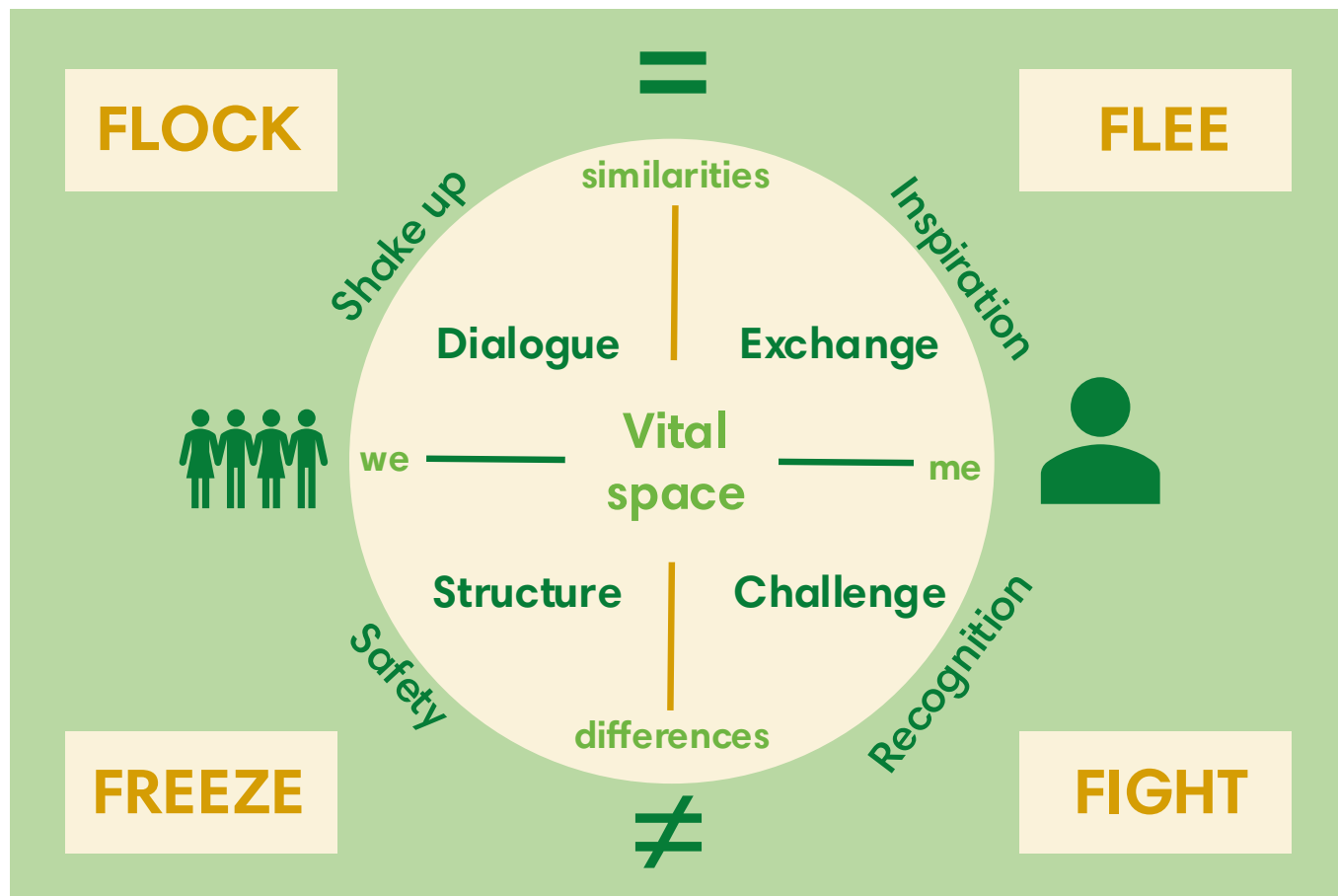


The Spiral of Initiatives - A Process Model for Developing Agroforestry Initiatives



The Spiral of Initiatives offers a practical framework for understanding the step-by-step evolution of agroforestry projects — from a single idea to established practice. It helps answer essential questions:

- What is the agroforestry initiative about?
- How far has it progressed?
- Who needs to be engaged at each phase?
- What can be done to keep it moving forward?

Unlike a step-by-step plan, this spiral model acknowledges the non-linear nature of innovation in agroforestry. It allows for setbacks, pauses, and restarts — a reality for many land-use and sustainability projects.



The Stages of the Spiral

1. Initial Idea

Agroforestry often begins with an idea that challenges the status quo — perhaps integrating trees into livestock grazing systems, hedgerows for biodiversity, or silvopasture models for soil restoration. These ideas may arise from a farmer, advisor, or researcher exposed to different practices, environments, or challenges such as climate stress or declining biodiversity. Sometimes, a local problem (e.g. soil erosion or reduced resilience to drought) leads to a creative solution — which then sparks broader interest.

2. Inspiration

At this stage, the initiator seeks out others with shared interests in multifunctional land use and regenerative agriculture. Informal conversations, farm walks, or peer-to-peer exchanges can generate collective enthusiasm. A shared vision for change begins to emerge — for instance, a landscape where trees support productivity, carbon storage, and ecological health. This shared ambition energizes a core group of change agents committed to exploring possibilities. In agroforestry, ambition might include restoring ecosystem services, enhancing farm resilience, or strengthening local food systems — goals that transcend individual gains.

3. Planning

Change agents begin structuring their efforts — perhaps forming a working group, cooperative, or pilot network. They often need space to act, which might mean:

- Funding from environmental programs or CAP schemes
- Access to advisory services or test plots
- Permission to pilot on public or institutional land

At this stage, engagement with enabling actors (e.g. funders, extension advisors, landowners, policy makers) becomes crucial. These actors do not need to share the entire vision — just enough interest to provide room for experimentation. Early agreements should be flexible but clear enough to build trust.

