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# The contribution of social farms to the development and care for cultural landscapes – a challenge of multifunctional agriculture

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## 1 Farming, cultural landscapes and the multifunctional role of the European agriculture

The appearance of cultural landscapes in Europe is influenced strongly by agriculture (VAN DER PLOEG *et al*, 2002). For example, ca. 50% of Germany's land is farmed land, including forestry more than 80%. In former times cultural landscapes were a by-product of an agri-culture with lots of manual work, whereas today a diverse and aesthetic landscape is preserved and developed only by active decisions and means. Today only 3% of the population is engaged in agriculture, creating the landscape for all the others. Landscape is a production area for farmers. But landscape is also a place for living, working, home, experience, recreation, moving through and making connections.

The connectedness of nature and culture is typical for European cultural landscapes. Moreover, the understanding what a landscape is s changing. Landscape can be seen as an social issue, too. The preamble to the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 20 October 2000) defines "landscape" as follows:

« The landscape ...

- ... has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation ;

- ... contributes to the formation of local cultures and ... is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity ;
- ... is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas ;
- ... is a key element of individual and social well-being and ... its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone »

([http://www.coe.int/t/e/Cultural\\_Co-operation/Environment/Landscape/](http://www.coe.int/t/e/Cultural_Co-operation/Environment/Landscape/)).

The conversion to environmental friendly practices like organic farming can be the starting point for higher biodiversity. The realisation of this potential depends on whether the farmers recognise nature and landscape development as objectives of their farming style and whether they succeed to integrate them into their agricultural practice.

Against the background of European Union agricultural reform, according to which in future the ecological achievements of farms are to be rewarded, and, with this aim in mind, jobs on farms are to be created outside the sphere of activity confined to agricultural production, new potential is offered for developing organic farming in a multifunctional manner. Such multi-functions can be to combine the production of food with social functions, like providing space for recreation, the care for landscapes, the care for disabled people (LENHARD ET AL. 1997, KESER & VAN ELSSEN 1997).

Research suggests that the relationship people have with nature and landscape also forms their opinions about it and thus constitutes part of their identity. Loss of identity is one of the problems experienced in the care for former drug addicts and other less favoured groups in the society (VAN ELSSEN ET AL 2006). Could the approach of social farms also include care and therapy for nature and landscapes? Are there already examples of combining such aspects of multifunctionality? And, first of all, can multifunctionality play a role in enhancing a feeling of identity? Are social forms of agriculture destined to combine organic farming with nature conservation?

## **2 Research on the impact of social farming on landscape**

During a research project "Optimising nature conservation on organic farms" (supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds of the Federal Environmental Ministry) sixteen organic farms which implement approaches of nature conservation into their practice and whose farmers were especially engaged in care for the landscape were investigated (VAN ELSSEN *et al.* 2002). What are the intentions of these farmers to deal with questions of nature conservation and landscape development, and – furthermore – to create and develop their landscape actively? Which circumstances allow such initiatives? What are the motives behind them?

The following hypotheses were the starting point of this investigation:

- There are organic farms that are exceptional among organic farms concerning their engagement in nature conservation and landscape development.
- The motives that lead to actions differ.

- There are different ways of acting and different systems of knowledge applied in order to find ideas and realise means of landscape development.

Due to the lack of previous investigations an explorative approach was chosen. In various regions of Germany 13 interviews were carried out on organic farms belonging to different certifying organisations. A wide spectrum of farms with respect to size, geographical location, structure, social structure and assumed intentions of the farmers were chosen. The interviews were elaborated using methods of qualitative social analysis (MAYRING 1988, STRAUSS & CORBIN 1996).

The results show that the motives of the farmers are exceptionally intrinsic in nature. Especially their relation to nature is very important. One interesting result was that traditional family farms usually have less time and financial support to integrate such aims than farms that work together with clients in their farming system. The increased outlay of social farms is balanced by funding from patient/ client care sources and makes the farm less dependent upon yield from harvests. This creates a degree of freedom for additional undertakings such as actively looking after and shaping the cultural landscape. Traditional family farms usually cannot manage this because of shortage of time or human resources.

