

WORKSHOP 1.A. DEFINITION OF THEMES/SYSTEMS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE HORTALAB (Local Landscape Laboratory of L'Horta Sud)

- Location: Alfafar Municipal Senior Center
- Date and time: Monday, June 8, 2026, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

PROGRAM:

- 18:00 to 18:05 Presentation of attendees and team creation.
- 18:05 to 18:15 Introduction to the LOLA project and the HORTALAB Local Landscape Laboratory
- 18:15 to 18:25 Presentation: Systems Thinking? What for? How? Why in the Landscape?
- 18:25 to 18:50 Exercise – Co-definition of themes to imagine the future of L'Horta Sud.
- 18:50 to 20:00 Work Plan for HORTALAB 2026-2028.

ASISTENTES

- Javier González Cardona (Local Development Agent of Benetússer)
- José Antonio Sebastián (resident of Alfafar)
- Arcadio del Real Asensi (Alfafar Urban Planning Councilor)
- Pepe Valls (Benetússer Reconstruction Committee)
- Juan Ramón Adsuara (Mayor of Alfafar)
- Jorge Bernal (European Projects Mancomunitat de L'Horta Sud)
- Isabel Tornero (European Projects Mancomunitat de L'Horta Sud)
- Juan José Galán Vivas (UPV, Department of Urban Planning, Project coordinator)
- Ramiro Salvador Erazo (UPV, Department of Urban Planning, Technical collaborator of the project)

1 OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

This workshop was the first of two planned (workshop “1a”) to co-define with the local population the main themes that will structure a transversal reflection in the following phases of the LOLA project and the HORTALAB regarding the past, present and future of the landscape of L'Horta Sud (*See Figures 1 and 2*).

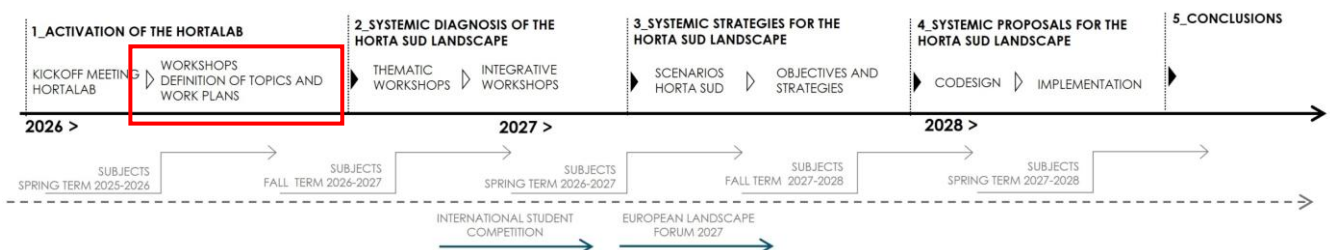


Figure 1 Preliminary schedule of activities to be developed in HORTALAB (<https://hortalab.webs.upv.es/>)



Figure 2. Information poster for Workshop 1.a. in Alfafar

The session began with a brief informative introduction about the LOLA project and the Landscape Laboratory of L'Horta Sud (HORTALAB). Its central objective is to promote systemic thinking capabilities among local communities, students, and teachers as a necessary condition to collectively address the complex challenges facing today's societies (climate change, increased sustainability and resilience, etc.)

The LOLA project is funded by the Erasmus+ program and recognizes the importance the European Union assigns to systems thinking for advancing towards greater levels of sustainability and resilience ("European framework of competences on sustainability", Bianchi et al., 2022). In the case of HORTALAB, the development of these competences will take place using the L'Horta Lab landscape as a space for study and collaborative learning.

In the introductory part of the Workshop (see [Figure 3](#)) and in response to a question raised by one of the participants, it was mentioned that landscape is understood as any portion of the territory as perceived by the population, regardless of its natural or artificial character and its aesthetic value (European Landscape Convention, 2000).



Figure 3. Introduction to the LOLA project during Workshop 1 in Alfafar

2_WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

The methodology used during this workshop was aimed at collectively capturing the complexity of the L'Horta Sud landscape system and the structuring themes for its study and future improvement. For this, a five-task process grouped into two parts was defined: (1) Brainstorming and (2) Synthesis. The tasks were carried out by two teams of participants grouped to have the most distinct profiles possible in each team.

PART 1: BRAINSTORMING

In the first task, each team was asked to indicate the elements, actors, and problems that, in their opinion, converge in the L'Horta Sud landscape. In a second task, based on the previous results, participants had to do a collective synthesis exercise, proposing between 7 and 10 themes that interrelate these elements, actors, and problems in the territory, allowing them to study and imagine the future landscape. The third task consisted of synthesizing the themes worked on into the three to five most relevant ones. ([see Figure 4](#)).

