



Scholarship Programme 2025

Insights & Reflections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

~~ Still work in progress ~~ with support of AI ~~ Still work in progress ~~ with support of AI ~~

Inhalt

Summary Report - Insights and Reflections:	3
Dupa Gard, RO - Paul Hermann, DE	3
Special context: Dupa Gard as host of the Rural Experience Hub Kick off meeting	3
Report from the trainee, Paul Hermann, DE:	3
cob Building with Earth, GR - Magda, AT	3
Report from the host, cob, Building with Earth, Greece	3
Report from the trainee, Magda from Austria:	4
Obelisk Farm, LV - Francisco & Antonia, PT & UK	5
Report from the host, Obelisk Farm, Lativa	5
Report from the trainee, Francisco from Portugal:	5
Report from the trainee, Antonia from UK/ Latvia:	6
Executive Summary	7
Intergenerational, Access to Land, and Gender in the Reports	7

Summary Report - Insights and Reflections:

For detailed reports from hosts and trainees, please visit our [website](https://www.forum-synergies.eu)

Dupa Gard, RO – Paul Hermann, DE

26.5.2025-10.6.2025



Special context: Dupa Gard as host of the Rural Experience Hub Kick off meeting

Report from the trainee, Paul Hermann, DE:

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** This is a key theme. The workshop discussions explicitly focused on “*the intergenerational challenges facing rural areas*”. It also highlights the lack of young villagers returning, the closure risk of the local school, and the need to create spaces where “*young and old, from near and far*” can connect.
- **Access to Land Aspects:** While not the central theme, it comes up indirectly. The text describes how a local family invested all their savings in farming machinery and chose to live off-grid, highlighting the barriers and costs of farming infrastructure. It also notes systemic obstacles like “*rigid land use laws*” and “*fragmented and unclear property rights*” as challenges to rural development
- **Gender Aspects:** The report doesn’t treat gender as a primary focus. Women are mentioned (e.g., Ioana as a farm founder, a young woman returning from the city, the newly elected female mayor), but there’s no deeper discussion of gender-specific challenges or inequalities in rural areas.

cob Building with Earth, GR – Magda, AT

3.6.2025 - 28.7./ 13.8.2025



Report from the host, cob, Building with Earth, Greece

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** Magdalena experienced *multigenerational dynamics* both inside the COB community and in the surrounding village.
She joined *community café events and cultural exchanges* with children, elders, and locals.
Her reflections highlight that intergenerational encounters foster **learning, empathy, and resilience**, but also come with complexities
intergenerational exchange as a lived practice – not just a challenge, but a vital element of community resilience and cultural continuity.
- **Access to Land Aspects:** She explored land access both **practically** (through permaculture, soil regeneration, biodiversity care, collective farming) and **systemically** (land registry problems, seed patent restrictions)

COB is portrayed as a place where land is treated as a commons, shared via workshops and collective activities.

The report connects ecological land stewardship with broader structural challenges, showing how local practice and systemic barriers are intertwined.

- **Gender Aspects:** Magdalena paid close attention to **gender dynamics** within the community. She observed structural patterns in the division of tasks, raised questions about inclusion and implicit hierarchies, and provided *critical reflections* that sparked internal dialogue. Gender is treated as a serious, reflective theme. Her observations contributed to the community's ongoing self-awareness and improvement.

Report from the trainee, Magda from Austria:

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** Intergenerational exchange is portrayed as a vital element of resilience and cultural continuity. At COB, people from toddlers to pensioners live and work together, forming both “blood” and “chosen” family constellations. This arrangement recreates the benefits of traditional multigenerational households while avoiding some of their tensions. Children are seen as a social glue, while elders pass on valuable knowledge. Beyond the farm, the local café becomes another intergenerational meeting point, where villagers share dances, skills, and traditions, bridging the farm community and local life.

Reflection: Intergenerational life at COB recreates traditional rural patterns, but in a community-of-choice model that can be more supportive than family-only structures.