Several surveys on the performance of farms with regard to nature conservation show that the main factors preventing them achieving more of it are shortages of human resources and time, together with insufficient funding. Engagement in the landscape calls for lots of helping hands – an obvious contrast to increasing tendencies to specialisation and rationalisation in agriculture. Is 'social farming' capable of uniting sustainable agriculture with the requirements of nature conservation?

Based on these results some investigations on social farms and their engagement in landscape development and nature conservation were set up. GÜNTHER 2005 has carried out a survey at care farms for former drug addicts, SELIG (2006) did the same for school farms, BERGMANN (2007) made a survey of sheltered workshops for disabled people and KALISCH (2006) investigated three farms integrating handicapped people as a case study (KALISCH & VAN ELSSEN 2008). The hypothesis of these investigations was that social farms can contribute to landscape development and nature conservation and may be specially suited for this task (see also: VAN ELSSEN 2007).

## **2.1 Care for landscape and nature development on care farms for addicted clients**

In general the examined institutions show a great interest in landscape care as a field of activity for the clients. More than 70 % of the farms deal with such measures, especially planting hedgerows or taking care for orchards and for different biotopes. Furthermore clients work in the forest; they care for the surroundings of the institutional buildings and public places. Concerning these activities there are only small differences between organic and conventional farms.

Half of the examined institutions think that farms with clients are especially suited for activities related to nature conservation and landscape care. Also concerning protection and management of biodiversity more than 60% of the farms are active. Concrete measures are the conservation of species-rich grassland, the care for orchards with rare or local varieties and also the keeping

of rare and endangered animal husbandry breeds. 85% of the organic and 50% of the conventional farms integrate such activities into their system.

## **2.2 Chances for landscape work on farms with disabled people**

From a theoretical point of view landscape work on farms with disabled people can be synergetic. It provides plenty of diverse manual work that can be combined with the daily routine work especially in winter or other times when there is not much agricultural work to do. The big and economically sound communities (i.e. sheltered workshops for people with handicaps WfbM) supporting the farms are not so dependent on profit in comparison to the ordinary family farm. By integrating disabled people the need to produce high yields or income is lower. Landscape work could be used as an advertisement for the institution and to promote the farm. The philosophy of the community and identification with the location can thus be supported. Disadvantages lie in the additional need for resources that are barely sufficient: There is a competition for time, space, workers and a shortage of professional staff.

The integration of disabled people in agricultural production and their workload with daily duties in animal care limit their commitment. The planting, care and harvest of shrubs, the processing of fruits, the cutting of fire wood and the production of leaf hay, the building and care for nesting boxes for birds and insects and even the mowing of meadows and the care for ponds and brooks are possible activities in which disabled people can be employed according to their capabilities. Offering landscape work as a commercial service by WfbM often competes with professional landscape care enterprises that do not get public support and is therefore problematic. Another idea would be to offer landscape work as a service for other farms which do not have time and labour to care for their landscape themselves. Financial issues – you can not sell landscape – might not be solved by the community alone. Another problem might be the personal capabilities of the disabled people.

## **3 Transversal analysis of landscape issues in the States of the Arts**

### **3.1 Impact of social farming on landscape in Germany**

The German project partner focuses on the aim to combine social and landscape engagement on social farms synergistically. National surveys were carried out concerning that question and many cases of farms that contribute to the care for nature and the development of cultural landscapes were visited within the project. Even the frame of what social farming is or should be can be enlarged due to that question: There are agricultural, horticultural and landscape maintaining enterprises, in which people with different needs get involved and participate in order to take therapy, employment or pedagogies. There is only a smooth transition to related services such as "holiday on farms" for example.

#### **3.1.1 Organic farming as the method of choice on social farms**

Many surveys (i.e. AGÖL 1999) on social farms in Germany reveal that about 60% of the farms are working organically. The production process in organic farming offers greater potential for meaningful work placements for 'members of marginalised social groups' than that of conventional agriculture (LENHARD et al. 1997). Dispensing with chemical aids increases job security. The jobs created

comprise 'meaningful' tasks and manual work which on conventional farms were rationalised by the application of chemistry. Organic farming claims holistic thinking and closed cycles. Arguments for organic farming are more experiential and comprehensible schemes of work, appropriate pricing for organic products and better consumer acceptance as well as the potential for using state aid through subsidies and investment support (HERMANOWSKI 2005). The clients are mainly occupied in labour intensive fields of activities, like keeping animals, gardening and also landscape care. Integrating clients also influences the farm structure: A large amount of handwork, a diversity of different fields of activities, and simple structures of the schemes of work are needed to deliver a sufficient occupation for the clients. Also enough time for care is needed to combine the therapeutic goals with food production. These clear advantages seem to make organic agriculture the method of choice for working in social farming.

