



**Matchmaking  
methodology**

## **Matchmaking methodology**

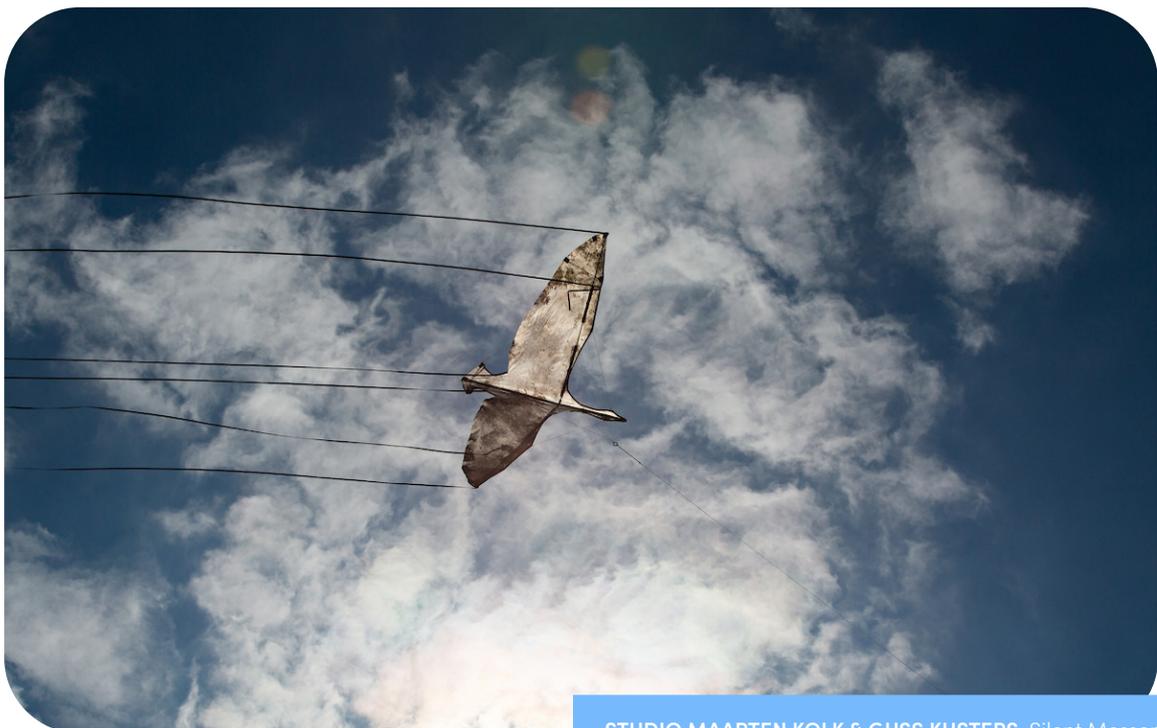
The LAND network brings together art, ecology, and community to address pressing environmental challenges through innovative collaborations.

This document outlines the history, methodology, and achievements of the LAND network, showcasing how artists, scientists, conservation organisations, and local communities can work together to create meaningful responses to ecological issues. From exploring landscapes to fostering creative interventions, the LAND matchmaking methodology offers a practical framework for interdisciplinary collaboration, blending artistic insight with environmental stewardship.

Whether you are an arts practitioner, a conservation professional, or a community leader, this guide provides inspiration and tools to forge deeper connections between landscape and audiences.

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## Introduction

LAND is a unique European network where art, ecology, and territory converge to address the urgent challenges of sustainable living and landscape conservation. For several years, this network—comprising Oerol (NL), Le Citron Jaune (FR), SYTEV (SK), and Activate Performing Arts (UK)—has been dedicated to creating frameworks that enable artists, scientists, and environmental managers to collaborate effectively.

We firmly believe this emerging interdisciplinary art form can play a crucial role in the cultural sector's response to the climate crisis. It bridges global challenges with local landscape issues, connects art with science and environmental practice, and engages audiences with the pressing concerns of our time. Our landscapes are evolving, our world is transforming—and we believe it is essential to forge a new partnership with the natural world. To inspire as many people as possible in this collective journey towards a sustainable future, we must imagine new potential worlds and reframe our relationships with our ecosystems.

Together, we are establishing “landscape laboratories” on Terschelling, in the Camargue, and in the mountains of northern Slovakia.

By embracing the unique characteristics of each laboratory, we foster a diverse range of experimentation and innovation that can be applied in other contexts across Europe. This approach also ensures that the activities of each partner are tailored to their specific needs, making them more sustainable and amplifying their local and regional impact.

