The Experience of the Italian Rural Network: LEADER AXIS IV

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"Network" – a definition

Subjects:
- primary Network
- institutional Network
- secondary Networks
- animation Unit
- Informal networks

Functions and tasks
Instrumental support (to create organizational context; to provide for services, to provide for resources, to simplify communication).
Social support (listening, keeping participation and “momentum”, enhancing the contributions of actors)

Structural properties
- form of network
- operation of links and processes
- operational properties
- Governance

Tools
communication
Training
Thematic Focus

no point is privileged over another (Serres)

A network is formed for a given instant by a plurality of points (nodes) connected together by a plurality of tracks (Serres)

facilitate the combination and mitigate tensions between organizational and professional “creativity” (Butera)

Promote mutual understanding, sharing, participation, cooperation, experimentation. Create a community.
Leader Network: the composition

**INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK**
- Italian Ministry of Agriculture (Mipaaf)
- UE – DG AGRI
- 21 MA RDP
- 7 PA
- 8 LEADER evaluators

**SECONDARY NETWORK**
- Stakeholders, other Ministries, etc.

**SECONDARY NETWORK**
- LAGs, rural areas representatives

**SECONDARY NETWORK**
- Regional RDP Manager
- Measure Thematic experts
- RDP evaluators
- Technical Assistance Stakeholders

**PRIMARY NETWORK**
- 192 LAGs
- 21 AXIS IV RDP Regional Managers
- 7 Paying Agencies
- 11 LAGs Regional Associations
- 7 LEADER evaluators

**INFORMAL NETWORK**
- Thematic Groups, LAGs; Rural Development experts; Others.

**NETWORK GROUP**
- social groups connected directly or indirectly,
  With some common links:
  - status shared by group;
  - group functions similar or shared;
  - geographical or cultural connections.

**PRIMARY NETWORK Contact Point Other National NRN**

**SECONDARY NETWORK**
- European LAGs
The Italian «Leader» Network - Features

- **LAGs**
  - Improve the skills of LAGs
  - Increase the transparency of LEADER

- **MA**
  - Improve the skills of MA
  - Increase the transparency of LEADER

- **EU (EC-MS-LAGs)**
  - Promote and increase the listening to the needs of the territories
  - Improve the image of LEADER

- **Other**
  - Enhance the quality and accessibility of information
  - Enhance the ability to interpret the results

Communication is a central function in the activities of the Leader Network and a key element of its mission. The function of TF Leader is to provide communication, resources and promotion of identity to all Leader actors.
... It is a plurality of subjects, carriers of different needs. Many of these needs can be solved using and combining skills and experience already held within the Network.

The mission of the Leader Network is to encourage and to support a process of learning "among equals". A process based on flows relations, resulting from the sharing of experiences and the socialization of knowledge and perceptions, oriented to the identification, from time to time, of the best practices to solve the problems.
Italian «Leader» Network – our Organization

**Scientific Committee**
- defines the annual program;
- identifies the networking methods;
- propose new thematic groups.

**Thematic working groups**
*long term or short term as needed*
- they deal with thematic analysis;
- Participation to the definition of program activities and the preparation of "products" (on-line thematic area in the portal, meetings / seminars, case studies, white papers, training courses; etc.)

**Technical Secretariat**
- facilitates the flow of communication between the participants to the LEADER network, calls meetings, collect the reports on the progress of activities, etc.;
- Dealing with organizational aspects, creates tools and products basics, supports thematic groups; databases, organizing seminars and meetings, management of on-line sections in the website.

**TF Rete Leader**

**Segretariato tecnico**

**Gruppi di lavoro tematici**

**Comitato Scientifico**

**13 Regional Antennas**

= 2 Seniors

= 4 Technical support

Full time staff

= 12 man-month

= 2 Seniors

= 3 Technical support
The Italian Leader Network – our Tools

Coordination meetings, working groups, open space, social networks  ➔ to allow the comparison and mutual understanding

Training, conferences, seminars, workshops, study visits  ➔ to facilitate the sharing of practices, knowledge and exchange of experiences

Information services (portal, newsletters, databases, archives and documentation) and proper Consulting (technical, legal and administrative branches)  ➔ to provide for services

Research and surveys, focus groups  ➔ to offer the opportunity to explore new ideas and solutions, and detect the needs
The Tools put in place by the Animation unit of a Network.

It is important that they are not just "innovative“.... but they need to have the ability to promote a practical and effective participation of all stakeholders

Always evaluate the context and resources available
Taking into account the following characteristics:

- **actors** (mode of action, knowledge);
- **structure** (characteristics of the network);
- **interactions** (operation and processes);
- **How the Regions have set Leader (axis IV)**
How the Regions have set Leader (axis IV)

Centri di competenza tecnica (gestionale - amministrativa)

Centri di competenza tecnica (informazione e animazione)

Centri di competenza tecnica (strategica - tematica)
Rete Leader some DATA ...

- n. 19 Report AL
- n. 4 Reports on progress
- n. 8 methodological documents
- n. 77 events organized by the Italian Rural Network + n. 45 meetings held with LAGs and Regions
- n. 22 participation in events organized by "others"
- n. 5 Working Groups - 1. procedures Leader 2. monitoring 3. evaluation 4.Leader transparency 5. Leader after 2013
- Comprehensive database of LAG areas leader, PSL, Financial Plans Axis IV
- 1400 calls LAG archived and georeferenced

The "number" indicators say little about the good networking processes

To "give an account" of the system network and networking processes, the first step is to give form to relations system that is not prescribed and that it is constantly evolving.