### **3.1.2 Landscape design and maintenance on social farms**

Some 14 of 95 investigated sheltered workshops (WfbM) are exclusively concentrating on landscape design and maintenance without actual farming (Hermanowski in Neuberger et al. 2006: 202). According to BERGMANN (2007) who has repeated the national surveys of sheltered workshops from 1993 and 1999 the green sectors of the surveyed institutions have 26 different scopes of work, 62 (58,5%) run horticultural enterprises, 58 (54%) farms and 51 maintain landscape and gardens. 35% of the institutions consist only of one of the three sectors, the others combine them with each other and additional fields of activity such as growing and processing of fruit, wine and vegetables. Many sheltered workshops have a garden and landscape group which manages not only the institution's grounds but also, as a service provider, land elsewhere. Thus, in these institutions, frequent consideration is given to extending to agriculture the positive experiences gained in horticulture and landscaping.

Also care farms with addicted clients care for landscape and nature development. In general the examined institutions show great interest in landscape care as a field of activity for the clients. More than 70 % of the farms deal with such measures, especially planting hedgerows or taking care for orchards and for different biotopes. Furthermore clients do work in the forest; they care for the surroundings of the institutional buildings and public places. Concerning these activities there are only small differences between organic and conventional farms. Half of the examined institutions think that farms with clients are especially suited for activities related to nature conservation and landscape care. Also concerning protection and management of biodiversity more than 60% of the farms are active. Concrete measures are the conservation of species-rich grassland, the care for orchards with rare or local varieties and also the keeping of rare and endangered animal husbandry breeds. 85% of the organic and 50% of the conventional farms integrate such activities into their system.

The situation on school farms is quite similar. More than half of the farms answer that nature conservation issues have a high priority on their farms and an additional third thinks it has priority. Nearly all of the farmers talk with their visitors about these issues; the following topics are stated frequently: landscape care, biodiversity, organic cycles, animal husbandry and the habits to deal with water, waste and remaining matter. Pupils show an intermediate or high interest for these topics and the teachers are interested, too. Almost 90% of the school farms carry out measures of nature conservation and landscape management. Mostly planting and care for hedgerows, orchards, wetland biotopes, brooks and

ponds get realized. Also measures to protect and support biodiversity are carried out such as planting and care for orchards with local or rare varieties or the care for species rich grassland. An example of a school farm where pupils get actively integrated into such measures is Gut Hohenberg (KRÜGER & VAN ELSSEN 2005). – About 2/3 of the school farms integrate their visitors into activities of landscape care; especially farms with overnight accommodation do so. At the end the farms should estimate the special suitability of school farms to carry out measurements of nature conservation and landscape management. 2/3 of the interrogated agreed and 20% were not sure about it.

### **3.1.3 Targets and intentions of employment of clients in nature conservation measures**

In the survey of the SoFar project the 22 carefully selected social farms were asked about their targets and intentions employing clients in nature conservation measures:

- providing meaningful work (14)
- providing additional labour in periods with less work in existing sectors (9)
- employment (6)
- support service (5)
- therapy (5)
- additional income (4).

Environmental education, nature conservation and to earn a living were additionally mentioned. For most of the projects support for nature conservation measures is not an important source of income. Mainly sheltered workshops mentioned it as such. Main limiting factors for landscape activities are:

- lack of time (nearly everyone),
- lack of labour force and supports (very often).
- Three did not see any limitations.

Limited conditions of national nature conservation programmes and bad experiences with nature conservation were also mentioned. Client integration in landscape care is mainly a matter of manual work – according to their capabilities.