- **Access to Land Aspects:** The report presents access to land as both a systemic challenge and a practical experiment in alternatives. Farmland scarcity, soil sealing, weak land registry systems in Greece, and restrictive seed patents illustrate structural barriers that limit security and autonomy. Against this backdrop, COB demonstrates another approach: ecological farming that preserves soil fertility, permaculture practices such as food forests, crop rotation, composting and worm systems, and an open-door policy that makes land use accessible to volunteers and learners who lack capital. Land is treated less as private property and more as a shared resource, managed for present needs and future generations.

Reflection: COB's model makes land accessible to people without capital, while systemic barriers (bureaucracy, patents) remain major obstacles.

- **Gender Aspects:** The report foregrounds gender as a structural issue rather than an individual one. Farming is described as historically male-dominated, with women's contributions undervalued. Within COB, the division of labor reflects both efficiency and entrenched patterns: household tasks largely carried out by volunteers (primarily women and non-binary participants), while permanent members—mostly men—focused on higher-responsibility roles. Occasional reinforcement of stereotypes, such as male volunteers refusing household duties, further illustrates how patriarchal dynamics can persist even in intentional communities. The broader village context reinforces this picture, with men occupying public café spaces while women remain largely absent from communal venues. The report concludes that constant questioning of attitudes and practices is necessary to move toward healthier, fairer gender roles in rural life.

Reflection: While no explicit intent to discriminate, the report highlights **structural gender imbalances** both within COB and in the surrounding culture, calling for conscious awareness and questioning of habits.

Obelisk Farm, LV – Francisco & Antonia, PT & UK

20.08.2025 - 3.09.2025



Report from the host, Obelisk Farm, Lativa

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** The report places strong emphasis on encounters across generations. Time spent with older community members, such as Jānis the lifelong farmer and a local poet, is described as a way of accessing knowledge that cannot be written down but only transmitted through stories and presence. These exchanges are presented as mutual: the younger trainees receive wisdom and perspective, while their curiosity and energy give something back to the elders. Everyday practices, such as cooking side by side with others of different ages, reinforce this sense of intergenerational learning through doing.

Reflection: Intergenerational relations are central and highlighted through storytelling, shared meals, and knowledge transmission.

- **Access to Land Aspects:** The theme of access to land is not addressed directly in legal or systemic terms, but it is reflected through lived practice. The farm embodies an alternative model of land use: small-scale, self-reliant, and based on hemp cultivation, processing, and product-making. The emphasis is on using land as both a productive space and a cultural landscape, where cultivation, craft, and storytelling converge. Visits to other rural entrepreneurs (including a young goat farmer) extend this reflection, showing how individuals claim space for sustainable livelihoods even in challenging rural economies.

Reflection: Access to Land is reflected through the farm's model of small-scale, value-based land use and the example of rural entrepreneurs, rather than through systemic critique.

- **Gender Aspects:** Gender is not discussed explicitly as a thematic focus. However, glimpses of gender dynamics appear indirectly. In the kitchen, for example, tasks are shared across male and female trainees, breaking from stereotypical divisions of labor. Encounters with rural women entrepreneurs, such as the young goat farmer, highlight female agency in shaping rural futures. While the report does not analyze gender roles critically, it reflects a context where men and women both contribute actively, and where women's initiatives in rural entrepreneurship are acknowledged.

Reflection: Gender is only indirectly present, through everyday practices and entrepreneurial examples, but not explored as a structural issue.

Report from the trainee, Francisco from Portugal:

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** Intergenerational exchange is portrayed as a dynamic balance of tradition and innovation. Elders contribute continuity and stability, while younger members and volunteers bring energy and new perspectives. Examples include farmers passing down cheesemaking skills, younger people exploring digital marketing at markets, and the hemp house project combining historical practices with modern sustainable architecture. Intergenerationality is also described as a transmission of values – respect for land, cultural traditions, and openness – ensuring continuity within rural communities.

Reflection: Intergenerational exchange blends tradition and innovation, uniting elders' experience with younger generations' new ideas.

- **Access to Land Aspects:** Access to land is framed as more than ownership – it is about **connectivity and infrastructure**. A reliable country road linking the farm to the outside world is described as essential for tractors, supplies, tourists, interns, and educational activities. In this perspective, land is not only the physical ground for cultivation but also the bridge that connects rural projects with society at large. The report highlights how accessibility allows Obelisk Farm to serve as a hub for knowledge exchange, cultural events, and entrepreneurship.

