The assessment of the added value of LEADER/CLLD as improved social capital in the LAG Prealpi & Dolomiti (Italy)

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Good Practice Workshop: “Showing the added value of LEADER/CLLD through evaluation”
17-18 May 2018 Helsinki, Finland
Outline

1. Introduction
2. Background and needs
3. Process and methods
4. Evaluation findings, and lessons learned from the findings
5. Reflections on the evaluation approach
LAG Prealpi & Dolomiti

- **Key information:** The LAG Prealpi & Dolomiti was firstly established in 1997 in a large, but fragmented, mountain territory in the North-East of Italy. It now includes 23 municipalities, covering a total surface of 1,344 km² where 142.803 inhabitants are residents. The partnership is composed of 23 members (11 public authorities and 11 private actors).


- **CLLD strategy** approved in October 2016, total budget is of **8.9 millions euros**, total number of projects **n° 106** and total n° of implemented projects **83** by March, 2018

- **Organizational features:** The LAG is a private not-for profit association and the delivery mechanisms is via the mono-fund approach selected by the Veneto Region
# Background and evaluation needs

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<th>Key questions</th>
<th>Background and evaluation needs</th>
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| **Why?**      | (i) *Different critical points* emerging from the external evaluation of the LEADER Axis (2007-2013) in the Veneto Region pointing on the limited value added of the LEADER Approach  
(ii) *Opportunity of a research project* done by the University of Padova on *Social Capital and Local Development: from theory to practice* recently published by Palgrave MacMillan |
| **Who initiated?** | *LAG’s director and staff* together with *Elena Pisani* of the TESAF Dep. of the University of Padova have jointly initiated *the assessment of these different forms of added value* |
| **How?**      | The initial evaluation need has been now transformed into a LAG’s self-assessment |
| **Who supported?** | Italian Rural Network, TESAF Dep. UNIPD, regional network of the LAGs of the Veneto Region, and local community |
| **Which stage in the assessment?** | Programming period 2007-2013: completed!  
Programming period 2014-2020: first round of data collection |
The evaluation approach

• Social capital can be defined as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups”

• This definition is used in the Guidelines Evaluation of LEADER-CLLD (2017) and OECD (2001)
The network approach: using networks to measure and show the social capital in LEADER

Indicators based on questions to the director, members and a representative sample of beneficiaries

Indicators based on SNA indexes of specific relationships among LAG members (information sharing, collaboration and trust relationship)

Social capital
3 Forms
15 Dimensions
34 Sub-dimensions
78 Indicators

Node size

Information sharing among LAG members
The network approach to assess the social capital in LEADER-CLLD: How does it work? (1)
The network approach to assess the social capital of LEADER-CLLD: How does it work? (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY POINT</th>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS</th>
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<td>The approach can be used for the self-assessment of the added value of LEADER in terms of improved social capital.</td>
<td>Baseline, ongoing (in itinere), and final data collection and the consequent elaboration of indicators allow to estimate if changes in social capital indicators are correlated with the changes in output, results and outcome indicators of the local development strategy.</td>
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## Example of evaluation elements used in the network approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>JUDGEMENT CRITERIA</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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| To what extent did the HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK lead to the generation of added value? | Internal participation has increased                                                | C1 Average annual rate of attendance of LAG members at Board of Directors’ meeting  
C2 Average annual rate of attendance at the LAG Assembly  
C3 Regular attendance of LAG members at formal meetings                                                                                     |
| Level of openness of the LAG has increased                                           |                                                                                     | C5 Implementation of communication channels by the LAG  
C6 Outreach to new actors by the LAG                                                                                                         |
| Density of relations in the LAG has increased                                        |                                                                                     | C7* Density of the information network of the LAG  
C8* Density of the collaborative network of the LAG                                                                                           |
| Public-private relations internal to the LAG has increased                           |                                                                                     | C9* Proportion of private actors in the centre of the network compared to proportion of private members in the Assembly  
C10* Collaborative relationships among public and private actors in the LAG  
C11* Public–private relations over total number of relations of the beneficiary                                                                 |
| Pro-activity of the LAG has increased                                                |                                                                                     | C12* Bridging capacity of the LAG among members and beneficiaries  
C13* Role of the LAG in building relationships among members  
C14 Level of synergy between beneficiaries and the LAG                                                                                       |

* Indicators are computed with SNA
## The network approach to assess the social capital in LEADER-CLLD: How does it work? (3)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who does what</th>
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| **1. Setting up the purpose and plan** | ✓ Define the evaluation questions  
✓ Agree on roles and responsibility | ✓ LAG manager and LAG staff  
✓ LAG members  
✓ External researcher  
✓ NRN |
| **2. Conceptualizing the approach** | ✓ Reviewing the CLLD strategy objectives  
✓ Define the indicators to be used among the 78 proposed  
✓ Prepare and test the data collection tools (questionnaires) | ✓ LAG manager  
✓ External researcher (supervision) |
| **3. Collecting data** | ✓ Carrying out interview, focus groups, etc. | ✓ External actor |
| **4. Analysing data** | ✓ Data entry in the excel file and on the SNA software  
✓ Elaboration of indicators and their graphical representation | ✓ External researcher (supervision)  
✓ External actor |
| **5. Visualizing, discussing, and interpreting findings** | ✓ Display findings in graphs and online tools  
✓ Arrange meetings with LAG members to diffuse  
✓ Adopt consequent actions or improve the existing ones in order to capitalize the lessons learnt | ✓ IT or communication expert  
✓ Facilitator of interactive group works  
✓ LAG manager  
✓ Executive Board  
✓ President of the organization |
Evaluation Findings

Structural social capital

INDICATOR A3: value 0.01
Beneficiaries’ level of indirect knowledge of projects supported by the LAG
https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/capitale-sociale/indicatore/

Normative-cognitive social capital

INDICATOR H5: value 0.07
Innovative capacity of the LAG as perceived by beneficiaries
https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/capitale-sociale/indicatore/

Related aspects of governance

INDICATOR O2: value 0.12
Understanding the role of the LAG in the territory
https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/capitale-sociale/indicatore/
Lesson learnt and follow-up actions

Structural social capital

Normative-cognitive social capital

Related aspects of governance

Example of action: dedicated tool

Example of action: innovative agriculture

Example of action: training courses
Reflections on the evaluation approach

**Challenges encountered in assessing the added value of LEADER:**

- Cultural challenge
- Simpler definition of social capital for communication purposes

**Elements that worked out well, and could be transferred to other Member States:**

- Training of the staff and interviewer
- Graphical representations (e.g. network graph, spider diagram, etc.)

**Overall ability of the approach to show the added value of LEADER:**

- Number of indicators is the real added value of the approach
- Social capital becomes “tangible”

**Possibility to upscale the approach at RDP level:**

- Require strong coordination between the LAGs and the MA

**Critical elements to consider:**

- The SNA method has direct costs and indirect costs
- How to connect social capital with improved results
Thank you

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