Many of the asked projects think that social and care farms are well suited to perform measures in nature conservation and landscape care. Some consider measures in nature conservation and landscape care as excellently suited, whereas other think that care farms are rather not suited to do this work. This certainly depends also on the ability of the different clients to do such work. The immediate visibility of labour success and provision of a future perspective through work are advantages of landscape activities. Furthermore landscape care can be done with less expense in that way.

On the other hand there is a necessity of good care taking which often can not be guaranteed because limited time. Proper organisation is needed. There is a high risk of accidents if machines are used. Especially educational farms but also others mentioned that this physical strength demanding work is often too hard for the children.

### **3.1.4 Designing Landscapes for different client groups**

Can landscape design support and influence the work on care farms and the well-being of participants in social care projects? If so, in which manner, and how can we support this as a positive interaction between people and landscape? And also: Can the contribution of users to the landscape have beneficial effects on landscapes and their quality, too? In a paper (VAN ELSSEN & SCHULER 2008) examples for designing of social farms or farm surroundings due to the needs of users were presented. Although already good examples exist, further research is needed on designing for special target groups to cope with the clients needs and activities. More cases presented show impacts of green care on landscape development and how this effect might be improved to meet the needs of the disabled people on the farm. That makes social farming a "win-win"-situation, integrating functions like caring for disabled people *and* contributing to the development of rural landscapes.

### **3.2 Impact of social farming on landscape in the Netherlands**

Care farmers contribute more to landscape quality than conventional farmers. In a national agricultural survey from 2003, 25% of the care farmers and only 11% of the conventional farmers indicated that they received additional income for nature conservation and landscape management. The survey among 20 care farmers in 2006 made clear that 90% of the care farms perform one or more activities in landscape management. They indicate that these activities fit well with the goals of the integration of clients. The most popular activities were planting and maintenance of hedges, protection of meadow birds, maintenance of ditch-sides, breeding of endangered species, care for orchards and the creation of specific biotopes such as ponds.

The development of social farming is part of a greater development of renewing the countryside and keeping cities healthy. Within this framework, the countryside will move from a production function towards a more recreational function. Combinations of regional food production, care, nature and landscape conservation, recreation and education can be building stones of new sustainable farming systems. A specific point of concern is the preservation of the specific quality of a real farm as this is important for the development of clients.

### **3.3 Impact of social farming on landscape in Flanders**

Increasing biodiversity on arable land (for example through green manuring) and putting hedges are the most popular environmental measures amongst the questioned care farmers. The construction of specific biotopes, nests or shelters and the maintenance of grasslands or dykes occur often. Most care farmers consider their contribution to nature protection as intermediate, but some care farmers assign their company (very) high nature values.

The majority of care farmers regard care farming as moderately suitable to rather unsuitable for implementing landscape/nature measures. Obstructing factors for applying landscape/nature measures on their own farm are lack of financial support and lack of time. Some have had negative experiences regarding nature protection. A rather large number of care farmers don't see any obstructing factor for the implementation of landscape/nature measures.



### **3.4 Impact of social farming on landscape in Italy**

There are many "B" cooperatives that work in gardening and/or in environmental services. These activities do not need any land, have limited initial costs, and do not require highly specialised know-how (compared to farming). Moreover, social cooperatives can enter agreements with public institutions and private enterprises that facilitate them to obtain jobs. Therefore, it is much easier to start business (and thus creating opportunities for labour integration) through this way, rather than by installing a farm.

Recurring features of social farms are organic or environmental-friendly farming. Practices of conservation of biodiversity (e.g. breeding of traditional farm animals) are often found too. These features appear to suite logic of diversification and intense labour typical for social farms, as well as to be coherent with an overall values' perspective (i.e. environmental and social values joint together). Particularly some interviewees remark the importance of landscape and nature (broad sense) as means of rehabilitation for disadvantaged persons; though, it is generally remarked that policy measures for landscape conservation usually provide very limited resources. A peculiar feature already mentioned is the entrustment of "green services" to social cooperatives for labour integration ("B" kind) by public and/or private bodies too. As explained, this is facilitated by the law (i.e. systems of agreements, right of priority in competitive tenders). However, in many cases these jobs are rather low profile and/or connected to urban environment, e.g. cut of vegetation along roads or water streams, maintenance of public gardens and parks, recycling of urban waste.