Parte 1: TORMENTA DE IDEAS (en equipos) (18:25-18:50)

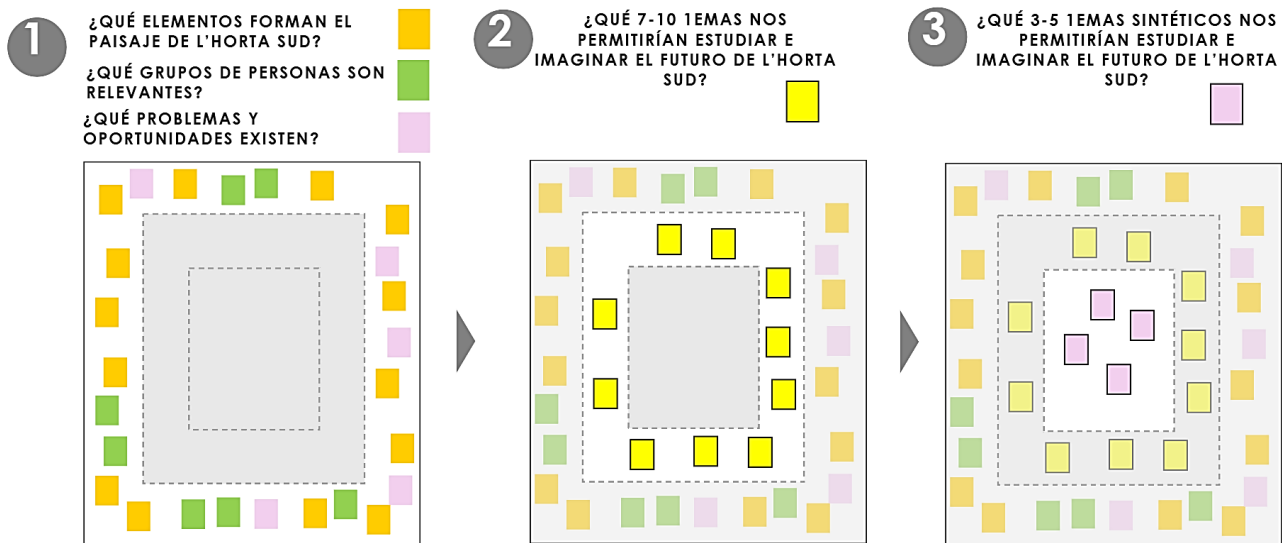


Figure 4. Progressive definition of the 3-5 topics proposed by each team of participants to structure future studies and development of proposals in L'Horta Sud

The second part involved a representative from each team presenting the results of task 3, ending with an open debate among all participants to jointly choose the 5 themes that could articulate the collective reflection on the L'Horta Sud landscape, integrating its different elements and systems, actors, problems and possibilities for future change ([see Figure 5](#)).

Parte 2: SÍNTESIS (todos) (18:50-19:15)

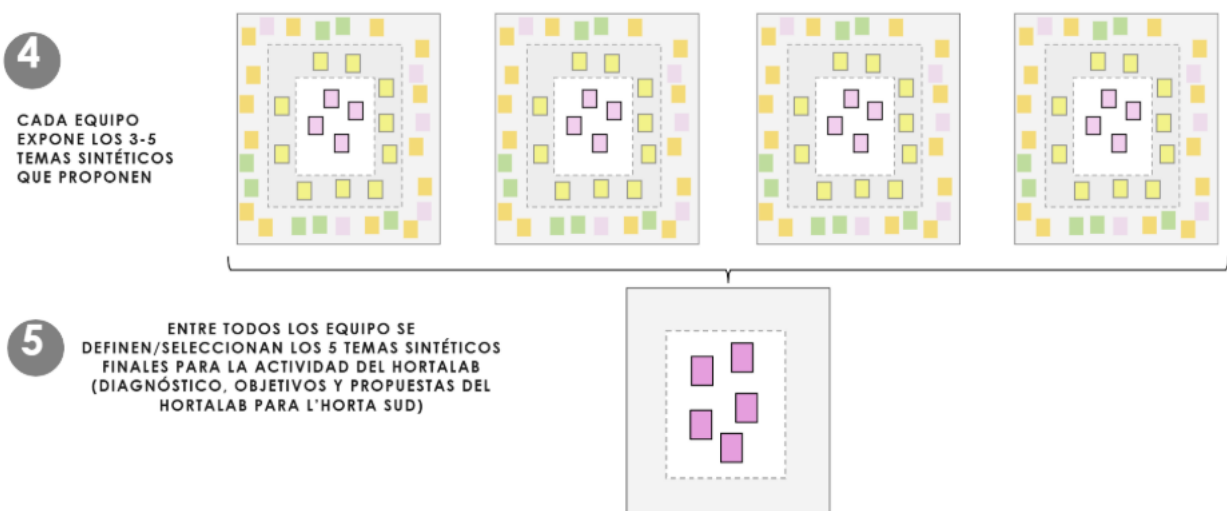


Figure 5. Joint definition between the different teams of the 3-5 themes that could articulate in the HORTALAB the reflections on the future landscape of L'Horta Sud

