

Improving agricultural policy

Professor Davide Viaggi is coordinating a pan-European study focusing on how rural landscape generates economic activity for local communities. In this fascinating interview, he explores the value of rural landscapes and how this can be improved

Can you begin by outlining the key objectives of CLAIM and the context from which this work emerged?

The context is given by the current state of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and public goods. There is recognition of the importance of public goods – of which landscape is one – but little evidence of their economic value, particularly in relation to second-order effects. Many detailed studies exist, but no comprehensive framework. In this context, our objective is to provide the knowledge base to support an effective CAP policy design to improve landscape management and, in particular, provide insights into the ability of landscape to contribute to the production of added value for society in rural areas.

Three key priorities of the CAP are viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and balanced development of rural areas throughout the EU. How does the project support these goals?

Landscape can be seen as an aggregate of ecosystems, producing multiple services for society. As such, the project supports all of these objectives. Sustainable management of natural resources is more intuitive, but landscape management also affects the ability of landscape to produce food. We are investigating the connection between landscape and rural economies, hence contributing to balanced development of rural areas.

How do landscapes and landscape management contribute to rural economies? Is this something that can be further capitalised on?

They primarily contribute through food and biomass production and then through a number of services contributing to environmental regulation or cultural values. The main issue is that many of these are appreciated by society but do not translate into market values. Our specific aim is to understand how public good

can contribute to market values. For instance, how a pleasant landscape can contribute to developing economic activities such as tourism, which can contribute second order effects to the local economy.

What tools are you implementing in order to improve the knowledge base on landscape management and its impact on the rural economy?

We are testing a number of tools. For example, we already have a long history of monetary evaluation of landscape aesthetic features, but the linkage with the behaviour of people using landscape (travelling there, staying in hotels, buying local food, etc.) is still largely unexplored. But we should not restrict attention to tourism as the lone user of landscape. Other services such as clean water and food are used by the entire population living in an area. In addition we want to investigate which policy measures within the CAP can contribute to this.

Could you highlight the steps you are taking in order to develop a general framework that can be applied across various regions?

We began with the literature; the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) already provides a reference framework. The framework was then adapted to the problems in need of address (CAP, landscape and rural economies) and tested empirically using different methods. We discuss and validate this framework with a wide range of stakeholders before and after testing as this represents the best combination of hard and soft knowledge.

Have you faced any challenges in this or any other regard?

The main challenge is always the difficulty of fitting very specific local features of rural landscapes into a general way of thinking. But EU policy is forced to do so and research has to find solutions for this.