### **3.5 Impacts of social farming on landscape in France**

#### **3.5.1 Impacts of social farms on landscape and environment.**

Those impacts can be approached on different ways.

- The production system is environmentally friendly: to simplify, the system should be organic or referring to integrated system.
  - . All the social inclusion farms or gardens belonging to Jardins de Cocagne are organic (by definition of the Cocagne network); their basket subscription and delivery system attracts consumers, on the basis of quality and associative engagement;
- The other way to think the link between social farming and landscape is to see whether the farms have a landscape and forest maintenance activity, mainly as a service sold to municipalities.
  - . 2/3 of social inclusion farms develop such activity. It is even a growing part, as it is rather slow and difficult to increase the production volumes.

In the farms, there is a *de facto* specialisation of the tasks according to the season, gender and age:

-- women work mainly in the fields and glass houses for the fruit and vegetable production, as well as long term unemployed men,

-- young men work very much in landscape and forest maintenance activities.

### **3.5.2 Impacts of therapeutic farms on landscape and environment.**

It is impossible to provide national data on the number of therapeutic farms in France, as there is no labelling nor certification procedure. The consequence is that it is difficult to calculate the proportion of organic farms being in care farming.

In Grenoble region, the most active and important therapeutic farms do not refer to organic farming, but they have a local brand strategy, for processed food, such as dairy products and cheese especially. They insist on the capacity of handicapped people to assume the constraints and conditions to respect quality and safety standards.

- We could also say that associative therapeutic farms may have the possibility to develop landscape and forest maintenance activities: they host enough beneficiaries to share the labour force between agriculture and landscape maintenance.
- Individual therapeutic farms with the couple working on the farm, or even one single person, can not have this kind of activity: hosting and caring beneficiaries along with agricultural production can be the only activities. In the case of horse riding farms, hosting people and managing the horses do not let possibilities to develop something else.

### **3.5.3 A more qualitative impact**

In our region, social inclusion and therapeutic farms contribute to maintain agriculture in mountain areas. The large associative therapeutic farms we have analysed were created by regenerating agriculture in abandoned/closed farms.

Their presence contributes, by the animal production activity, to let the landscape opened and limits land abandonment on pastures.

### **3.6 Impact of social farming on landscape in Ireland**

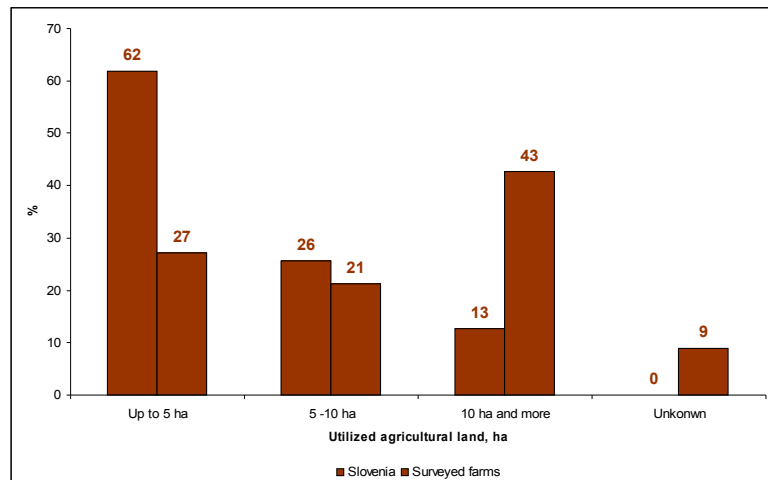
There may be a common cause to be found between people who believe in the benefits of Social Farming and organic farming or sustainable farming. Of the 90 projects included in the inventory, 40% followed organic practices or low input agriculture as a matter of principle in keeping with the overall ethos of their work.

An urban sustainable garden project, Tunnel Vision which is a collaboration between mental health, physical, and intellectual disability services and two training organisations have worked with participants and trained them in the areas of horticulture and environmental awareness which these participants with a range of disabilities, now teach to primary school children in two schools in their area.

Many of the projects included environmental awareness, education and dissemination of practices which could indicate that Social Farming may contribute to enhanced environment and landscape quality.