This publication outlines the history, methodologies, and artistic practices of the LAND network, providing insights into its innovative approach to blending art, ecology, and local engagement.



# History of the network



## 1. History of the network

### 1.1 First Creative Europe programme: developing international connections

Le Citron Jaune, Oerol, and Activate Performing Arts have been at the forefront of the performing arts and public space art sectors for around thirty years. Each organisation has also been a pioneer in its region in the field of art in natural spaces. While today environmental issues and climate change are prominent in media and public discourse, this was not the case three decades ago. It was this shared, forward-thinking concern that brought Le Citron Jaune, Oerol, and Activate Performing Arts together. Beyond their mutual interests, they were united by a shared desire to work collaboratively in landscapes.

In 2019, the trio submitted a project to the European Commission under the Creative Europe programme, which resulted in the creation of LAND: Stewards and Artists. This initial partnership was soon joined by the Hungarian festival PLACCC, forming a network with clear objectives:

- **Produce:** Strengthen the relationships between partners, artists, and land stewards to support the creation and production of artistic works in the landscape.
- **Engage:** Foster local engagement with artistic work in natural spaces, with a particular focus on young people.
- **Exchange:** Develop the professional skills and expertise of partners and land stewards to deepen understanding of this specialised field of work.

The programme brought together over a dozen artists and companies, along with six environmental organisations from four countries. Through residencies and workshops, participants exchanged expertise and introduced diverse artistic perspectives to different landscapes.

This first phase of collaboration was a resounding success.

Siart Smit, Director of Oerol (2019–2024), reflected:

*"This collaboration was genuinely focused on forging a meaningful connection between land and art. The participants were carefully selected from across Europe, representing a great mix of locations and scales. We explored the landscapes through hikes and worked directly in the natural areas of the various festivals, sparking fresh ideas about site-specific art and its connection with nature. For example, [Oerol's Ecological Compass](#) was conceived during one of these meetings by festival organisers and artists. And let's not forget—we had plenty of fun along the way!"*

Despite the success of this initial programme, the partners recognised a desire to go further. They aimed to move beyond a straightforward artistic exchange and delve more deeply into the complexities and unique characteristics of the territories involved.

With a strong foundation established during the Creative Europe programme, the network sought new opportunities for collaboration and development, leading to the next phase under Erasmus+.

### 1.2 Erasmus+: getting to know each other

Building on their initial collaboration, the network capitalised on a pause in the Creative Europe application process to apply for another European Union programme: Erasmus+. Erasmus+ supports

professional exchanges between organisations across EU countries, providing an ideal opportunity for the partners to meet, explore each other's work in their respective territories, and shape the next chapter of the project.

As this second phase began, the group of partners saw some changes. Due to political and financial challenges, PLACCC withdrew from the project. At the same time, Bodø – a Norwegian city bidding to become the European Capital of Culture in 2024 – and SYTEV, a young Slovak cultural organisation, joined the network.

Over two years, the partners embarked on a series of visits to each other's countries. Each organisation was encouraged to invite artists and researchers they regularly collaborate with, resulting in a dynamic mobile campus. This campus brought together cultural operators, scientists specialising in ecological issues, and environmental managers.

These journeys offered an opportunity to examine specific territories in depth, explore diverse organisational models, and address the challenge of engaging audiences with environmental issues through artistic approaches. In the process, the LAND network partners developed a distinctive working method – interactive, dynamic, and uniquely suited to the project's ambitions, which will be explored in detail later.

The insights and relationships developed during the Erasmus+ phase set the stage for the next chapter: transitioning LANDscapes, a project that deepened the network's engagement with its territories and expanded its impact.

### 1.3 Transitioning LANDscapes: creating landscape laboratories

The third phase of cooperation between network partners – Le Citron Jaune (FR), Oerol (NL) and SYTEV (SK) – began in 2024 and will run until 2025. The first year focused on visits to the three key territories serving as fields of exploration: the Camargue, the island of Terschelling, and the Carpathian Mountains.

Before hosting these visits, each organisation formed an advisory group comprising researchers, local users (such as hunters, fishers, and sports enthusiasts), and residents. These groups brought valuable insights, informed by their lived experiences, backgrounds, and professions. During the two- to three-day visits, participants explored the area and identified its environmental, political, historical, and social challenges. The outcome of these discussions was the formulation of an ecological or environmental issue to guide the next stages of the project. This foundational step established the groundwork for meaningful artistic engagement with the territories and set the stage for the forthcoming artist residencies.

