ E
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**WONDER
COMMONLANDS**
WOMEN ORGANIZATION AND NETWORKING OF
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS COMMONLAND

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP COMMONLANDS: LESSONS FROM THE PAST. WHICH FUTURE FOR WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE?

Teramo (Italy) - September 15, 2025
University Campus - Gabriele D'Annunzio Building

9.30/13.30 A.M. - DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE - PARLIAMENTARY ROOM

Institutional greetings Francesca Fausta Gallo Head of the Department of Political Science Opening remarks Rita Salvatore Scientific coordinator Presentation pitches from partners Nuria Alonso - Ana Luisa Luz Vyara Stefanova - Despoina Karatosidi - Raquel Prado Commonlands rights through historical and legal perspective Fabrizio Marinelli Jurist - University of L'Aquila A historical overview of commonlands management in the Abruzzo region: from the Middle Ages to the Present Alessio Rotellini Historian - University of Rome Tor Vergata	The geography of commonlands institutions in the Central Apennines Annalisa Spalazzi Economist and geographer - Gran Sasso Science Institute "Walking through the commons": sustainability and participation Anna Ciammariconi Jurist - University of Teramo Migle Camplone Master student - University of Teramo Gender Perspective and Common Goods Consuelo Diodati Sociologist - University of Teramo The role of women in the territorial development of Italian rural areas Sabrina Lucatelli Rural development economist - "Riabitare l'Italia" Association
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12.30 - Debate

3.00/6.00 P.M. - GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO BUILDING - ROOM 26

NETWORKING AND EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

Fishbowl session Paraskovi Ntouma Elgo-Dimitra - Greece Alima El Bajnoui Babalex - France María Del Carmen Campos Peregrina Entretantos - Spain Eduarda Miranda ISEG Lisboa - Portugal	Vyara Stefanova STEP - Bulgaria Maria Cristina Pasquali Donne che salvano la Terra - Slow Food Italy Barbara Diletti Antica Università Agraria di Rocca Santa Maria (TE) - Italy Rosanna Maria Rossi Dominio collettivo ex-feudo Marotta di Cerasuolo (IS) - Italy Annamaria D'Alonzo Presidio Slow Food del Peperone dolce di Altino (CH) - Italy
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The third day of the meeting was dedicated to collective reflection and to a deeper exploration of the project's core themes through an international interdisciplinary workshop held at the University of Teramo. This final day represented a moment of synthesis, opening the internal work of the consortium to a broader audience and fostering dialogue between project partners, invited speakers, students and local stakeholders.

The workshop set a particular focus on the value of commonlands in the Apennine areas of Italy, addressing their historical role, contemporary challenges and future perspectives, especially in relation to women's participation in governance. By combining academic contributions, field-based experiences and testimonies from within the network, the discussion allowed for a multi-scalar and interdisciplinary reading of commonlands as socio-ecological systems.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The main objectives of the workshop were the following:

- To **update the network** and external participants on the objectives achieved by the project and on the main outcomes developed throughout its implementation.
- To **communicate the work**, perspectives and analytical frameworks of the network to the hosting institution, students and the wider academic and local community.
- To **deepen the debate** on commonlands in the Apennine context, highlighting their relevance for rural development, biodiversity conservation and socio-ecological resilience.
- To critically reflect on **women's roles in commonlands governance**, with specific attention to the gap between their central economic, ecological and knowledge-based contributions and their limited participation in formal decision-making processes.
- To **foster exchange** between academic research and grassroots experiences, strengthening mutual learning between researchers, practitioners and community members.
- To create a space for **open discussion on future challenges** and possible trajectories for research, policy and collective action, including opportunities for follow-up projects and long-term collaboration.

The workshop thus aimed to function as both a closing moment and a forward-looking space, reinforcing the project's commitment to participatory knowledge production and to the valorisation of commonlands as living laboratories for inclusive governance and territorial regeneration.

The **FIRST PART OF THE MORNING SESSION** was dedicated to the presentation of the project partners and to an overview of the value and role of commonlands across different European contexts.