4. Development

With space secured, the network tests ideas — integrating trees with crops, managing mixed-species hedgerows, or trialling new tree-planting layouts. Here, it is important not to aim for system-wide transformation immediately. Instead, change agents demonstrate that change is possible through small, well-documented examples. This often involves:

- Engaging researchers or technical advisors
- Capturing lessons learned
- Documenting results through case studies or demonstration sites

At the same time, early contact with other key stakeholders (e.g. farm advisors, local planners, neighbouring farmers) strengthens readiness for the next stage.

5. Realisation

Scaling up agroforestry involves broader collaboration — and negotiation. This might mean:

- Aligning tree-planting with local or national policy
- Working with cooperatives or producer groups
- Convincing stakeholders of long-term benefits despite short-term uncertainties



At this stage, strategic engagement is essential. Agroforestry promoters must present compelling evidence — cost-benefit data, ecological monitoring results, or farmer testimonials — to build support and resolve concerns. Compromise and shared interests become the foundation for collective movement.

6. Dissemination

As success stories emerge, other farmers, advisors, or organizations begin to adopt agroforestry practices. Dissemination may happen organically, but often needs to be strategically planned, using:

- Knowledge-sharing events
- Farmer-to-farmer exchanges
- Online platforms and toolkits
- Integration into advisory service curricula

Importantly, access to knowledge, funding, and planting material can either accelerate or hinder this spread. These resources must be made available and accessible.

7. Embedding

Eventually, agroforestry practices become normalized. Advisory services include agroforestry in their toolkit. CAP supports are adjusted to better accommodate trees on farms. Agricultural colleges teach integrated land use. Regional strategies reflect agroforestry's potential. However, if the institutional structures fail to fully support these practices, new challenges will arise — and the spiral may begin again with a new generation of initiatives.

Why a Spiral?

Agroforestry is complex and adaptive. It doesn't follow a predictable, stepwise path. The spiral recognizes:

- That not all innovations proceed smoothly
- That each stage requires distinct actions and support
- That reflection on your current position helps avoid burnout and guides strategic decision-making

Background and Relevance to Agroforestry

The Spiral of Initiatives was originally developed by Eelke Wielinga and Wim Zaalmink to guide sustainable innovation in livestock farming. Its relevance to agroforestry is strong — both fields involve complex systems, diverse stakeholders, and a need for long-term thinking.

Agroforestry practitioners, advisors, and facilitators can use this model to:

- Diagnose where their initiative currently stands
- Anticipate challenges ahead
- Engage the right actors at the right time
- Adapt strategies to maintain momentum



References

Wielinga, H.E., Zaalmink, B.W., Bergevoet, R.H.M., Geerling-Eiff, F.A., Holster, H., Hoogerwerf, L., Vrolijk, M. (2007). Networks with Free Actors: Encouraging Sustainable Innovations in Animal Husbandry by Using the FAN Approach. Wageningen University and Research

OUTCOMES OF THE COURSE MODULE

- Understanding of innovation processes and co-creation approaches
- Skills to facilitate creativity and idea generation
- Tools to manage group dynamics and sustain network momentum
- Confidence to act as an innovation broker and network facilitator

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The Network Analysis- Mapping Connections in Agroforestry Initiatives

In agroforestry, where land-use innovation depends on collaboration among diverse actors — from farmers and advisors to policymakers and researchers — Network Analysis is a practical tool to map these relationships. It places the agroforestry initiative at the centre and explores how different people and institutions interact with and contribute to its development.

This process helps identify:

- Who plays what role?
- Which relationships are critical to success?
- Where are the weak links that need strengthening?



The Stages of the Spiral

Diverse Roles in the Agroforestry Network

Successful agroforestry projects rely on the engagement of people with different motivations, capacities, and levels of involvement. Network Analysis helps categorize them into meaningful roles:

- **Users:** Farmers, communities, or landscapes that benefit directly from the agroforestry intervention (e.g., improved soil, shade for livestock, food diversification).
- **Suppliers:** Those providing essential inputs such as seedlings, knowledge, funding, or technical support (e.g., nurseries, research institutes, funders).
- **Partners:** Individuals or organizations who feel co-responsible for the initiative and actively help shape its direction (e.g., agroforestry extension advisors, local leaders).
- **Links:** Intermediaries who help partners connect with users and suppliers (e.g., cooperative coordinators, extension agents, knowledge brokers).

Key guiding questions include:

- What is the agroforestry initiative trying to achieve?
- What resources or supports are required?
- Who are the essential actors?
- Who is positioned to connect others?
- Where are the most important gaps in the network?

Steps for Agroforestry Network Analysis

1. Place the Agroforestry Initiative at the Centre

This is your focal point — whether it is a farmer-led tree-planting movement, a silvopasture trial, or a regional agroforestry policy push. Use a large visual medium (e.g., flipchart, tabletop) to sketch the analysis.

2. Identify the 'Factors that Matter'

What elements are needed to bring this initiative to life? These may include land rights, policy frameworks, market access, planting material, or climate-smart practices. Write these elements on cards and position them around the central initiative.

3. Add Real People as Actors

Assign individuals (rather than just institutions) to each factor. Who is taking action? Who needs to be involved? The more specific you can be — naming a regional advisor or local nursery manager rather than just their organizations — the clearer the network becomes.

4. Map the Users

These are the farmers or land managers who will benefit from the agroforestry system. Place them in the outer circle and mark them in black.

5. Map the Suppliers

Suppliers are essential contributors of resources, funding, or services. Mark these in blue. Note that some users (e.g., experienced farmers) may also serve as suppliers by offering advice or planting stock.



6. Identify the Links

Links are crucial. They are the connectors — for example, a facilitator who introduces a farmer to a funding scheme, or a community rep linking researchers with local needs. Use green cards for these actors, indicating their specific relationships.