In the second year of the project, the focus shifted to the artists. Collaborators convened to select the participating artists, with the stipulation that each artist would work in a territory outside their home country. Each selected artist participated in a two-week residency in their designated territory, culminating in a presentation or early-stage sharing of their work.

From the outset, the partners decided to give transitioning LANDscapes a strong professional development focus. Although Activate Performing Arts was not a partner in the third phase of

cooperation, they were, with its extensive experience in supporting artists in its region, the perfect subcontractor to lead this effort. They organised a workshop in Dorset for the selected artists, providing dedicated time to deepen their understanding of the territories they would work in and the audiences they would engage with.

This workshop also served as an opportunity for the artists to connect, collaborate, and reflect collectively. Additionally, Activate Performing Arts supported the 3 network members in defining their objectives for their territories, particularly in fostering relationships with local partners.



# Matchmaking visits: understanding the lay of the land



## 2. Matchmaking visits: understanding the lay of the land

In the first six months of the project, the partners deepened their understanding of each other's contexts and landscapes through a series of matchmaking visits. These visits provided an opportunity to explore the regions where the network's partner organisations are based and connect with the people who live there. The goal was to uncover the dynamics shaping these territories and identify ecological issues of immediate concern to local populations.

Whether in the Camargue, the island of Terschelling, or the Žilina region, all three areas are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. In these places, the future is being shaped in real time, with inhabitants needing to adapt to and organise around these changes.

As part of their landscape laboratories, each partner established a landscape advisory group, bringing together cultural, environmental, and scientific perspectives. These groups co-hosted the matchmaking visits, ensuring that all partners gained a multifaceted understanding of each landscape. Hosting the visits also fostered a sense of shared ownership within the landscape advisory groups by involving them in welcoming and sharing their landscapes with visitors.

The matchmaking visits were instrumental in helping each partner gain a deeper understanding of their own landscape and its transitions. This insight informed the development of the artistic briefs, which serve as the foundation for the next phase of the project.

At the conclusion of the matchmaking phase, once all partners had formulated their artistic briefs, a final matchmaking meeting was held to connect artists and creators with each brief. These matches now form the basis of the artistic residencies for the remainder of the project. Only at this stage could the artistic programming for the transitioning LANDscapes project be fully defined, with the identified landscape transitions serving as the guiding principle for programming decisions.

The matchmaking visits provided an invaluable opportunity to examine three unique landscapes, each facing distinct ecological challenges. The following sections detail the findings and artistic approaches developed in the Camargue (FR), the Rajec Valley (SK), and Terschelling (NL).



MATCHMAKING VISIT  
The Camargue, France

## 2.1 First matchmaking visit: The Camargue, France

Le Citron Jaune is a multidisciplinary artistic and cultural organisation dedicated to exploring the relationship between arts, ecology, and territory. Situated in the unique geographical context of the Rhône Delta in the Camargue, this national centre welcomes artists who create works for public spaces and address economic, social, and political issues tied to ecological challenges. Nestled between the historic city of Arles to the north and the industrial hub of Le Grand Port de Marseille to the southeast, the Camargue offers contrasting landscapes and socio-economic conditions that inspire Le Citron Jaune's work.

For the matchmaking visit, the team at Le Citron Jaune focused on predefined themes or pressing issues within their landscape, using the visit to refine these topics. The two key themes were pollution and flooding—both in relation to rising sea levels and the interaction between saltwater, freshwater, and the water table. These topics formed the basis for a programme developed in collaboration with local stakeholders, who are evolving into an informal Landscape Advisory Group.

The visit also provided training opportunities to strengthen relationships between two key stakeholders in the region: the Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue, a prominent land steward, and La Tour du Valat, a significant scientific research organisation and land steward with a longstanding relationship with Le Citron Jaune.

The first on-site visit was to the old saltworks at Salin de Giraud, co-hosted by scientists from La Tour du Valat, land stewards from the Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue and the Réserve Nationale Camargue, and a local expert and user of the landscape. This visit revealed the transitions that will increasingly shape this landscape in the coming years, such as heightened salinisation due to sea level rise and reduced flow from the Rhône River, as well as communities under threat from the rising sea. It also highlighted the challenges of communicating these issues to local communities and businesses, particularly farmers and those with traditional ties to hunting and fishing in the area.