- The **Spanish context** was introduced by Nuria Alonso from the **Entretantos Foundation**, who presented their long-standing work on commonlands governance, gender and participation. Drawing on research-action approaches and on the *Somos Comuneras* network, Entretantos highlighted the persistence of diverse forms of commons in Spain and the strong imbalance between women's everyday involvement in commonlands and their limited representation in formal decision-making spaces.
- The **Bulgarian context**, presented by Vyara Stefanova from **STEP** (Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity), focused on municipal and state-owned common grasslands, which represent a significant share of the country's public land. The presentation underlined how post-socialist land restitution and CAP mechanisms have progressively shifted common grasslands towards an individualised use, raising concerns about long-term sustainability and women's marginal role in governance despite their active presence in rural economies.
- The **Greek context** was illustrated by Despoina Karatosidi from **ELGO-DIMITRA**, emphasising the historical importance of common pastures linked to transhumant systems such as the *tseligkata*. While many of these systems declined during the twentieth century, common grazing remains central to extensive livestock farming today, with ELGO-DIMITRA actively engaged in research, training and policy support to promote sustainable management and greater inclusion of women and young people.
- The **Portuguese context** was presented by **Ana Luísa Luz** from the **ISEG** (Lisbon School of Economics & Management). She explained the important role of *baldios* which community-owned common lands that historically covered a large share of national territory and were central to traditional agro-pastoral systems. After a long period of state appropriation and afforestation, baldios were returned to rural communities following the democratic revolution of 1974 and legally recognised as collective property. Today, most baldios are forested and largely co-managed with Forest Services, while recent legal reforms aim to restore autonomous community governance. Also in Portugal, despite women's crucial role in sustaining rural communities and transmitting traditional ecological knowledge, they remain largely excluded from formal decision-making.
- The **French context**, presented by **Raquel Pardo** from **Babalex**, focused on pastoral commonlands in mountain and marginal rural areas, where collective grazing systems continue to play a key role in landscape management, biodiversity conservation and local economies. The presentation highlighted how commons in France are embedded in complex legal and institutional frameworks, often combining customary practices with formal agreements involving municipalities, pastoral associations and public authorities.



The **SECOND PART OF THE MORNING SESSION** was dedicated to an in-depth exploration of commonlands through complementary historical, legal, geographical and policy-oriented perspectives, with a specific focus on the Central Apennines.

- **Historical framework**

The historical dimension was addressed by the researcher **Alessio Rotellini**, who reconstructed the long-term evolution of collective land management in the Gran Sasso area. His intervention illustrated how commonlands historically structured a “spread territory-city” based on civic uses, pastoral economies and customary law. Particular attention was given to the differentiated management of lowland demesnes and high mountain pastures, the ritualised mechanisms of allocation (such as public auctions), and the role of defense in forest and pasture protection. Rotellini also traced the transformations brought about by state legislation, capitalist logics and the decline of transhumance, leading to contemporary forms of management through ASBUC (Amministrazione Separata di Usi Civici, that is *Separated Administration of civic uses*).

- **Normative framework**

The legal and normative framework was analysed by **Fabrizio Marinelli** from the University of L'Aquila who outlined the juridical evolution of civic uses and collective

lands in Italy. His presentation traced key phases from early modern fiscal systems and transhumance regulation, through Napoleonic reforms and post-Unification legislation, to the Fascist attempt to completely abolish civic uses in 1927. The intervention culminated with the contemporary legal framework established by Law 168/2017, which recognises collective domains as primary legal systems and affirms the inalienable, indivisible and intergenerational character of commonlands, placing ecological functions at the core of their legal status. **Migle Camplone** and **Anna Ciammariconi** from the University of Teramo also focused their contribution on the role of *comunanze agrarie* in the Central Apennines as they have historically functioned as customary institutions regulating collective access to land, pastures and forests through local norms and shared practices. Long considered residual or informal arrangements, they were progressively marginalised by modern state legislation. However, their recent recognition under Italian Law 168/2017 reframed them as primary legal systems, based on inalienability, indivisibility and intergenerational stewardship. Today, they represent a key tool for ecological protection and territorial sustainability, although participation remains uneven, with women and younger generations still underrepresented in governance structures.

- **Geographical perspective**

The geographical and territorial framework was introduced by **Annalisa Spalazzi** from the Gran Sasso Science Institute, who presented a spatial analysis of commonlands institutions in the Central Apennines. Her contribution framed commonlands as living territorial actors shaped by power relations, historical trajectories and hybrid governance arrangements involving communities, municipalities, the state and the market. Drawing on mapping and field-based research, she highlighted the wide variety of institutional forms—open, closed and hybrid systems—and underlined how collective properties are often marginalised or poorly recognised within contemporary territorial strategies, despite their key role in managing agro-silvo-pastoral resources and biodiversity.

- **Policy and gender perspectives on common goods**

Both **Consuelo Diodati** from the University of Teramo and **Sabrina Lucatelli** from the ONG “Riabitare l’Italia” have focused more particularly on the gender perspective.

While the former provided an overview of the sociological landscape of gender inequalities, the latter focused on the findings of a very recent study on the experiences of women living in rural inner areas. This research, titled “*Women and Inner Areas*” addresses the structural relationship between gender inequalities and territorial marginalisation in Italian inner areas. It highlights how demographic decline, limited access to services and employment scarcity disproportionately affect women, while at the same time relying heavily on their often-invisible labour to sustain local communities. The analysis shows that women play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion, care infrastructures and local economies, particularly through informal work, family-based agriculture and community services. However, their contribution is rarely recognised or translated into stable employment opportunities, adequate

income or access to decision-making positions. As a result, women in inner areas face higher risks of poverty, social isolation and forced out-migration.