What the Final Network Map Reveals

By the end, the Network Analysis will visually depict:

- The agroforestry initiative at the centre
- The users it serves
- The suppliers it relies on
- The links that facilitate exchange and collaboration
- The partners who carry the vision forward

You will also see where important connections are missing or weak — informing your next steps for outreach, facilitation, or capacity-building. Unlike rigid stakeholder maps that define who's “in” and who's “out,” this method acknowledges that some people may not yet feel part of the initiative — but still have a vital role to play. Network boundaries remain open and adaptive, just like agroforestry systems themselves.

Moving Beyond Power Maps

Conventional stakeholder or power analyses often focus on institutional hierarchies and negotiations. The FAN Network Analysis, by contrast, starts with shared ambitions, not positional authority. It emphasizes:

- Real people over institutional labels
- Informal networks and energy flows
- Movement sparked by dreams and opportunities, rather than just procedures and constraints

This approach aligns closely with the Inspiration Stage of the Spiral of Initiatives — where informal collaboration and creative momentum are most alive.

References

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OUTCOMES OF THE COURSE MODULE

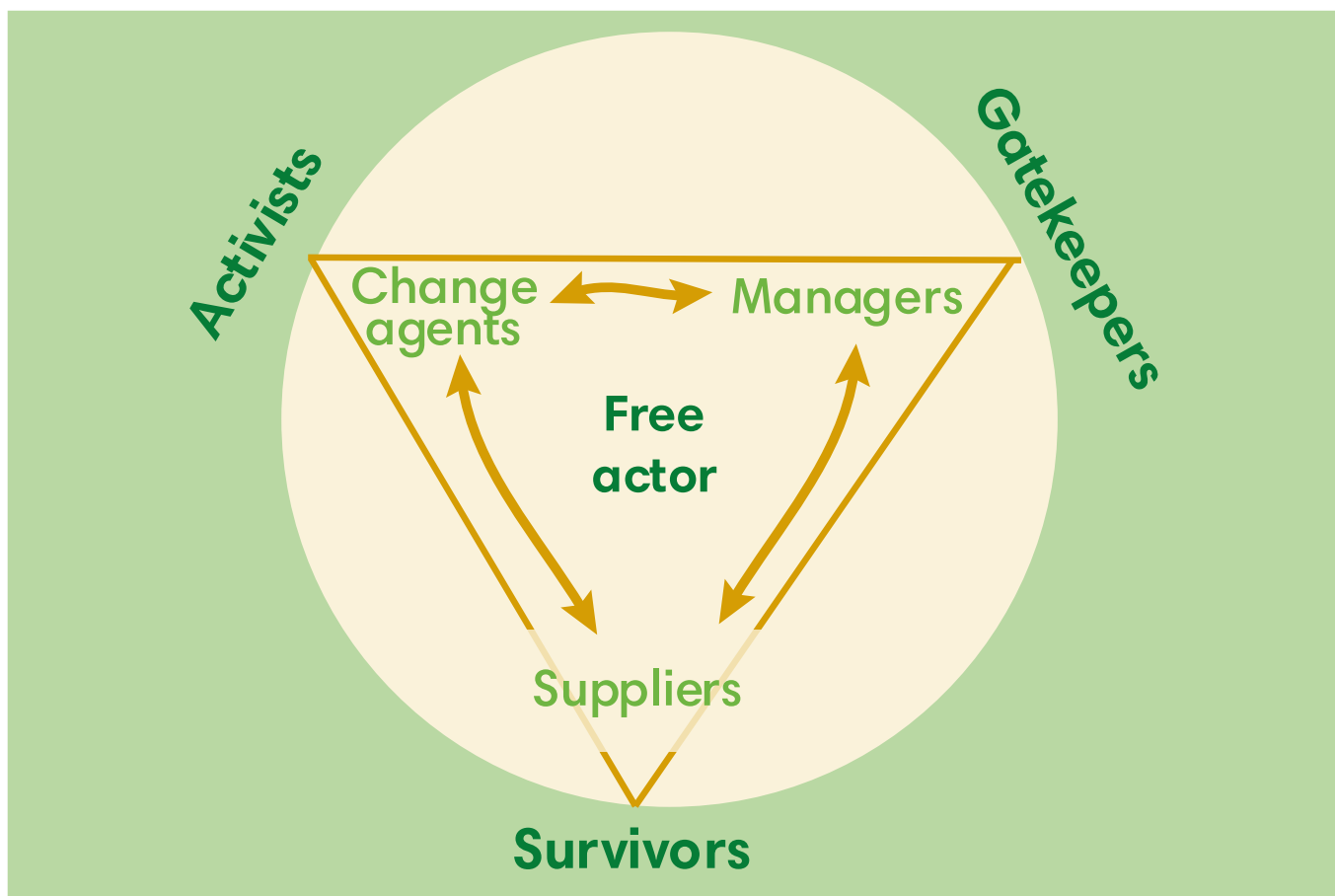
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The Triangle of Change- Navigating Change in Agroforestry Networks



A Tool for Strategic Action

In agroforestry, where diverse actors collaborate to bring about ecological, economic, and social benefits on the land, change does not happen in a vacuum. It occurs in a dynamic space shaped by ambition, existing structures, and the realities of personal survival. The Triangle of Change helps facilitators, advisors, and innovators act more strategically within agroforestry networks. It maps out three typical roles that people take up in response to change — not as fixed labels, but as positions that shift depending on context.

The Three Corners of the Triangle

1. Change Agents - Driven by Ambition

In the agroforestry context, these might be:

- A pioneering farmer trying alley cropping for the first time
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- A researcher connecting climate resilience goals to tree integration



Change agents are guided by a vision — they take initiative, inspire others, and invest energy to make something new happen. They often start small, test ideas in practice, and build momentum through collaboration. Shared ambition is a powerful fuel — especially when rooted in ecological care and community wellbeing.