3_WORKSHOP RESULTS

Part 1: TEAM BRAINSTORMING

- TASK 1: Identification of actors, elements and problems
- TASK 2: Initial Themes Proposal
- TASK 3: Synthesis of Priority Themes



Figure 6. Participatory exercise, co-definition of topics, Team 1

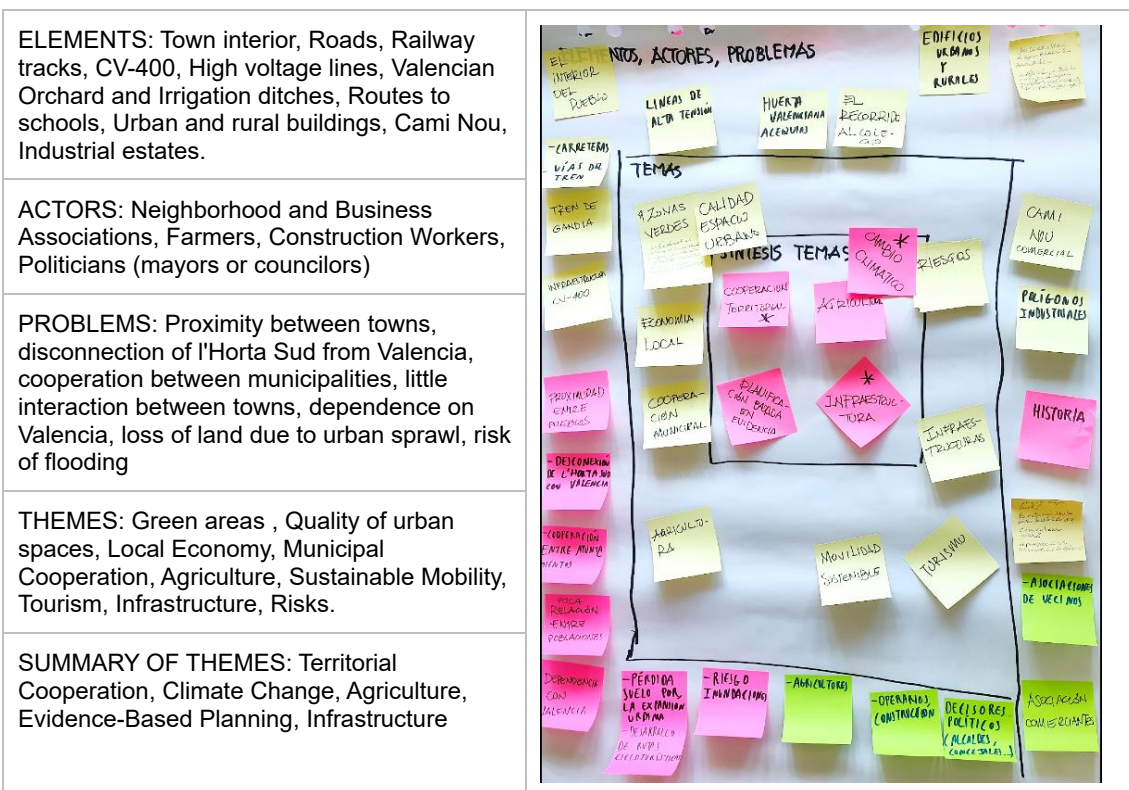


Figure 7. Results of PART 1 (Tasks 1, 2 and 3) of Team 1



Figure 8. Participatory exercise, co-definition of topics, Team 1

ELEMENTOS, ACTORES, PROBLEMAS

TEMAS

- MOBILIDAD**
 - GOBERNANZA INTERMUNICIPAL
 - AGUA
 - AGUA *
 - AGRICULTURA MUERTA (no viable generacional)
 - AGRICULTURA VIABLE (ARROZ)
 - TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO (no llega a zona industrial)
 - DESARROLLO URBANO (no viable) vs HUERTA
 - INTERESES ECONÓMICOS vs INTERESES DE DESARROLLO DE LA POBLACIÓN
 - TRANSFORMAR PUEBLO INSUFICIENTE + TRANSCURRIR
 - VÍAS vs SOTERANIDAD
 - BUENA CONVIVENCIA
 - LLAVADORES
 - LA SOCIEDAD CIVIL Y SUS ASOCIACIONES
 - REPRESENTANTES POLÍTICOS
 - COMERCIO
 - POLÍGONOS INDUSTRIALES
 - MARSALE ALBUFERA
- VIVIENDA**
 - AGUA
 - AGUA *
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 - REPRESENTANTES POLÍTICOS
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 - POLÍGONOS INDUSTRIALES
 - MARSALE ALBUFERA
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 - MARSALE ALBUFERA