The second on-site visit took place on the opposite side of the Rhône, exploring the (post-)industrial landscapes of the Port of Marseille. Partners met with the team at the Institut Eco-Citoyen, a unique initiative advocating for the interests of local residents through citizen science and participatory approaches. The Institut Eco-Citoyen studies environmental impacts and pollution on human health to better understand the risks associated with industrial and logistical activities. Together with local communities, they are examining the dynamics of the Port of Marseille's changing landscape and its effects on those who live nearby.

Both visits underscored the importance of human stories within these landscapes. First-hand accounts from locals who have observed and experienced environmental changes provided essential insights that shaped the narrative and the planned artistic interventions. While the contrasts between these landscapes offer rich opportunities for artistic exploration, discussions emphasised the importance of ensuring that the artistic briefs remain manageable. The focus shifted towards highlighting positive actions and creating a supportive environment for artists to engage meaningfully without feeling overwhelmed.

## 2.2 Second matchmaking visit: Mala Fatra region, Slovakia

SYTEV, an NGO supporting active youth communities in north-western Slovakia, centred their matchmaking visit on the Rajec Valley. This visit highlighted the region's pressing environmental challenges, particularly the severe water scarcity experienced during the hot summer of 2022. This event brought widespread public attention to the region's vulnerabilities and the interplay between community, environment, and industry. Key local organisations, including Kvapka and My sme les, participated in discussions, which were further charged by recent political changes in Slovakia and their potential impact on environmental policies.

The Rajec Valley offers a unique ecological and geographical context. Along the Rajčianka River, the landscape transitions from ancient beech wildwood ecosystems in the northern part of the valley to mixed forests rich in biodiversity, including over 900 plant species, some endemic. The area's rocky terrain is known for its abundant reservoirs of hot mineral water, which are valued for their therapeutic properties. The topography alternates between steep rocky mountains and gentle meadows, creating a strikingly diverse environment.

The Slovak partners opted to produce a single artistic brief as the outcome of the matchmaking visit.

According to Silvia Janoskova, one of the Slovak project partners:

*“Throughout the process of the LAND project, it became evident to us what the primary focus should be. This clarity allowed us to streamline our efforts and concentrate on a single, well-defined brief. However, we still wanted to ensure that we remained open to a variety of practices and perspectives. By focusing on one brief, we could maintain a clear direction while still encouraging diverse approaches and innovative solutions.”*



The artistic brief aims to address critical challenges, such as bridging communication gaps between conflicting groups, using art to heighten environmental awareness, and navigating the complex dynamics of corporate influence in the region. For example, the bottled mineral water industry, represented by the Kofola company, became a focal point of public debate during the 2022 drought. As sections of the Rajčianka River completely dried up, long-ignored warnings from scientists became a stark reality, sparking widespread concern about sustainability and water management. Public frustration grew as the bottling company continued to sell mineral water despite the visible crisis.

The Slovak team envisions using artistic interventions to facilitate dialogue between the company, land stewards, artists, scientists, and the wider community. These efforts aim to elevate the conversation around corporate responsibility and sustainability in the region while fostering collaboration across diverse stakeholders.

The visit concluded with a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing the Rajec Valley. Participants combined theoretical knowledge with firsthand experiences to gain a holistic view of the issues at hand. They left with a strengthened commitment to integrating artistic endeavours with environmental stewardship. This approach seeks not only to address immediate ecological concerns but also to inspire broader engagement with sustainability through the lens of art, fostering resilience and resistance to both ecological and cultural erosion.

### 2.3 Third matchmaking visit: Terschelling, The Netherlands

Terschelling's Oerol Festival has gained recognition as one of Europe's most remarkable landscape arts festivals. From its modest beginnings as a small festival in 1982, Oerol has evolved into a cultural phenomenon. It is now structurally funded by the Dutch government as part of the "core cultural infrastructure" due to its vital national and international role in showcasing emerging talent and fostering collaborations with environmental and scientific stakeholders.

Located in the far north of the Netherlands, Terschelling is part of the Wadden Islands archipelago, which stretches from the Netherlands to Denmark. The island is renowned for its diverse landscapes, which include a Natura 2000-protected bird reserve and areas shaped by its unique position between two seas: the North Sea and the Waddenzee.

The Oerol team adopted an open approach to the matchmaking visit, prioritising conversations with a wide range of stakeholders to gather multiple perspectives on the island's landscapes and their transitions. This flexible method enabled project partners to engage with archaeologists, archivists, land stewards, scientists, farmers, entrepreneurs, and residents, each bringing unique insights into Terschelling's evolving environment.

