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# Alliance a pilot action in the rural art & craft soul of Tunisia

Bologna 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014

## CONCISE OUTLOOK March 2014

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## 1. GROUND-BREAKING NATURE OF THE PILOT ACTION ALLIANCE \_ AN ALLIANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

The proposed pilot action, entitled **ALLIANCE**, is aimed to answer two core questions:

1. how can a community composed of human beings (children, young adults, aged women and men, etc), organizations, institutions, and a precise physical environment (with its own climate and geographical connotations), its peculiar history, myths, written and unwritten, a unique cultural landscapes, that has moreover suffered deep and penetrating wounds, develop and revitalize its desire/will for rebirth?
2. How can a local community discover and recognise its potential and specific pathways for a full exploitation of its tangible and intangible resources?

The main theses from which the pilot action takes origin are:

- o major progress in community can be achieved conceiving a fragile community as a real living being with its original attributes, an inimitable and unique cognitive map, its motivations, its historical-featured adaptation strategies, timing and mode of learning and changing;
- o physical proximity is an important explicative factor of learning and innovation processes: any innovation process incorporates a set of concrete circumstances which are peculiar to and typical of a specific territory;
- o exclusively economic background has shown itself to be weak when dealing with the specification of the forms through which innovation – and hence development – is generated and governed in a local community. Studies which are economic in origin manage to intuit and signal the role of learning and the knowledge generation processes, but they cannot progress without a solid multidisciplinary theoretical work.



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## 2. THE BACKGROUND/ORIGIN OF THE PILOT ACTION PROPOSED

The proposed pilot action originated from an extensive multidisciplinary theoretical work and an action-research programme (entitled Alliance) initiated by the ARTES institute at the end of 90s. The core aim was to lay down *the theoretical foundation, to foster radical changes in fragile areas without missing the community identity and by encouraging the community to play the role of protagonist*. The Alliance Model first pilot experience was carried out in one of the most difficult area of Southern Europe, the Italian region of Calabria, but also in Basilicata, another small, lively outermost region of Italian Mezzogiorno and in Alba Iulia, a Romanian territory.

The theoretical foundation of the Alliance model was illustrated in a monograph published at the beginning of 2000<sup>1</sup>; it was then presented and discussed during three international conferences, respectively held in Le Mans (1998)<sup>2</sup>, in Dortmund (2002)<sup>3</sup> and in Pisa (2003)<sup>4</sup>. The operational model was also evaluated by the Scientific Committee and included in thirty international exemplary experiences at the first World Cluster Conference, organized by OCSE and DATAR (Paris, January 2001). Fieldwork and further theoretical studies (in Brazil, Ukraine, Kazakhstan) have both produced adjustments and developments revealing unresolved theoretical issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Infelise L., *Apprendere e cambiare in una comunità locale (Learning and change in a local community)* in Amietta, Pierluigi (Ed.) *I luoghi dell'apprendimento - metodi, strumenti e casi di eccellenza delle nuove formazioni*, Franco Angeli, Milan (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Infelise L. Le Mans – 12-13 June 1998, *Diagnosis/development of innovation potential in rural areas throughout innovative networking strategies. A critical appraisal of theoretical works and innovative experiences*.

<sup>3</sup> Infelise L., *ALLIANCE – An alliance for the development of business and employment in rural areas: a community learning model*. Dortmund – August 2002. 42nd Congress of the European Regional Science Association.

<sup>4</sup> Infelise L., *ALLIANCE - an alliance for the development of business and employment in rural areas: a community learning model*. April 2003 – Pisa, Italy Regional Studies Association – Reinventing Regions in the Global Economy Gateway.



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An extensive discussion took place at the international seminar held on 21-22 September 2006 in Lugano, entitled 'The crisis of the boundaries. Towards an engineering of regional development'. At this stage, Lilia Infelise foreshadowed both a more solid theoretical development and the urgent need to engage in regions under conditions of post-conflict renaissance<sup>5</sup>.

Above all, this model is established on a founding principle: **every local community is a living creature of its own, with a unique cognitive map, its own inimitable attributes, times and ways of learning and changing. A real cognitive identity is built on a system of innovative networks with its own morphology, its own language, its own ways of learning, but also peculiar motivations and affective history.**

There are three main thesis supporting the articulation of the process:

- every innovation process is a real process of individual and collective learning;
- every learning process implies a creative forgetting process;
- a true pedagogy of change/ a system of innovation encouragement strategies/techniques have to be put into place (Å. B. Lundvall claims about national system of innovation).