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Gatekeepers represent the existing system — they set boundaries based on rules, policies, or institutional norms. In agroforestry, these may include:

- Agricultural advisors focused on compliance
- Policy officers managing subsidy frameworks
- Landowners with fixed rental agreements

Not all gatekeepers are resistant to change — but they do prioritize structure. They ask: Is this allowed? Is it fundable? Is it replicable? Change agents will inevitably have to negotiate with gatekeepers — but doing so prematurely can stall momentum.

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Survivors are those more focused on getting by than on changing the system. In an agroforestry setting, this could be:

- A farmer under financial pressure who sticks to what works
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They often do not share visible ambition — and engaging them too early drains energy. Some survivors may appear to be gatekeepers or even change agents, but their primary concern is self-preservation. You will know you are dealing with a survivor when your interaction feels like hard work and brings little energy in return.

These roles are not judgments. Everyone plays all three at different times. A farmer might be a change agent on their own land, a gatekeeper when advising others, and a survivor during a tough season. The value of the Triangle lies in strategic awareness — helping us read the network landscape and act accordingly.

Strategic Use of the Triangle in Agroforestry

Here's how agroforestry facilitators can apply the Triangle of Change:

- **Start with Ambition:** Build momentum with people who share your vision — even if the group is small at first.
- **Engage Gatekeepers Strategically:** Approach them after demonstrating credibility or early success — not before.
- **Leave Survivors Be (for now):** Don not invest energy trying to convert those who are not ready. They may join later, once risks are lower or incentives are clearer.

This strategy helps:

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Imagine a network promoting windbreak hedgerows in a livestock region:

- A group of enthusiastic farmers (change agents) test various layouts and species.
- The regional forestry service (gatekeeper) is skeptical, concerned about subsidy misuse.
- Meanwhile, other farmers (survivors) observe from a distance, wary of costs or land-use conflicts.

With this tool, the facilitators:

- Strengthen the core group's identity and ambition
- Document and share early results
- Approach policy actors when they're ready to show impact
- Keep doors open for cautious observers to join when the time is right

References

The Triangle of Change was developed by Eelke Wielinga in his PhD work, *Networks as Living Tissue*, to explain dynamics in collaborative change processes. It has since been used in projects such as *Networks in Livestock Farming*, and is now widely applied to other sectors — including agroforestry — where innovation emerges through diverse, networked efforts.

Wielinga, H.E. (2001). *Networks as Living Tissue*. PhD Thesis, Wageningen University.

Wielinga, H.E., Zaalmink, B.W., et al. (2008). *Networks with Free Actors*. Wageningen University and Research.

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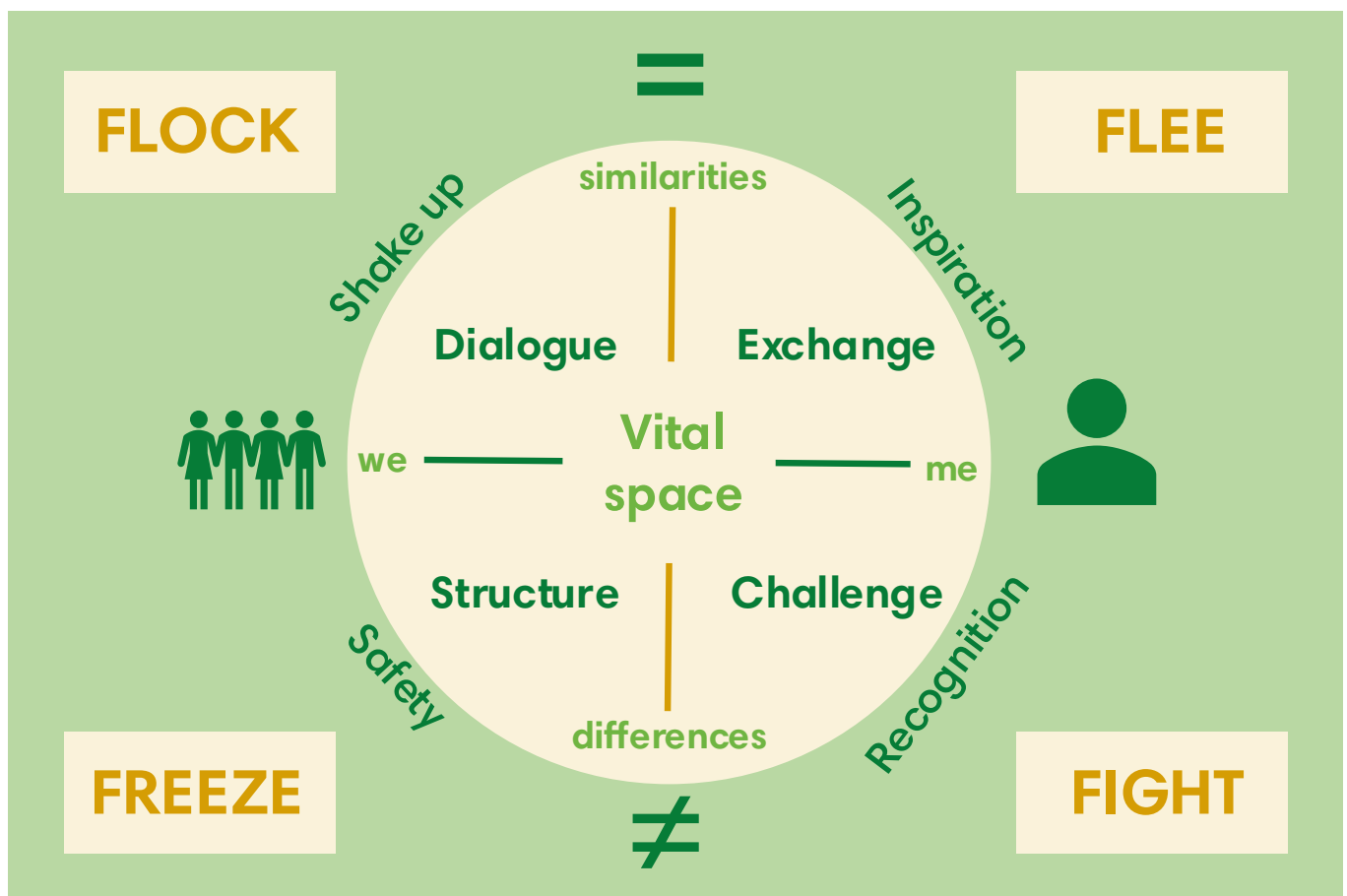
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The Circle of Coherence- Understanding Interaction Dynamics in Agroforestry Collaboration