Participants explored the island's varied and dynamic landscapes, from natural bird reserves to areas impacted by human activity. Meetings with local stakeholders, such as forest rangers, farmers, and cultural practitioners, provided valuable insights into key transitions affecting the island. These include rising salinity levels impacting agriculture, sea level rise threatening the freshwater lens, and local resistance to landscape changes, such as the removal of the sea dyke.

The artistic briefs developed during the visit focus on visualising often-invisible environmental processes, fostering community engagement, and navigating the complex balance between adaptation and resistance within the local context. These briefs aim to translate the island's transitions into compelling narratives and interventions.

The visit also underscored how Oerol's 40-year history has deeply embedded cultural significance within Terschelling's landscape. This enduring connection offers a powerful platform to explore environmental stories, particularly those centred on the delicate interplay between freshwater and saltwater and the evolving relationship between human and non-human inhabitants of the island.

## 2.4 Conclusion of matchmaking visits

The matchmaking visits have culminated in the creation of comprehensive artistic briefs that blend cultural, scientific, and environmental perspectives. These briefs will now guide the next phases of the LAND project as artists and creators develop interventions addressing local and broader European environmental issues. Each partner's unique landscape has shaped an artistic approach designed to foster meaningful community engagement and inspire creative solutions to the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

These matchmaking visits resulted in artistic briefs that reflect the complexity of each landscape while ensuring practical and creative responses to environmental challenges. With this groundwork laid, the LAND methodology emerges as a cohesive approach to integrating art and ecology.



# The LAND methodology



### 3. The LAND methodology

In the first phase of the transitioning LANDscapes programme, we've been working to document the network's visits to various territories and showcasing the methods and tools used to bridge the gap between art and nature. This unique methodology is rooted in empirical practice, developed and tested in the field rather than through theoretical discussions.

It draws upon a blend of scientific, traditional, artistic, and cultural knowledge, creating a multidisciplinary approach. The methodology is enriched by the exchange of practices among participants and supported by immersive, experiential engagements that foster a deeper, more sensitive understanding of the landscapes.

The experiences and findings from the matchmaking visits underpin the LAND methodology. This unique approach combines collaboration, interdisciplinary practices, and hands-on exploration to address ecological challenges through artistic creation.

#### 3.1 Working together as a network

##### 3.1.1 Diverse perspectives as an advantage

Collaboration across borders lies at the heart of the network's identity. It began with the shared curiosity of European cultural practitioners working in protected natural areas, united by a common passion for landscape-based arts. While the challenges they face are similar, the contexts and approaches are strikingly different.

Take Terschelling, for instance: an island that was rapidly adapted roughly 100 years ago to prevent it from being swallowed by the sea. In contrast, the Camargue is a protected nature reserve on the edge of one of Europe's largest petrochemical hubs. Meanwhile, Slovakia's Malá Fatra mountains is a pristine landscape under pressure from urban sprawl, mass tourism, and deforestation, all of which threaten its rich biodiversity.

The organisations involved also reflect this diversity. Oerol is a more than 40-year-old festival that draws 55,000 visitors in just ten days. Le Citron Jaune, on the other hand, is a residency centre that focuses on local projects. SYTEV is a budding organisation shaping its cultural vision, while Activate Performing Arts operates as a festival organiser, producer, collaborator, and curator in rural England.

This diversity isn't a challenge—it's a strength. By bringing together such varied perspectives, the network fosters rich exchanges about how to run cultural projects that are deeply rooted in and responsive to their regions. Adding a blend of art and science makes this collaboration even more impactful.

##### 3.1.2 Bridging disciplines: the art-science connection

All the network's partners are experienced in blending arts with environmental science. Le Citron Jaune works with organisations like the Tour du Valat and the Eco-Citizen Institute, Oerol collaborates with the Waddenacademie and Staatsbosbeheer, and SYTEV partners with the Malá Fatra Valley National Park and Kvapka. This integration of art and science forms the backbone of their approach.

These collaborations are a two-way street. Scientists and environmental managers offer crucial insights into ecosystems and help guide artists in understanding the landscapes they're working with. In turn, artists use their creativity to make scientific ideas more engaging and accessible—whether for the public or policymakers—especially when the topics are complex or even unsettling. Artistic interventions can spark new ways of thinking and create emotional connections, making it easier for people to engage with environmental issues.



AND NOW Wayfaring

Perhaps most importantly, this cross-pollination between art and science fuels innovation. It opens up new ways to imagine and design less destructive ways of living in the world.