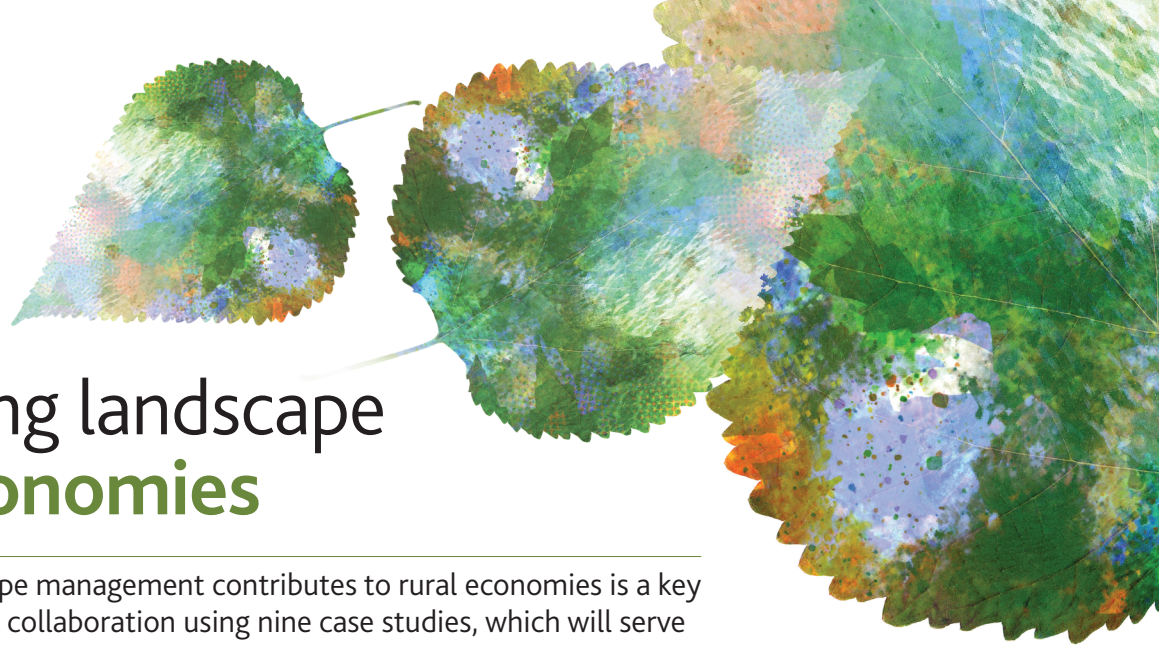


The project seeks to better support policy design. Are you working with decision makers in order to ensure your work is policy relevant and well-directed to make an impact in the sector?

This is of central importance to our work. Our stakeholder networks comprise decision makers from different levels including EU, national and local, and with varied expertise such as agriculture, planning and environment. Our consortium really incorporates those involved in designing, implementing and evaluating policies. The first meeting of the Italian group, for example, started with a project presentation and almost ended up as a forum for participatory local policy design.

What have been the stand-out successes of the project so far?

The project is still at a preliminary phase of framing the problem, developing conceptual frameworks and entering the empirical stage. However we have already attracted stakeholders through EU-level and local laboratories, and they helped us in developing this conceptual framework, providing at the same time an opportunity for networking and focusing the project. We now have a network of around 100 stakeholders.



The changing landscape of rural economies

Understanding how landscape management contributes to rural economies is a key goal of **CLAIM** – a European collaboration using nine case studies, which will serve as an important guide for policy makers updating the Common Agricultural Policy

SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION five decades ago, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has undergone many changes in an effort to maintain its relevance to the European communities it serves. This year it is once again under review and policy makers are making decisions that will shape the future of agriculture in Europe. To ensure that policy is based on the best possible knowledge, CLAIM – a project funded by the EU Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which began in January 2011 and will run for three years – is analysing how the CAP can improve rural landscape management.

LANDSCAPE, AGRICULTURE AND SOCIETY

Landscape management is fundamental to socioeconomic development. From farming to tourism, landscapes support a wide array of economic activities. However, analysing and understanding this added value is a complex task. CLAIM Coordinator Professor Davide Viaggi and his colleagues at the University of Bologna's Department of Agricultural Sciences and the Department of Statistics are therefore collaborating with nine other institutions from eight other European countries to create a pan-European policy evaluation framework.

The first stage of the project is the development of a preliminary framework connecting landscape, rural economy and the CAP. This will then be validated against evidence gathered from nine case studies. The third stage of the project will create a final version of the framework that incorporates the knowledge collected from the case studies. This work will enable the team to explain how the CAP influences the interactions between agriculture, landscape and rural development, and inform policy makers about the role of landscape management in the competitiveness of rural areas.

The relationship between landscape, agriculture and society is inevitably a complex one. This

means that studying landscape management requires a vast range of information and, in a continent with geography as diverse as Europe's, numerous case studies. Viaggi describes how the research covers a broad array of landscape management practices: "It ranges from practices contributing to fire prevention in Corsica to wind protection features in Poland". These case studies are crucial to the success of the project and so ensuring effective interaction between the participants and stakeholders at all levels – local, national and EU – is a major part of Viaggi's role.

LOCAL AND PLENARY STAKEHOLDER LABORATORIES

CLAIM devotes specific attention to the integration of researchers and stakeholders as a central component of the development of the framework to support policy design.

At the project level these relations are based on a network of stakeholders from EU Member States. The aim is to support the project activities through a participatory process; this network is called the Plenary Stakeholder Laboratory – PSL. The benefits of this approach include a privileged channel for the dissemination of project results, greater specificity when building and validating the framework and a network for exchanging practices and ideas throughout different geographical areas.

The research is particularly focused on how the current CAP influences all aspects of land use and the knock-on economic effects of landscape management. To this end, local stakeholder laboratories are pivotal to the project. They provide a hub for interaction between local stakeholders such as regional administrations, farm organisations, local NGOs, Women's Associations and Chambers of Commerce. This local network enables effective feedback between researchers and participants

in the case studies. They will meet at least twice during the research and support the work through a participatory consortium. This means that those who will be affected by the CAP can come together from a range of sectors and get directly involved in informing its future.