Agroforestry innovation depends on strong, trust-based interactions among diverse actors: farmers, advisors, researchers, policymakers, and communities. The Circle of Coherence helps us understand how people in agroforestry networks communicate, collaborate, and sometimes clash — and what we can do to foster more productive relationships.

It distinguishes between constructive patterns that build trust and momentum, and defensive patterns that signal disconnection or stagnation. Recognizing these dynamics allows us to adapt, support, and lead more effectively within agroforestry systems.

Vital Space: The Soil in Which Collaboration Grows



Just as trees need healthy soil, agroforestry networks thrive on “vital space” — a condition where participants feel safe, energized, and motivated to contribute. In this space:

- Trust allows people to focus on their strengths.
- Creativity and experimentation flourish.
- Specialization and shared purpose emerge naturally.

Vital space cannot be imposed — like soil fertility, it must be cultivated. It does not mean uncritical harmony. Rather, it grows from healthy interaction, not blind trust or forced unity.

Four Constructive Interaction Patterns in Agroforestry

These interaction types build coherence in multi-actor environments like agroforestry innovation:

1. Exchange

Farmers, researchers, and advisors weigh the risks, benefits, and relevance of agroforestry practices. When ambitions align — say, integrating trees for productivity and climate resilience — trust deepens through mutually rewarding relationships.

2. Challenge

Constructive disagreement is vital. For example, a researcher may question a local practice, sparking innovation when the group explores alternatives. Properly managed, challenge builds resilience, learning, and confidence in diverse perspectives.

3. Structure

Whether drafting a grazing plan or organizing a knowledge exchange event, clear agreements and roles matter. Agroforestry initiatives often succeed when informal collaboration is complemented by practical structures — timetables, decision rules, and shared responsibilities.

4. Dialogue

Dialogue is the heartbeat of agroforestry co-creation. Through open conversations, landowners, extension agents, and policymakers refine their understanding. Dialogue enables joint learning, not just consultation.

Networks Self-Regulate — But Need Awareness

In any agroforestry network, people naturally try to balance all four constructive patterns. If one is missing — say, structure — it may show up as confusion or frustration. Often, people act on relational tension before they can explain it. All interactions carry content (e.g., “Should we plant oaks or alders?”) and relational signals (e.g., “Do I feel respected in this discussion?”). Recognizing both layers helps maintain coherence.

Two Axes of Interaction

1. Content Axis

People navigate between familiar knowledge and new, challenging insights. Agroforestry thrives in the zone of curiosity — where learning is encouraged but not overwhelming.

2. Relationship Axis

Collaboration moves along a tension between “Me” (personal agency) and “We” (collective purpose). Excessive group pressure triggers resistance, while too much individualism erodes shared direction. Over time, trust grows through repeated positive interaction.



Four Defensive Patterns: Signals of Strain

When vital space erodes, people slip into defensive behaviours. These are not failures — they are signs that the network needs care and recalibration:

1. Fleeing

If someone feels their ideas or time are undervalued, they quietly disengage. In agroforestry projects, this may show as absent farmers or “ghost” partners.

2. Fighting

Conflict becomes personal. Farmers may resist extension agents. Advisors may criticize policies harshly. Tensions escalate when competition replaces collaboration.

3. Freezing

Overly rigid protocols (e.g., funding rules, bureaucratic controls) stifle creativity. Actors become passive, sticking to “the way things are” instead of innovating.

4. Flocking

In the name of unity, disagreement disappears. Everyone nods — but progress stalls. Without dissent, agroforestry loses its adaptive edge.

Though challenging, defensive behaviours highlight deeper issues — often outdated structures or unspoken frustrations. Like in nature, agroforestry networks must evolve or risk decline. Defensive patterns either cause systems to collapse or prompt adaptation and renewal.

Intervening to Restore Connection

Each defensive pattern calls for tailored leadership. The Circle of Coherence offers “warm” (soft) and “cold” (firm) responses:

Defensive Pattern	What’s Needed	Warm Intervention	Cold Intervention
Fleeing	Inspiration	Inspirator (shares new ideas)	
Fighting	Recognition	Negotiator (honors both sides)	Regulator (sets clearer structure)
Freezing	Safety	Strategist (levels power imbalances)	
Flocking	Disruption	Investigator (opens safe dialogue)	Fighter (challenges rigidity)

Joker (uses humor to loosen conformity) Prophet (delivers uncomfortable truth)

Warm approaches invite reflection and reconnection. Cold approaches impose boundaries or shifts — sometimes essential but always sensitive. The intention behind intervention matters more than the method: to win creates resistance, to reconnect builds trust.

Using the Circle in Agroforestry Practice

Agroforestry advisors, project leaders, and peer facilitators can apply this model by:

- Observing which pattern dominates in a meeting or initiative
- Adjusting their own approach accordingly
- Creating space for mutual reflection, without forcing outcomes



Unlike linear group models, the Circle of Coherence reflects the messy, regenerative reality of agroforestry collaboration. Patterns can overlap, reverse, or evolve quickly — just like in ecosystems.