In the transitioning LANDscapes programme, this collaboration takes shape through the Landscape Advisory Groups. These informal groups bring together expertise to provide the scientific foundation for artistic projects and support artists as they navigate the landscapes and issues they'll be working on.

This cooperative, cross-disciplinary foundation ensures that all partners are aligned in their objectives and methodologies, creating a strong base for the next stage of work in the field.

### 3.1.3 Sharing ideas and practices

Cooperation is the network's driving force, with decision-making carried out collectively and democratically. Regular meetings are held to address everything from project objectives and timelines to budgets, ecological priorities, and artistic decisions.

These gatherings are more than logistical—they're a chance to discuss local challenges and share approaches that feed into both the project itself and each partner's year-round activities. They also help shape a shared philosophy centred around three key ideas:

#### **Art as a tool for ecological change**

Art can be a powerful catalyst for rethinking our relationship with the environment. By shifting perspectives, resolving tensions, and highlighting the fragility of ecosystems, art helps people reconnect with nature, whether it's through animals, rivers, or forests. Participatory works, storytelling, and performances can inspire action and give people a sense of agency, even in the face of daunting challenges.

### **Building community connections**

The partners identified three key groups to focus on:

- **Young people:** The next generation has the power to drive change. Engaging teenagers means equipping them with the tools for transformative thinking.
- **Decision-makers:** Reaching political leaders is crucial for influencing local and national policies.
- **Landscape users:** Hunters, fishers, and farmers are deeply connected to the land. Understanding their perspectives ensures the network's actions are inclusive and grounded in shared goals.

### **Cultural roots and contemporary artistic practices**

The partners are exploring how traditional folklore can intersect with contemporary creation. While not always the focal point, mythology and cultural traditions can enrich artistic work, anchoring it in the local context and deepening its ecological resonance. The myths and stories tied to each territory—whether in Terschelling, the Camargue, or Malá Fatra—offer fertile ground for artistic exploration.

This spirit of collaboration will continue as the artistic teams exchange ideas across the three laboratory territories. A workshop hosted by Activate Performing Arts in Dorset in 2025 will serve as a platform for these exchanges, ensuring the cross-pollination of ideas across the network.

## **3.2 Working in the field: a three-stage approach**

In the field, the LAND methodology comes to life through a three-stage approach: sensitive exploration, hypothesis testing, and the creation of artistic briefs. Each stage builds on the last, ensuring a thoughtful and comprehensive response to ecological challenges.

### **3.2.1 Sensitive exploration: generating hypotheses**

LAND operates as a living laboratory, with experimentation at the core of its methodology. This is reflected in its hands-on, experiential approach. As Kees Lesuis, former Artistic Director of Oerol, explains:

*“We discovered that the best way to learn about a landscape and to explore the environmental issues is to be there and experience it with the people who live and work there. To connect with the soil, the trees, the water, the insects, and the animals. We also learned that, with input from citizens, experts, scientists, and cultural organisations, artists can open up complex and urgent matters to wider audiences in creative and meaningful ways.”*

Participants immersed themselves in the landscapes, engaging with them in physical and symbolic ways. They hiked through mountains, cooked and tasted seascapes, explored ports, bathed in freezing waters, and cleaned beaches. These physical acts were complemented by artistic performances led by artists, designed to deepen participants' sensory and emotional connection to

the environment.

This serendipitous and experiential approach created the conditions for agile research, aligning organically with the themes of exploration. These insights directly informed surveys conducted in the research territories.

### 3.2.2 The survey: testing hypotheses

Each matchmaking visit was carefully orchestrated by the host organisation, focusing on themes that placed participants at the forefront of ecological change. The host's role was to guide the investigations of visiting partners.

The surveys combined site visits to landscapes reflecting local ecological challenges with meetings involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including scientists, environmental managers, artists, and landscape users such as fishers, hunters, and farmers. This multi-layered approach revealed a spectrum of perspectives, highlighting the social and political tensions that often accompany environmental upheaval.

The result was a nuanced understanding of the complexity of these challenges, providing a rich foundation for future artistic interventions.

### 3.2.3 Analysis and defining artistic briefs

The matchmaking visits identified key ecological and environmental challenges, which informed the creation of two artistic briefs per region. These briefs were shared with artists whose work could offer sensitive and creative perspectives on the issues at hand.

#### In the Camargue

In this region, where nature reserves coexist with industrial port areas, participants observed a landscape shaped by climate disruption and political inertia. The first artistic brief invites artists to explore how eco-emotions—emotional responses to climate change—can either hinder or inspire action. By understanding these emotions, the aim is to find ways to use them as catalysts for citizen and political engagement.

