



# rural- ization

how can we create thriving rural  
places for all?

Ruralization: How can we create thriving  
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# *context*

The Ruralization project which started in 2019 has been looking at **how to facilitate rural dreams for new generations.**

The project has worked to uncover and imagine promising practices and innovations in rural areas: looking at innovative forms of land ownership, stewardship, and ways to promote social, economic and environmental sustainability in rural areas.

In December 2022, we hosted an event "HOW CAN WE CREATE THRIVING RURAL PLACES FOR ALL?" to explore a number of ideas from this 4 year project, and discuss possibilities for the future of rural communities. The event brought together folk from up and down the UK who wanted to reimagine rural areas together.

We have compiled this zine to illustrate how a process of Ruralization can respond to the current needs of rural areas, bringing the ideas that resonated with attendees of our December event to life.

The zine works to imagine how we can create a thriving, regenerative, connected rural future.

Ruralization: How can we create thriving  
rural places for all?

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## 1. Access to Land.

To have access to land means to have the opportunity to create a connection with it. Advocating for better access to land has been a key focus for the Ruralization project, and we take a look at some examples of how access can be supported.

## 2. Reframing relationships with people and the land.

In our event "HOW CAN WE CREATE THRIVING RURAL PLACES FOR ALL?", the room discussed how a dominant narrative about protecting or conserving landscapes can work to exclude people - when in fact we want to create thriving places through seeing people as part of, living within, a functioning, thriving ecosystem.

## 3. How liveable are rural areas?

Just as in urban places, rural places around the UK are also facing a housing crisis where access to good quality, low impact housing is extremely difficult, and housing provisions aren't enough. We explore the issues, both in common and contrasting between urban and rural places and ask: how liveable is the rural?

*What does access to land mean on a monetary, educational, or personal level?*

# ACCESS



\* For people to have the right to live, shelter and belong.

\* For people to experience and to have a relationship with nature.

\* For people to provide for themselves with land, eg. growing food or forest.



\* For those who roam and move, being able to connect with land wherever they go.

\* For those wanting to experience urban community, those wanting to experience community within a countryside, and everything in between.

# TO LAND

*How could we promote fairer, more equitable access to land?*

## COMMUNITY / COOPERATIVE OWNERSHIP?

De Wassende Maan is one example of a farm run by a cooperative in Belgium providing veg boxes, with a strong input from the community.

## REPARATIONS?

LION (Land In Our Names) defines reparative justice as redistributing resources to Black and People of Colour, and also creating the space for BPOC to heal and repair.

## LAND VALUE TAX?

Could a tax on land itself work to benefit society as a whole, and not only those with legal ownership? Countries currently using varying Variations of Land Value Tax are currently used in Denmark, Estonia, Taiwan, Singapore, Kenya, New Zealand, among others...

## LOCAL DECISION MAKING?

Having communities be able to feed directly into local democracy... for example: in Frome, Somerset, the council has endorsed a self-empowerment approach where citizens' panels make decisions for the local community.

## DECOMMODIFICATION?

Supporting routes to decommodify land and avoid the precarities rooting from speculative land prices. These could include Community Land Trusts, which allow land to be retained by community ownership and its use to be decided upon for the community's long term interest.

## COMMONING LAND & RESOURCES?

In Romania, around half of the permanent pastures in the country operate as commons: meaning that whilst land may be owned publicly or privately, it is grazed upon and accessed by multiple farmers locally. Eco Ruralis are a Romanian organisation working to strengthen participation and build legitimacy around the commons to safeguard this model for future generations.

# Reframing relationships between people and land...

WILDERNESS -  
OUT OF  
BOUNDS

NO PUBLIC  
RIGHT OF  
WAY

NO TRESPASSING



**LANDSCAPES HAVE  
THRIVED FOR CENTURIES,  
WITH HUMAN LIFE  
SHAPING AND LIVING AS  
PART OF THEM.**

**THE NARRATIVE THAT  
'THE WILD' CAN ONLY  
THRIVE THROUGH  
EXCLUDING HUMANS, IS A  
MYTH.**

**THIS IS NOT TO DENY THAT  
THERE ARE DIFFERENT  
STRUCTURES WITHIN  
HABITATS AND  
LANDSCAPES THAT HAVE  
DIFFERENT DEGREES OF  
HUMAN INTERACTION,**

**BUT IT IS TO RECOGNISE  
THAT OUR CULTIVATION  
CAN BE A GIFT: WE HAVE  
EVERY CAPACITY TO LIVE  
RECIPROCALLY WITHIN  
ECOSYSTEMS.**



# Frameworks that could work as solutions:

Commoning describes a social practice where people create, protect and govern shared resources for the mutual benefit of everyone in the community.

Organisations such as **Future Natures** are exploring the potentials of reviving commoning in a modern context to address current crises in the UK.

## COMMONING



The **Right to Roam Campaign** advocates for free, fair and informed access to nature.

We should be able to be integrated within nature and landscapes, with the right to explore it and equipped with the knowledge we need to look after it.

## RIGHT TO ROAM



## AGROECOLOGY



**Agroecology** means agriculture that is based on ecological systems, and addresses the need for socially equitable food systems.

Organisations such as the **Landworkers' Alliance** support agroecology and have various projects to enable new entrants to farm agroecologically.



# HOW LIVEABLE ARE RURAL AREAS?

Good quality, low impact and suitable housing is not readily available or affordable, particularly for workers wanting to live on or near farmland.

Land prices are too high, which makes land inaccessible for those living in rural areas, as well as newcomers and landworkers alike.

New developments are steered by private property developers over communities, whose needs, such as for social spaces, aren't being met.

Alternatives such as co-operative housing models are difficult to attain because of lack of policy support and cultural acceptance.

There is a lack of mixed transport /cycling infrastructure and public transport that is frequent, affordable and reliable.

Transport infrastructure has been depleted through funding cuts to rural bus and railway services.

## RURAL AREAS COULD ALLOW COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE THROUGH:

- HOUSING STRATEGY THAT PRIORITISES COMMUNITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.
- FUNDING AND PLANNING POLICY THAT SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS & HOUSING COOPERATIVES.
- TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PRIORITISES RURAL CONNECTION, PUBLIC HEALTH, & ENVIRONMENT.



**URBANIZATION HAS RESULTED IN VARIOUS ISSUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER FOR RURALIZATION...**

# **& URBAN AREAS?**

As in rural spaces, democratically involved housing such as co-operative structures are still hard to come by and create.

Urban density, lack of accessible public spaces and poor connections with rural areas mean many urban communities are disconnected from nature and land.

Expensive rent deprives people of fundamental security and stability in their homes, the ability to make choices over their living arrangements, and can cause damage to mental health.

Precarity in living situations prevents people in urban spaces to build a life around a space; which can be central to building local economies, community and culture.

A lack of ecological building and infrastructure has caused widespread environmental degradation.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAND, ECOLOGY AND ECOSYSTEMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS AND SUSTAINS THEM. THESE CONNECTIONS COULD BE ENABLED THROUGH:**

- **MORE LAND BEING MADE ACCESSIBLE TO COMMUNITIES FOR RECREATION, GROWING AND LAND-BASED WORK.**
- **SUPPORTING COMMUNITY HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING ON LAND SO THAT LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE AUTONOMY.**
- **ADDRESSING CULTURAL BARRIERS TO PROMOTE JUSTICE IN OUTDOOR SPACES, SUCH AS RURAL RACISM AND AFFORDABILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.**



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[The opinions expressed belong to Shared Assets and are not written to reflect the European Commission's opinion.]