Structures that interact for a proper "Institutional duty" (eg DG Agriculture, European Rural Network and Leaders Sub Committee, Ministry of Agriculture, National Rural Network and Task Force Leader) can not be considered outright "Network system"
Our Participatory process EXAMPLE (1)

Questionnaires completed by MA and national networks of the 27 Member States relating to 88 PSR


fiches prepared by the MA and National Network of 21 member states relating to "eligible expenditure under Axis IV"

Case studies by MA and National Networks of 24 SM on the organization of 66 PSR, functions and tasks assigned to the MA, LAG and PA

Case studies by MA and national networks of 20 SM for 16 PSR on "complex projects / provided in the Local Development Plans"

fiches prepared by the MA and National Network of 21 member states relating to "eligible expenditure under Axis IV"

Case studies developed by MA and National Networks of 6 MS relating to the "small scale projects"
Our Participatory process
**Italian LEADER Network: the monitoring**

_Since 2009_

- n. **436** technical support requests
- n. **1,995** requests for diffusion of information on events, calls, projects, etc.
- N **2,415** participants to workshops, seminars; etc.

**“behaviour” of LEADER operators**

- Regionali no Leader
- Referenti regionali Leader
- Altro
- GAL (italiani)
Contact density - Regions

Monitoring

In particular Participations to seminars
In particular Information requests for the Network
Contacts pattern - LAGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>% on tot. LAGs</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n. LAGs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium -contacts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>63</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

- Annual average Support requests / diffusion = 6
- Annual average participation in events = 4
Needs analysis and intervention planning → in the start-up phase.

- Analysis of doc. programming
- Regional Focus Groups
- MA Technical meetings
- On Line Consulting instruments

"Peer" development tools:
- LDS Analysis
- "CBN" procedures development
- Leaderbook implementation

- Development of methods and tools for the capitalization and dissemination of results

Support for learning

- Activities agreed with the MA: seminars on Programme quality, "on line" legal consulting, technical workshops on RDP "delivery" with the Regions.

- Activities based on the analysis of the needs of the LAG Network: workshops, seminars, etc.

- Activities carried out within the group "CBN" (capacity building network)
Needs analysis and intervention planning → in the start-up phase.

LAG Learning needs.

N. Of LDS (Local Development Strategy) Selected and approved.

LAG & LDS selective process

Starting Up of LDS «Local Development Strategy».

Focus Group: needs analysis.

Time

- Methods and Programming practices
- Legal aspects
- RDP Administrative and Financial Procedures
- Communication with the local territory
- LAG/Relational (its communication, self-assessment)
- Specific Thematic analysis
- Specific update needs

2009 2010

The issues and activities of the LEADER TASK FORCE are periodically reviewed in relation to the phases of the RDP Axis IV implementation.
THE SUPPORT OF THE ITALIAN RURAL NETWORK: THE LAGS START UP – EXAMPLE

Focus Group for analyzing the needs

WORKSHOPS:
- a. Local Actions Groups: «Legal and institutional OPTIONS for the management of local development plans”
- b. “HOW to Develop a strategy for local development with the Leader method: key elements for quality in Programme planning”
- c. “The operational planning of activities and the administrative and financial management”
- d. “The planning of communication activities, animation and technical support”

TOOLS:
- 1. “AL” : our Monthly Report
- 2. Methodological documents on local animation Technics
- 3. Projects Reviews
- 4. Juridical on line consulting
- 5. Report AL
- 6. Analysis of the tools for communication and animation for the LAGs
- 7. Projects Data Base
- 8. AWARD “E.S.E.M.P.I”
- 9. LEADERBOOK social network
- 10. Methodological documents
- 11. Monitoring system
- 12. Test of development methodologies in LAG areas
- 13. Geo-referencing

National Study Visits:
- Renewable energy (LAG Valli di Tures e Aurina)
- Sustainable Tourism (LAG DELTA 2000)
- Networks and local food chains (LAG TERRE SHARDANA; LAG Maiella Verde)
- Cultural heritage (LAG Basento Camastra Rocca di Cerere, LAG Area Grganica; LAG CILSI)

WORKSHOPS:
- e. “The selection of the beneficiaries of Local Development Plans”
- f. “Evaluating and Monitoring Leader”
- g. “Signals of Leader: to invest in transparency, communication and evaluation for the future of Leader”
- f. Evaluating the animation capacity of LAGs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n. meetings</th>
<th>n. LAGs</th>
<th>n. Regions involved</th>
<th>n. of Region Managers</th>
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<td>Focus Groups</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>30</td>
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Network monitoring

<table>
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<th>Meeting tipology</th>
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<td>meetings with other Member States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.G. Meeting</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordination meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tot.</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
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Participants

- Study visit
- Incontri con altri Stati membri
- Riunioni di coordinamento MiPAAF
- Focus Group
- Gruppi di lavoro
- Seminari nazionali - incontri informativi-Workshop
- Laboratorio per i GAL

Graph showing the number of participants for each type of meeting from 2009 to 2012.