The second brief focuses on non-human perspectives, particularly species like gulls, which navigate both urban and wild environments. These creatures, simultaneously reliant on and independent of human activity, are impacted by pollution while also acting as agents of change. What can these species teach us about our ways of inhabiting and transforming the landscape?

#### In the Rajec Valley

In Slovakia, SYTEV's exploratory work centred on the paradox of water as both a natural treasure and a commercial resource. This delicate balance is increasingly strained by frequent droughts, exacerbated by national political instability. The brief calls for artistic exploration of these tensions, aiming to shed light on the complexity of balancing vital water needs with its economic exploitation.

Beneath Terschelling's dunes lies a vast reservoir of freshwater. Rising sea levels are forcing this freshwater to the surface, disrupting agriculture, ecosystems, drinking water supplies, and construction. The first artistic brief focuses on visualising these challenges and their growing impact on the island's future.

A pivotal issue is the potential reopening of the old dike separating the Boschplaat nature reserve from the sea. This European-protected reserve, one of the Netherlands' most valuable, has suffered biodiversity loss due to a lack of dynamism. The second brief encourages artists to explore this symbolic yet tangible transition, using creative approaches to highlight the interconnectedness of ecological and human systems.

With the groundwork of fieldwork complete, the focus shifts to artistic practice as a means of translating these ecological insights into creative interventions.

### **3.3 Artistic practice: bringing everything together**

At the heart of LAND's work is the belief that art can illuminate complex ecological issues and inspire meaningful engagement. The following sections highlight how artistic practice brings the project's vision to life.

#### **3.3.1 A long-term artistic connection**

Transitioning LANDscapes is rooted in addressing ecological challenges through the lens of site-specific artistic creation. This guiding principle meant that artistic perspectives were integrated throughout the project. At every stage, the partners engaged with artists—whether as members of the exploratory teams, as contributors presenting their work on specific occasions, or through performances linked to the project themes.

These companion artists, drawn from the four partner countries, participated in various ways, joining meals, exploratory walks, and informal meetings. Their input enriched the diagnosis of each territory, infusing the process with creative feedback and alternative viewpoints.

This ongoing collaboration also served as a pulse-check on the vitality of local artistic scenes. Partners connected with a diverse range of cultural players, such as Nová Synagóga and Stanica in Slovakia, Le Bureau des Guides in France, and Flang in de Pan on Terschelling. Visits were often timed to coincide with performances of contemporary local art, such as one scouting trip held during the run-up to Oerol Festival. These experiences deepened the partners' understanding of the cultural dynamics in each country and connected them with artists whose work resonated with the ethos of Transitioning LANDscapes.

#### **3.3.2 Collective matchmaking**

The selection of artists was shaped by these cultural exchanges and culminated in a brainstorming session in Brussels, marking the end of a year of research. This meeting synthesised the project's findings, combining insights from art, science, and ecology.

In keeping with the project's collective and contextual nature, the artistic selection process was not conducted through an open call. Instead, partners drew on their deep knowledge of the territories and ecological issues to decide collaboratively on the artists for the final stage of the project. Each partner produced detailed briefs outlining the parameters for their artistic commissions. These

documents specified the ecological issues to be addressed, the scientific stakes, timelines, public engagement goals, and dates for presenting the work. Based on these briefs, the partners proposed artistic teams whose skills aligned with the project's needs.

The selection criteria ensured diversity and balance, including gender representation, artists from all four partner countries, and a requirement for each residency to involve an artist from a different country than the host site.

Through a rigorous selection process, three exceptional artistic teams were chosen to interpret and address the challenges identified in the matchmaking visits.

### 3.3.3 Three artistic teams for three residencies

As a result of the matchmaking process, we arrived at three artists who will each engage with one of the project's contexts and briefs:

#### **Rara Woulib (FR) - will be working in the Rajec Valley**

The French company Rara Woulib draws inspiration from the rituals of traditional societies, reimagining them in communal spaces. Their work creates festive experiences where excess, joy, and togetherness merge, fostering spaces of care for both the individual and the collective. Their immersive performances move between the sacred and the profane, the real and the fictional, offering dreamlike journeys that connect audiences with shared human experiences.

#### **Rita Hoofwijk (NL) - will be working in the Camargue**

Dutch artist Rita Hoofwijk's work emerges from specific locations or contexts and takes various forms, including spatial interventions, installations, audio, and text. Her process begins with an attentive exploration of the environment, cultivating a thoughtful connection that later extends to the audience, inviting them into her reflective practice.