Why This Model Matters in Agroforestry

Agroforestry is built on relationships as much as on land. Trees may grow slowly, but social innovation requires ongoing attention to how people connect, learn, and act together. The Circle of Coherence gives agroforestry practitioners a language and lens to keep networks healthy and resilient — unlocking far greater impact than any individual actor could achieve alone.

Reference

The Circle of Coherence was developed by Eelke Wielinga, drawing on systems thinking, leadership theory, and the biology of social networks. Introduced in his 2001 PhD Networks as Living Tissue, the model offers a living metaphor for how people grow, organize, and regenerate in purpose-driven collaboration.

OUTCOMES OF THE COURSE MODULE

Understanding of innovation processes and co-creation approaches

Skills to facilitate creativity and idea generation

Tools to manage group dynamics and sustain network momentum

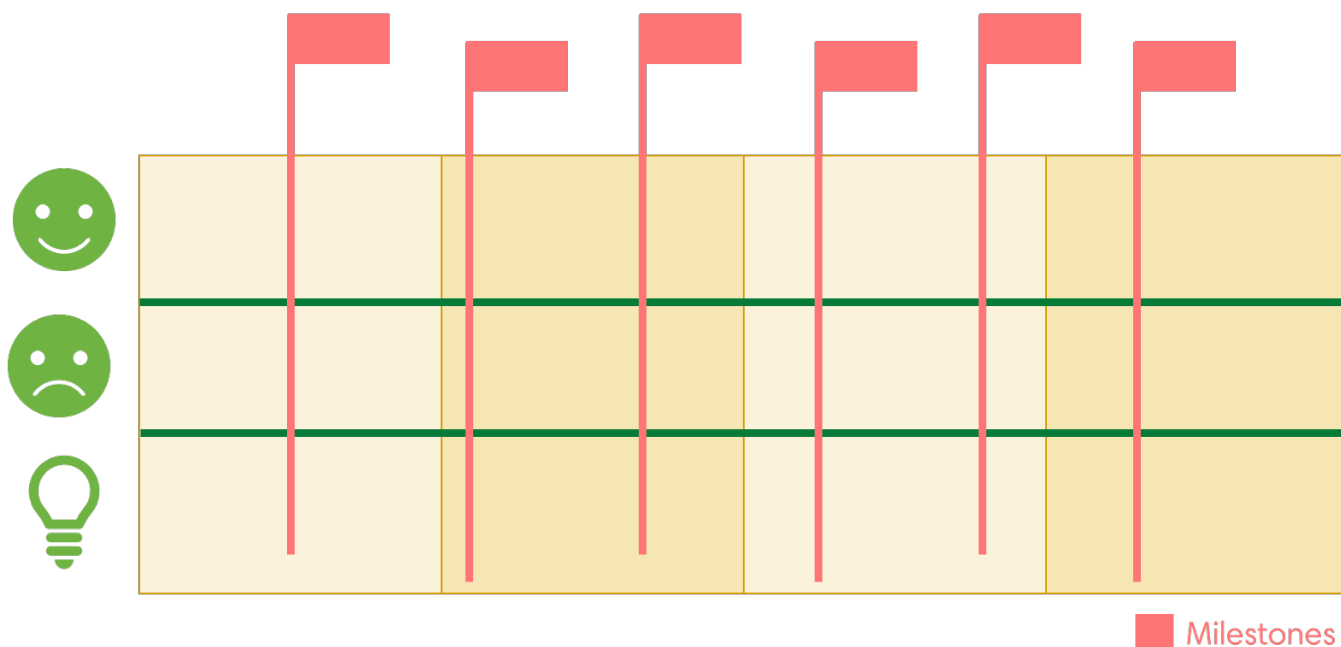
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The Timeline Method- A Method for Joint Reflection on Agroforestry Network Processes



The Timeline Method is a simple yet powerful tool for collective reflection in agroforestry networks. It allows participants — farmers, advisors, researchers, and community stakeholders — to look back at their shared journey, visually mapping out how the initiative has evolved through their eyes.

This method supports participatory monitoring and evaluation, uncovering insights that might otherwise remain hidden. Unlike other tools in the FAN (Facilitation of Networks) approach, which are more analytical, the Timeline is event-based and story-driven — ideal for documenting the progression of agroforestry efforts and laying the groundwork for deeper analysis through a Learning History.

Why Use a Timeline in Agroforestry Projects?

Whether you are piloting silvopasture, implementing hedgerows for biodiversity, or launching a regional agroforestry hub, a Timeline helps:

- Capture how people experienced key moments
- Reveal energy highs and lows in the process
- Build shared understanding between veterans and newcomers
- Set the stage for collaborative learning and adaptation

How to Prepare the Timeline Session

Use flipcharts taped end-to-end (portrait orientation), with one for every 5–8 participants. Alternatively, use wallpaper rolls or brown paper if that is easier to source. Hang the papers on a long wall or lay them out on tables or the floor — the goal is visibility and accessibility for everyone.



Structure the Timeline:

- Top row: ✨ Positive moments (marked with a smiley)
- Middle row: 😞 Negative moments (marked with a sad face)
- Bottom row: 💡 Flash moments — breakthroughs, surprises, or turning points

Divide the paper horizontally into time periods — from the earliest relevant point (e.g. initial idea or first farmer meeting) to the present. You can pre-set these or co-create them with participants at the session's start.

Materials Needed

- Thick markers (one per participant)
- 10–12 large sticky notes per person (or paper with tape)
- Optional: camera for documenting the flipcharts, and an audio recorder (with permission)

Encourage brevity and clarity — sticky notes should be legible from a distance.

Instructions for Participants

Start by explaining the purpose “We’re here to co-create a visual history of this agroforestry journey — to reflect on what mattered, what challenged us, and what surprised us.”