Lucatelli has also underlined a persistent mismatch between public policies and the actual needs of women living in marginal territories. Labour market measures and training programmes are often poorly adapted to local contexts, failing to value women's skills, traditional knowledge and potential for innovation. This contributes to a cycle of depopulation and masculinisation of rural and inner areas. From a policy perspective, the research calls for integrated, place-based strategies that explicitly incorporate a gender lens. Key priorities include improving access to services, supporting women-led economic initiatives, recognising care work, and fostering women's participation in governance and territorial development processes. Strengthening women's agency is presented not only as a matter of social justice, but as a necessary condition for the long-term resilience and revitalisation of inner areas.

The **AFTERNOON SESSION** was structured as a **fishbowl discussion** designed to foreground lived experiences and to stimulate collective reflection through two different steps.



- 1) **The first round of the fishbowl** was dedicated to participants' self-presentations and was introduced by the coordinator **Rita Salvatore** with the prompt: *"Tell us about your own experience as a woman in the commonlands of your territory."* This opening round

allowed each participant to situate her personal and professional trajectory within concrete practices of commonland use, management and care, ranging from pastoralism and irrigation systems to forests, food production, education and social innovation.

- 2) **The second round of the fishbowl** was introduced by the guiding question: “Where are we going? What future do you imagine for commonlands?” This phase shifted the discussion from individual experiences to shared visions, challenges and expectations for the future of commonlands across different territorial and institutional contexts.

Throughout the session, participants’ contributions were synthesised in real time through a graphic representation facilitated by **Annalisa Spalazzi**, who visually mapped key themes, connections and recurring patterns emerging from the dialogue. At the end of the session, she provided a collective restitution of the discussion, helping to consolidate insights and highlight convergences across experiences.





KEY ASPECTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

From the collective exchange, several cross-cutting themes emerged:

- **Centrality of relationships and trust:** commonlands were repeatedly described as relational spaces, where cooperation, conflict mediation and the building of social ties are as important as formal rules. Many participants stressed that relationships often precede institutions and enable communities to grow and endure.
- **Women's invisible but foundational roles:** across contexts, women were recognised as key actors in everyday management, care work, knowledge transmission and innovation, despite their persistent underrepresentation in formal governance and decision-making bodies.
- **Tradition as a resource for innovation:** rather than opposing tradition and change, participants highlighted processes of “restoring the past” through new practices, suggesting that what is built today may become the traditions of tomorrow.
- **Barriers to participation:** structural obstacles such as male-dominated governance, ageing leadership, lack of data transparency, have limited meeting spaces and weak institutional recognition, thus continuing to constrain women's participation and voice.
- **Diversification and multifunctionality:** several experiences pointed to the importance of diversifying commonland-based economies—through food production, forest

products, education, cultural activities and tourism—as a strategy for resilience and social sustainability.

- **Education, storytelling and intergenerational transmission:** sharing stories, skills and lived experiences was seen as a powerful tool to inspire younger generations and to counter rural abandonment.
- **Commonlands as spaces of social justice and inclusion:** discussions extended beyond rural contexts to include urban commons, food security initiatives and intersectional approaches involving migrants and vulnerable groups, highlighting the adaptability of commoning practices.

Overall, the fishbowl session reinforced the idea that the future of commonlands depends not only on legal recognition or technical management, but on the capacity to value women's experiential knowledge, strengthen participation and nurture the social relationships that sustain collective stewardship.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

- The closing meeting confirmed the value of coming together again after one year, allowing the group to reflect on a shared trajectory rather than on isolated experiences. What emerged was a strong sense of continuity between the opening encounter and the work carried out since then, grounded in relationships, trust and mutual learning.
- The diversity of commonlands across territories and institutional settings remains a central element of the project. At the same time, the meeting made clear that this diversity is not an obstacle, but a resource for comparison, dialogue and collective understanding.
- Field visits and direct engagement with commonlands in the Apennine context highlighted the importance of place-based knowledge and lived practices. Seeing how commonlands are embedded in everyday work, care and local economies reinforced the need to keep research closely connected to empirical realities.
- Women's roles emerged once again as both central and under-recognised. Across different contexts, women sustain commonlands through labour, knowledge transmission, innovation and social reproduction, while remaining largely excluded from formal governance structures. Addressing this gap remains a key challenge and a shared priority also for future projects
- The fishbowl session demonstrated the power of creating spaces where experiential knowledge can be voiced, shared and collectively elaborated. Listening to women directly involved in commonlands management confirmed the importance of relationality, storytelling and collective reflection as tools for both research and action.
- The meeting in presence strengthened the group's awareness that WONDER Commonlands is not only a research network, but also a space of engagement, where academic work, grassroots practices and territorial struggles can meaningfully intersect.
- Participants expressed a renewed commitment to using the knowledge produced within the project to support local communities, foster inclusive governance and contribute to socially and ecologically sustainable territorial futures.

Finally, the closing meeting opened new questions rather than providing definitive answers: about participation, intergenerational transmission, policy recognition and the future of commonlands in contexts of rural change. These open questions are seen not as a limitation, but as a fertile ground for future collaboration, research and collective action.



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