#### **David Koronczí (SK) - will be working on Terschelling**

Slovak artist and graphic designer Dávid Koronczí explores the intersection of food politics and artistic practice. His multidisciplinary work has been featured in group and solo exhibitions both in Slovakia and internationally, offering provocative insights into the cultural, ecological, and political dimensions of food systems.

These residencies, rooted in collaboration and creativity, embody the LAND network's commitment to using art as a transformative tool for ecological and cultural engagement. Together, they exemplify the potential of interdisciplinary approaches to address the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

# Looking ahead: fostering sustainable connections



#### 4. Looking ahead: fostering sustainable connections

The LAND network has demonstrated how art and ecology can come together to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. Through its innovative matchmaking methodology, collaborative spirit, and interdisciplinary approach, the project has not only fostered creative interventions in three distinct landscapes but also set a precedent for how cultural and environmental practitioners can work together effectively.

As the artistic residencies unfold and the final works take shape, the impact of Transitioning LANDscapes will continue to resonate—within local communities, across Europe, and beyond. The insights gained and connections forged throughout this process are intended to inspire new collaborations, deepen understanding, and catalyse action in other contexts facing similar challenges.

LAND's work does not stop here. The methodologies, artistic practices, and collaborative frameworks developed through this project offer a template for future initiatives that seek to bridge the gap between art, science, and community engagement. Whether in the Camargue, the Rajec Valley, or Terschelling, the lessons learned in these laboratories of the living will inform a broader dialogue about sustainability, resilience, and our shared future with the natural world.

By continuing to champion creativity, interdisciplinarity, and local engagement, the LAND network aims to inspire others to rethink their relationship with the environment. Together, we can forge a path towards more sustainable and meaningful ways of inhabiting our landscapes.



## The LAND matchmaking methodology: a quick guide for arts practitioners

The LAND matchmaking methodology is an adaptable, interdisciplinary approach that combines artistic creativity, scientific insight, and community engagement to address ecological challenges in meaningful and innovative ways. Developed through collaboration among cultural practitioners, conservation organisations, and land stewards, this methodology is designed to bridge the gap between art and environmental stewardship.

### Key steps in the methodology

#### Establish collaborative foundations

- Bring together a diverse network of partners, including artists, conservation organisations, land stewards, scientists, and local communities.
- Create advisory groups for each territory, ensuring a mix of cultural, scientific, and environmental expertise. These groups help to contextualise artistic interventions and guide research.

#### Explore the landscape sensitively

- Begin with immersive, on-the-ground exploration to deeply connect with the environment. This might include hikes, symbolic artistic acts, or engaging in everyday activities like fishing or farming.
- Invite local land stewards and conservation experts to share their knowledge, helping artists and participants understand the ecological, social, and political dimensions of the landscape.

#### Survey and create artistic briefs

- Combine site exploration with meetings involving stakeholders such as scientists, farmers, and cultural practitioners to uncover the layered dynamics of the region, including ecological pressures, conservation challenges, and community concerns.
- Synthesize findings from these surveys into clear artistic briefs that articulate key ecological issues and creative opportunities. These briefs should balance artistic freedom with the practical and environmental needs identified by conservation organisations and land stewards.

#### Select and support artists

- Collaboratively select artists whose work aligns with the ecological and cultural goals of the project.
- Provide artists with access to local expertise, including scientists and land managers, to enhance their understanding of the territory.

#### Facilitate artistic residencies

- Host residencies that allow artists to create site-specific works while engaging with local communities and conservation organisations.
- Encourage cross-pollination of ideas through workshops or exchanges with other artists and practitioners.

## **Why this matters for conservation organisations and land stewards**

This methodology offers a unique way for conservation organisations and land stewards to engage new audiences and foster deeper connections with the landscapes they work to protect.

By integrating arts into environmental work:

- Artists can translate complex ecological issues into accessible and compelling narratives, inspiring public awareness and action.
- Collaboration with cultural practitioners creates opportunities to highlight the value of biodiversity and sustainability in innovative ways.
- Shared ownership of the process strengthens partnerships between conservationists, land managers, and local communities, ensuring that the interventions are relevant, inclusive, and impactful.



By following the LAND matchmaking methodology, arts practitioners can not only create meaningful artistic works but also contribute to a broader dialogue about conservation, sustainability, and the role of creativity in addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Network members



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