Then guide them through:

- Positive moments: Actions, events, or experiences that gave energy (“First trees planted on demo farm”).
- Negative moments: Draining or demotivating episodes (“Funding delay held up seedling orders”).
- Flash moments: Breakthroughs or insights (“Realized hedgerows improve pollination!”).

Each sticky note should contain one sentence describing the moment, not just a label like “training” or “seminar”.
Examples:

- “We realized intercropping reduced water stress.”
- “Farmers from three counties showed up — beyond expectations.”

Allow approximately 25 minutes. Encourage spontaneity — participants can keep adding new ideas after they read others’ contributions.

Facilitating the Review

Once all notes are placed, bring the group to stand around the Timeline for a joint reading and reflection.

Guide the group through:

1. Initial Impressions:

What patterns do they notice? Where were high points or challenges clustered?

2. Reading the Cards:

Go through them chronologically. Group similar statements if needed, but avoid removing any. Every viewpoint is valid. If someone disagrees, they are invited to add their own card — not debate another’s.

3. Points for Further Discussion:

Invite reflections on what has emerged. What does this timeline suggest for the future of the agroforestry initiative? Note themes or questions for deeper exploration.

Deepening the Story with Interviews

The Timeline often uncovers surface-level moments. To explore them more deeply:



- Conduct short interviews with selected participants, either during the same event or shortly after.
- Focus on what gave or drained energy in the network.
- Ask what made a flash moment a turning point — what changed, and why?

Use the Timeline itself as a starting point, asking participants to elaborate on the stories behind their notes.



Turning the Timeline into a Narrative

After the session and interviews, the facilitator — together with a core actor from the agroforestry initiative — creates a draft narrative story. This becomes the script for a feedback session, which ideally takes place later in the same event. It helps validate and refine the collective understanding before writing the final report.

Create 4–6 “scenes” that each have:

- A beginning situation
- A key development or event
- Network responses or interventions
- A different outcome or new situation

Use bold, engaging headlines:

-  “Farmers Push for Native Species Integration”
-  “Policy Surprise Forces Mid-Season Rethink”

Finalizing and Sharing the Report

The final report summarizes the timeline-based story in 4–8 pages, following the scenes and using the group’s language and tone.

Structure:

- Introduction to the agroforestry network
- Narrative scenes with clear titles
- Key questions or priorities for the future

Send the draft to participants for feedback and additions. This collaborative summary becomes a powerful tool for internal learning, sharing with funders, or informing new initiatives.

Why It Works in Agroforestry

- Agroforestry is a long game — and success relies on learning from what really happens on the ground.
- Timelines honour diverse perspectives and show how change unfolds over time.
- They foster transparency, build trust, and surface lessons no technical report ever could.

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The current form evolved through projects like Networks in Animal Husbandry and the Healthy Networks Learning Programme, with over 120 network processes supported by Wageningen UR and PSO — and it's ideally suited to the collaborative, evolving nature of agroforestry.

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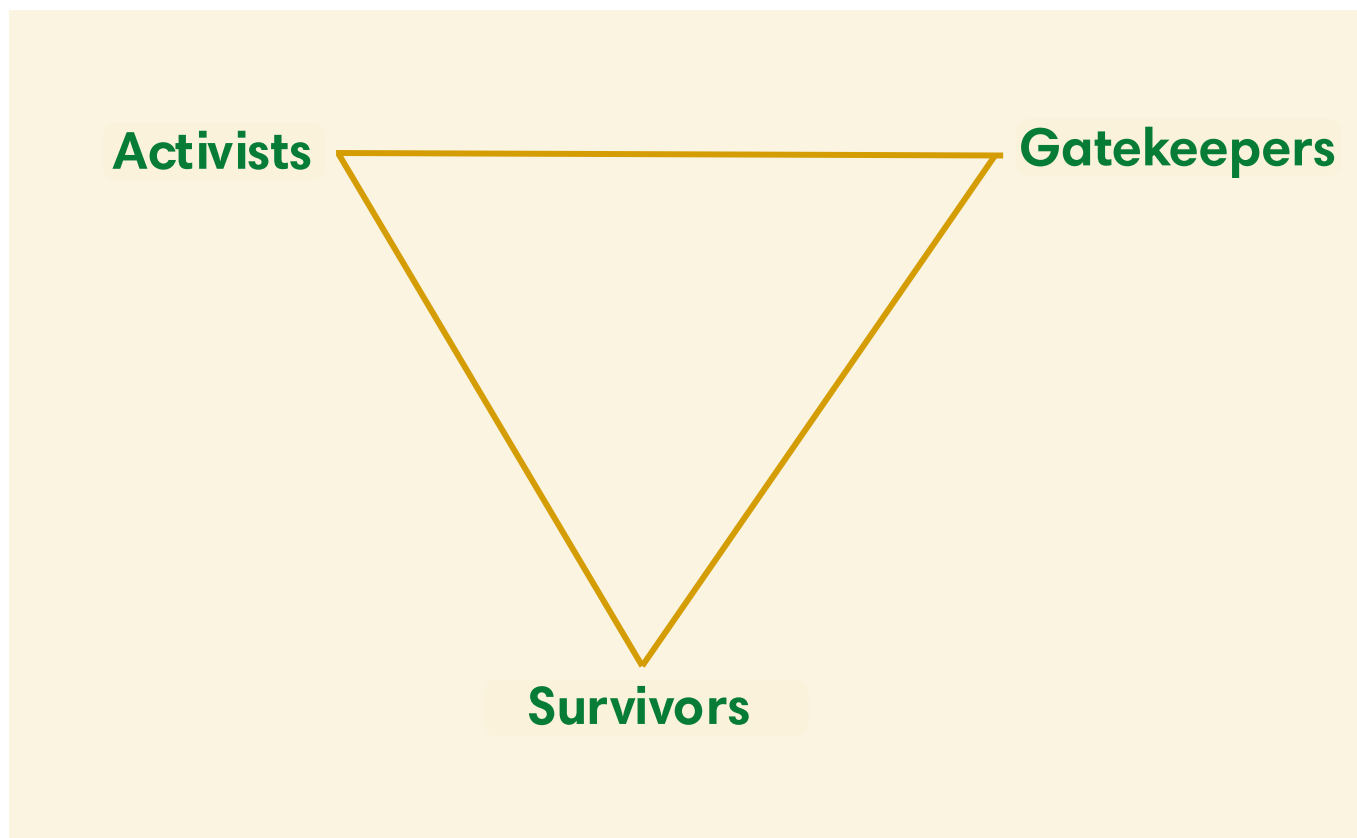
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Here's how agroforestry facilitators can apply the Triangle of Change:

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- Engage Gatekeepers Strategically: Approach them after demonstrating credibility or early success — not before.
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- Keep doors open for cautious observers to join when the time is right

References

The Triangle of Change was developed by Eelke Wielinga in his PhD work, *Networks as Living Tissue*, to explain dynamics in collaborative change processes. It has since been used in projects such as *Networks in Livestock Farming*, and is now widely applied to other sectors — including agroforestry — where innovation emerges through diverse, networked efforts.

- Wielinga, H.E. (2001). *Networks as Living Tissue*. PhD Thesis, Wageningen University.
- Wielinga, H.E., Zaalmink, B.W., et al. (2008). *Networks with Free Actors*. Wageningen University and Research.

OUTCOMES OF THE COURSE MODULE

Understanding of innovation processes and co-creation approaches

Skills to facilitate creativity and idea generation

Tools to manage group dynamics and sustain network momentum

Confidence to act as an innovation broker and network facilitator

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The Learning History- Capturing the Story of Agroforestry Innovation

What is a Learning History?

In agroforestry, where innovation is deeply collaborative and shaped by local landscapes and people, a Learning History is a valuable tool for understanding how change unfolds. It builds upon a Timeline, which records key events and perceptions over time, by adding analysis, interpretation, and lessons learned.

While a Timeline gathers different actors' experiences — farmers, advisors, researchers, policy stakeholders — the Learning History helps make sense of those experiences, highlighting how they influenced outcomes, and what can be learned for the future.

This process respects that every perception is valid. Participants may disagree on how to interpret what happened, but their lived experiences are not up for debate. Through structured analysis, the Learning History becomes a reflective and engaging document that supports ongoing learning in agroforestry practice and policy.

Structure: Narrative Meets Analysis

Following the approach developed by Kleiner and Roth, a Learning History is typically presented in two columns:

- The right-hand column tells the story, often including direct quotes from those involved — farmers' voices, advisor reflections, or moments from field workshops.
- The left-hand column offers commentary, analysis, and insights from the facilitator or evaluator.

Alternatively, analysis can be set apart in boxes to emphasize turning points, dilemmas, or breakthroughs.

How It's Created: Facilitation and Feedback

In agroforestry networks, it is often straightforward to agree on the sequence of events for a Timeline — everyone's perspective can be represented. Analysis, especially when things didn't go smoothly, may be more contested. For this reason, the Learning History is usually drafted by a neutral facilitator, who may be an advisor, researcher, or experienced network member. After drafting, it is shared for feedback and validation. Where tensions exist, it can help to bring in an external coach or peer reviewer to support unbiased reflection.

Turning the Timeline into a Story

From Events to Shared Narratives

A well-written Learning History helps people say: "Yes, this tells the real story of our agroforestry journey." Whether the project involved integrating trees on pasture, setting up farmer-led trials, or working on landscape-scale policy, the story becomes a collective account. If the initiative is still underway, the facilitator can include provisional observations, checking in with participants to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Structuring the Story into "Scenes"

To make the story easier to follow, divide it into scenes with clear, memorable headlines. Think of each one like a chapter in a story:

- "Farmers Unite for Tree Integration" (Initiation)
- "From Hesitation to Shared Enthusiasm" (Early collaboration)



- “Challenges with Payments and Planting Plans” (Obstacles)
- “Redesign and New Energy” (Adaptation)

These scenes capture key moments — where something shifted, failed, succeeded, or sparked new learning.

Analysing Each Scene

Each scene should be framed by change — what was happening at the start, what changed, and why. Use established tools such as those from the FAN (Facilitation of Networks) approach to guide your interpretation. You can also incorporate local knowledge systems, agroecological frameworks, or stakeholder mapping tools — just make the methods explicit. Quotations can breathe life into the narrative. The analysis explains what caused a turning point, how people responded, and what we can take from it for future agroforestry innovation.

A Hero’s Journey — Agroforestry Style

Agroforestry initiatives rarely follow a straight line. Like in the hero’s journey, the group begins with ambition and vision — planting trees, testing designs, building community — but soon faces unexpected resistance. Maybe policies don’t align. Maybe neighbours are sceptical. Maybe drought sets in. Allies might back off, but new support appears. The outcome is often surprising — and better than imagined. The Learning History captures this unpredictability and resilience, spotlighting:

- Initial assumptions
- Surprises and lessons
- Effective and ineffective actions
- Theories that help explain what worked

Keeping It Focused and Useful

Agroforestry Learning Histories should be concise — around 4–8 pages — the same length as the Timeline they build on. The emphasis is not exhaustive detail, but key learnings, critical moments, and actionable insights. Compared to formal reporting, Learning Histories offer a richer and more human understanding of agroforestry processes. They are useful not just for the project team, but also for funders, supporters, and other networks seeking to replicate or adapt the approach.

Why It Matters in Agroforestry

- Agroforestry requires long-term thinking, relationship-building, and innovation.
- Projects evolve with many actors and shifting contexts.
- Learning Histories offer a way to step back, reflect, and grow — both personally and collectively.
- They help communities and organizations retain knowledge and avoid repeating mistakes.
- They tell the story of how landscapes and people co-evolve toward resilience.



References

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