### 3.7 Impact of social farming on landscape in Slovenia

Out of 155 surveyed farms 32 % are full-time and 37 % part-time. Only 10 % is carrying out a supplementary on-farm activity. Two third of them are characterized as multi-generation household (on 39 % surveyed farms a household consists of two generation, and on 41% of three generations). Therefore the number of household members is rather high (on average 5 members). A combination of crop production and animal breeding is a dominant type of farming on surveyed farms (50 % of surveyed farms), followed by animal production (15 %), horticultural production (11 %), and crop production (9 %). Only 13 % out of them are ecological farms, while all others are farming conventionally.



Although the economics is a weak point of green programs, their holders are very optimistic in regard to the economic prospects. It is their estimation that the economic situation will improve in the near future. The reasons for such optimism are twofold. First, they will be in position to use learning and experiences curve effects. Furthermore, two new concepts, multifunctional agriculture and community-based social care, will place stress on the economy of scope.

Within a diploma thesis "spatial arrangements of a therapeutic farm" were planned (MEDVED 2006). The spatial characteristics of Kepec farm were analysed and the present and future activities of disabled people on the farms were defined, in order to strive for spatial arrangements for the needs of the clients involved.

## 4 Conclusions: Cross country analysis

The data base to conclude the impact and chances of social and care farms to contribute to landscape maintenance, care and design differs among the SoFar-project partners. This is one problem when results of the surveys get analysed. It has been the focus of the German SoFar- project partner to look and search for social farms being active working with landscape measurements. So we use our national results as the basis. The comparison among the different countries reveals as follows:

### 4.1 Organic Farming

The share of organic social farms might be an indicator for increased environmental and ethical awareness on social farms. The contribution of organic farming to the protection of species and the environment has been proven by many studies, so it seems worth to compare the amount of organic care farms in the different countries. The number of organic farms with social integration varies among the countries and does not give a consistent picture. Whereas in Germany about 60% of the social farms are certified organic, there are only 36

(40%) of 90 surveyed farms organic or low input in Ireland and 20 (13%) of 155 farms that are interested in social care work organic in Slovenia.

According to SOEL 2003 (<http://www.soel.de/oekolandbau/europa.html#1>) the situation in the different countries looks as following (data from 2003):

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of farms in total</b>	<b>Organic farms in %</b>	<b>Organic care farms from surveyed total care farms (%)</b>
Belgium	62000	1,15 %	?
France	664000	1,70%	?
Germany	472000	3,31%	60%
Ireland	142000	0,65%	40%
Italy	2152000	2,30%	?
Netherlands	102000	1,53%	?
Slovenia	86000	1,34%	13%

Although the database of each country differs, the results show that the share of organic farms among the social farms is much higher than the average number of organic farms in the countries. That leads to the conclusion that these farms contribute per se to a healthy environment, even if they do not offer special landscape activities.

#### **4.2 Landscape and nature conservation measurements**

In the Netherlands 90% of the care farms are actively improving their environment by nature conservation measurements and 25% of the care farms (compared to 11% other farms) get some additional income for these measures. Also in Flanders many care farms are actively improving their environment and do not see any obstructing factors to do so – besides missing time and financial support. Many social farms in Ireland include some kind of environmental education.

In Italy especially the social cooperatives run landscape maintaining groups and get supported by the Italian law that favours social enterprises when concluding public contracts. These public orders are mostly easy and unsophisticated landscape maintaining measurements in urban areas, but not often activities concerning nature conservation or landscape development. Low profile landscape maintenance seems to be rather suited as placement for employing underprivileged people because the staff does not need much training, the land must not be owned and the income can be accomplished without high costs or expensive instruments. At least some examples in Germany show that there is a threat when social entrepreneurs have to compete with landscape maintaining business and spoil prices because of the state money for integration.

Activities like mowing grass and caring for green can be seen as a step towards other landscape activities that take over the task to prevent and develop the biodiversity and biotopes within European cultural landscapes. Social farming has the potential to combine therapeutic goals, the employment of people and social

activities to support nature. The awareness for this challenge within social farming should be enhanced.

Aspects of the transversal analysis have been published in conference proceedings (VAN ELSSEN & KALISCH 2007, KALISCH & VAN ELSSEN 2008).

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