ACTORES

- GOBERNANZA INTERMUNICIPAL
- AGUA
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- AGRICULTURA MUERTA (no viable generacional)
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PROBLEMAS

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THEMES

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SUMMARY OF THEMES

- GOBERNANZA INTERMUNICIPAL
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Figure 9. Results of PART 1 (Tasks 1, 2 and 3) of Team 2

Part 2: JOINT SYNTHESIS

- TASK 4: Presentation of Themes by each team
- TASK 5: General summary of the workshop



Figure 10: Presentation of results by each team.



Figure 11: Joint definition by all attendees of the final topics based on what was proposed by each team

THEMES:

- *Infrastructure and transport*
- *Management and governance system*
- *Water and Territory*
- *Urban Models and Housing*
- *Economic Models*
- *Green Infrastructure and Productive Landscapes*

TRANSVERSE AXLES:

- *Climate Change*

- Evidence-based decision making



Figure 12: Topics agreed upon by the attendees of the Alfafar Workshop 1a for the HORTALAB activity

4_FINAL REFLECTIONS

4.1_About the results

- The proposed themes for the future activity of the HORTALAB would allow adequately addressing aspects linked to the physical structure of the L'Horta Sud landscape system and its functioning (form and function of the territory).
- The themes complement each other and are quite transversal, allowing the incorporation of the ecological and productive-economic dimensions of the landscape.
- Given the strong social demand for housing and the influence that urban land has on the functionality and risks of the landscape, the incorporation of this theme is considered very relevant.
- The incorporation of a theme dedicated to territorial governance would allow addressing a frequently ignored issue, possibly resulting from the presence of municipal and Mancomunidad technicians in the teams.
- The absence of a specific theme linked to society, quality of life, or culture is noted.

4.2_About the methodology used in the Workshop

- The use of the landscape as an element of reflection allowed addressing the entire territory and a wide diversity of themes (avoiding focusing on very specific aspects or strictly personal interests).
- The methodology was effective and allowed collecting and distilling the perceptions and interests of the different types of attendees in a short time.
- As an alternative, a map could be used to collect the participants' inputs, although this could orient the process towards specific point problems and ignore more abstract or systemic aspects.
- Alternatively, the joint creation by attendees of a map of L'Horta Sud collecting ideas and drawings could be proposed, although it would require more time.

- The presence of more teams and a more diverse composition (in ages, professions, origins, etc.) would have allowed a more diverse debate representative of the L'Horta Sud population.

4.3_On the development of systemic thinking skills among the participants

- Overall, participants indicated that the landscape approach helped them have a more open vision, less focused on specific aspects or personal interests.
- Additionally, approaching the landscape as any territory as perceived by the population allowed considering urban, agricultural, industrial, and infrastructural landscapes.
- Participants indicated that identifying elements, actors, problems, opportunities, and vectors of change in Task 1 provided them with a more complete, complex, and interrelational vision of the landscape (systemic vision).
- Likewise, the progressive distillation of themes in Tasks 2 and 3 allowed the development of capacities for synthetic and propositional thinking, reinforced in the joint debates in Tasks 4 and 5.
- Regarding the degree of treatment of different forms of thought, the following can be concluded:
 - **Abstract and conceptual thinking:** The proposed methodology favored the development of this competence, especially when having to define open and transversal themes that encompass specific situations or problems (4/5).
 - **Integral and interdisciplinary thinking:** The multidimensional character of the landscape avored considering different types of problems and different types of knowledge to address them (3/5).
 - **Synthetic thinking:** The proposed methodology favored the development of this competence, especially when defining open and transversal themes (5/5).
 - **Propositional thinking aimed at problem-solving:** Favored by knowing that the proposed themes should help to fully improve the L'Horta Sud landscape (4/5).
 - **Systemic thinking identifying relationships:** This capacity began to develop in Task 1 but was not worked on in the rest of the workshop as it moved to defining synthetic themes. However, participants expressly indicated that Task 1 provided them with a more diverse, comprehensive, and relational vision (3/5).
- Regarding the degree of treatment of the fundamental properties of complex systems, the following can be concluded:
 - **Non-linearity cause-effect:** Not worked on during the workshop (0/5)
 - **Path dependence:** Not worked on during the workshop (0/5)
 - **Order and spontaneous events/outbreaks:** Not worked on during the workshop (0/5)
 - **Feedback and self-learning:** Not worked on during the workshop (0/5)
 - **Adaptation:** Not worked on during the workshop (0/5).