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

Elena Pisani – TESAF Dep. – University of Padova
Matteo Aguanno – Director of the LAG Prealpi & Dolomiti

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key questions</th>
<th>Background and evaluation needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **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)

Related aspects of governance

Normative Cognitive

Structural

Node size

0

1

Information sharing among LAG members

Social capital

3 Forms

15 Dimensions

34 Sub-dimensions

78 Indicators
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<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 (<em>in itinere</em>), and final data collection and the consequent elaboration of indicators allow to estimate if <em>changes in social capital indicators</em> are correlated with the <em>changes in output, results and outcome indicators</em> of the local development strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Baseline t0](Baseline_t0.png) ![In itinere t1](In_itinere_t1.png) ![Final t2](Final_t2.png)
Example of evaluation elements used in the network approach

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who does what</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Setting up the purpose and plan | ✓ Define the evaluation questions  
✓ Agree on roles and responsibility | ✓ LAG manager and LAG staff  
 ✓ LAG members  
 ✓ External members  
 ✓ 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**

**Normative-cognitive social capital**

**Related aspects of governance**

**INDICATOR A3: value 0.01**
Beneficiaries’ level of indirect knowledge of projects supported by the LAG

https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/capitale-sociale/indicatore/

**INDICATOR H5: value 0.07**
Innovative capacity of the LAG as perceived by beneficiaries

https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/capitale-sociale/indicatore/

**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

Elena Pisani, Dep. TESAF University of Padova,
elena.pisani@unipd.it
https://orchid.org/0000-0002-8918-2781

Matteo Aguanno, LAG Prealpi e Dolomiti,
direttore@gal2.it
https://www.galprealpidolomiti.it/monitoraggio-evalutazione/

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