Reflection: Access is understood as connectivity, with reliable infrastructure enabling the farm to function as a hub for learning and exchange.

- **Gender Aspects:** Gender equality is presented as a **natural and lived reality** at Obelisk Farm. Tasks across the farm – from welcoming visitors and preparing food to hempcrete construction and decision-making – are described as shared equally between men and women. The report emphasizes the absence of gendered hierarchies and contrasts this with traditional farming contexts where divisions are common. This environment is portrayed as respectful, inclusive, and efficient, showing that conscious practice of equality can become embedded in daily routines and strengthen the resilience of community life.

Reflection: Gender equality is lived naturally, with all tasks shared collaboratively and without hierarchy.

Report from the trainee, Antonia from UK/ Latvia:

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** Intergenerational exchange appears in visits to older locals and neighbors, where skills, stories, and traditions were shared across age groups, reinforcing community bonds.
- **Access to Land Aspects:** Access is explored through hemp farming and small-scale production, with reflections on how infrastructure, machinery costs, and market conditions shape what is possible for sustainable small-scale farms.
- **Gender Aspects:** Gender is not addressed directly as a theme, though women farmers and entrepreneurs (like the goat farmer Jolanta) are highlighted as examples of agency and alternative rural livelihoods.

Castello de Pontentino, IT – Lana, FR CASTELLO DI **POTENTINO**

22.9.2025 - 12.10.2025

- **Intergenerational Aspects:** While not the central theme, the report reflects intergenerational continuity through the estate's long agricultural lineage and the collaboration between long-term workers, younger trainees, and visiting students or artists. Castello di Potentino is portrayed as a place where **knowledge and stewardship are passed across generations**, linking centuries of land care with present-day sustainable practice and learning.
- **Access to Land Aspects:** Access is explored through the lens of **stewardship and sustainability rather than ownership**. The estate is described as a “living, working agricultural property” that integrates production, ecology, and culture. Its remoteness



preserves authenticity while enabling models of responsible land use. The discussion of small-scale, integrated farming highlights how **direct engagement with land, soil health, and biodiversity** contrasts with industrial agriculture and raises questions about scalability and long-term viability.

- **Gender Aspects:** Gender is a major focus. Extended dialogue with Charlotte Horton, the estate's founder, examines **systemic gender bias in agriculture and viticulture**, where women's authority is often questioned. The report analyzes how recognition, leadership, and labor are gendered, stressing the need for **structural and cultural change** so that women's expertise and vision in rural professions are fully acknowledged.

Reflection: The report strongly engages with **gender dynamics**, situates **access to land** within sustainable and relational land use, and conveys **intergenerational continuity** through lived rural practice and knowledge transmission.

Executive Summary

Intergenerational, Access to Land, and Gender in the Reports

Across the reports, three recurring themes are documented: access to land, gender, and intergenerational exchange.

Intergenerational exchange is referred to in all contexts. The reports describe collaborations between different age groups, learning from older generations, and the transmission of skills and traditions in both family and community settings. Some also note demographic challenges, including outmigration and the need for young people's engagement in rural areas. In the report from Castello di Potentino, intergenerational continuity is described through long-term agricultural knowledge and care for the land.

Access to Land is described in diverse ways. The reports refer to legal and administrative barriers, such as rigid land use laws and unclear property rights, and to ecological or community-based practices, including permaculture, collective use, and small-scale farming. Some reports describe access through infrastructure and connectivity, while others focus on the daily relationship between people and the land. In the report from Castello di Potentino, land is described as a working agricultural property where sustainability, biodiversity, and cultural continuity are central.

Gender is addressed with varying depth. Several reports mention women in leadership or entrepreneurial roles. Others analyse structural patterns, divisions of labour, and the persistence of unequal participation. In the report from Castello di Potentino, gender bias in agriculture and viticulture is discussed through the experience of a female estate founder, highlighting how expertise and recognition are linked to gendered expectations.

Together, these reports provide examples of how intergenerational collaboration, gender relations, and access to land appear in the different settings of the 2025 Forum Synergies Scholarship Programme.