EXPLORING THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE

The first study is of Lowland Ferrara in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. This reclaimed coastal land has to strike a balance between agriculture and land condition. How this interacts with the local tourist industry is of particular interest to the researchers. The second, Maerkische Schweiz Natural Park in Brandenburg, Germany is also heavily used for tourism. It boasts glacial hills, forests, lakes and farmland. Tourists are attracted to its impressive biodiversity and historic villages. In Styria, Austria the focus is on the Mitterles Ennstal region. Two of the local communities are found in the valley, while two more reach into the upper alpine. This provides the opportunity to compare the interactions of landscape, agriculture and society, as the low areas in the valley are used for grass and arable farming, and the higher for meadows, pastures and forestry.

In The Netherlands, the team is examining the Winterswijk Municipality. The region's history has shaped its agriculture; farmers are restricted to small plots with fields enclosed by hedgerows. Agriculture contributes 10 per cent of the local communities' income but uses 74 per cent of the land. The fifth study lies further west, in Montoro, Spain. This hilly landscape supports a range of agriculture including olive groves, specialist cereals and attracts visitors to the Natural Park. The research examines the impact of landscape changes in olive groves as recreation environment.

Back to Eastern Europe and the sixth case study of the General Chlapowski Landscape Park in Wielkopolskie, Poland. Both small and large

farms have thrived in this flat area which is sustainably managed to protect the landscape. In the 19th Century rows of trees were planted to prevent soil erosion, a technique which has made the area famous. Another landscape used for both agriculture and tourism is Eğirdir in Isparta, Turkey. This historic region, known for its fruit trees, has a lake, mountains and a castle. The Turkish Government has protected this area as it attracts many tourists to the nearby National Park and Ski Center.

The eighth case study is in the Pazardzhik Region of Bulgaria. This landscape has mountains, farmland, low flatlands, artificial lakes and hot springs. This has generated a variety of agricultural activity, from cereal and potato crops to sheep and cattle rearing. There is potential for more tourism as the thermal waters are also suitable for spas. Finally, in Corsica, the researchers are studying land from sea level up to the 800 m height of the mountain range summit. Population migration towards coastal cities has dramatically changed the agriculture; some land has been abandoned and some developed into extensive farming systems. This study aims to establish the role of shepherds in preventing wild fires, a serious environmental threat to the area.

INFORMING POLICY

In each of these nine different landscapes the team will examine the relationship between agriculture and socioeconomic development, and try to establish how landscape influences job creation and income in rural areas. This will help them to understand how the CAP influences these interconnections and develop a framework for effective policy making. Each case study provides the opportunity to test their ideas and improve the framework.

Viaggi hopes to encourage the sector to think differently about landscape and to consider it as a complex entity rather than taking reductive approaches, choosing either total preservation or total destruction for economic gain: "We should be aware that landscape in the wider sense is our future and we have to be practical about it," he stresses. Ultimately, the potential influence of this work on policy can be huge. The finalised framework will be widely distributed and made available online. It promises to shape an intelligent CAP that takes into account the range of 21st Century pressures on our landscapes and better understands the benefit to society of good landscape management.

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INTELLIGENCE

CLAIM

SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN LANDSCAPE VALORISATION

OBJECTIVES

To provide the knowledge base to support an effective CAP policy design in the direction of improved landscape management, particularly providing insights into the ability of landscape to contribute to the production of added value for society in rural areas.

PARTNERS

University of Bologna, Italy • ZALF Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research, Germany • AgriLife Unit, IPTS, EC Joint Research Centre, Spain • Institute of Agricultural and Forestry Economics, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Austria • Institute for Environmental Studies, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands • Andalusian Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IFAPA), Spain • Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland • Department of Agricultural Economics, Süleyman Demirel University, Turkey • Agricultural University, Bulgaria • Laboratory of Research for the Development of Livestock, National Institute for Agronomic Research, France

FUNDING

EU Seventh Framework Programme – award no. 289578

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DAVIDE VIAGGI received his PhD in Agricultural Economics and Policy in 1997, at the University of Siena, Italy. He is now Associate Professor at the Department of Agricultural Sciences. His main research themes concern the CAP, the economics and management of water resources, the economics of the bioeconomy, the evaluation of agri-environmental policies, innovation in agri-food systems, the rural economy and farm management.



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