### 3. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

**ALLIANCE** is composed of two main PHASES:

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<sup>5</sup> Infelise L., *Nuove relazioni tra approcci cognitivi ed economici, nuovi spazi e forme di democrazia partecipativa. Per una pedagogia del cambiamento in aree fragili*, in: *La crisi dei confini. Verso un'ingegneria dello sviluppo regionale*, a cura di Claudio Del Don, Franco Angeli, Milano (2007).



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The first entitled PREPARATORY, entails two main actions: (1.) **AWARENESS RAISING AND CAPACITY BUILDING**, which consists in planning a very first phase of “approach” and familiarization of the project team with the territory, the inhabitants and the leaders; (2.) **TASK FORCE BUILDING** which consists in building a task force of your project leaders which through the project development become capable of representing the agents of learning and change.

### **(1) AWARENESS RAISING AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

The action starts with a large-scale information campaign in major newspapers and on local radio stations, a “freephone” line which ran for two months, and the distribution of 4000 copies of a manifesto containing an attractive presentation of the project proposals.

Meetings are held at national and local level to present the whole programme.

### **(2) TASK FORCE BUILDING**

The project develops from a fundamental decision to empower as protagonists those political, economic and cultural leaders who are deeply rooted in the territory but also oriented towards the future, by introducing them into the project team and support their development of attitude, competences, knowledge and relationships.

This first group has to be selected to build a Task Force, an action team fully aware and motivated towards the success of the project, who through field work becomes capable to recognise and master strengths and weaknesses, dangers and opportunities of development, as well the physical and relational resources of their communities of origin. In short, the objective at the heart of this action is the development of the roles of **FEDERATIVE LEADERS** capable of targeting problems and devising action plans to solve them, identifying all the necessary and available resources, and managing them in a manner consistent with the intended ultimate objective to be achieved. This will be called **ALLIANCE TASK FORCE** and will be trained to recognise implicit and explicit knowledge in their own local communities, crystallised in histories, cultural characteristics, styles of



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learning and inherited knowledge. A Methodological guideline to COMMUNITY PROFILING will help them to conduct research into original, strong, productive vocations, deploying current productive capacity in innovative processes as agents of synergy; in particular all those economic and institutional actors who might possibly become "allies" in actions to develop the growth-potential of the local community.

The second phase, entitled ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT entails the creation and development of a wide cluster start up (territorial agglomeration of businesses) programme involving especially the European and Mediterranean partners through commercial and productive ties.

Already existing, even informal, entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs are involved. The main purpose is to sustain firms which are locally rooted but endowed with a bold international vocation built up with a transfer of know-how from the international partners and also from immigrated communities. The hidden resources and specific dynamics connoting a community have to be activated.

In this model, business and general economic regeneration strategies are related to diffuse and wisely structured innovative learning strategies. Among the main methodologies adopted, we can find: action learning, action research, project work, Metaplan, Future Search Conference, Open Space Technology, Incident Analysis, negotiation techniques, SWOT analysis, activity analysis, gap analysis.

### ***Operational model***

The entrepreneurial development will take place according to four related components:

1. recruitment;
2. animation and orientation to entrepreneurial activities;
3. escort the job and enterprise creation and development;



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#### 4. making sustainability institutionalised.

##### **Recruit**

A vast information campaign will be launched in order to ensure that any person determined to set up a business with their own family or network of friends can access to the information.

##### **Animation and orientation to entrepreneurialism**

A sound animation is needed to build an alliance between entrepreneurs/aspirant entrepreneurs and already well established business outside the country.

This action focus on the building up of a working team, a professional team of entrepreneurs from a generic group able to work together in view of a common objective, that is the development of a district/area.

##### **Escort the job and enterprise creation and development;**

During this phase the entrepreneurs supported by the TASK FORCE and the whole project team start from the needs identified and develop business action plans and business networks.

This phase implies many methodologies supporting the elaboration of an aware and interconnected entrepreneurial spirit:

1. mentoring;
2. laboratory activities;
3. thematic workshops;
4. action learning sets;
5. social network involvement;
6. external stages and formative travels useful to learn from similar experiences implemented in other countries;
7. an international festival of the sustainable entrepreneurship and technologies;
8. the participation to the World Expo 2015, promoting the brand and the Alliance-Urunani philosophy.



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### ***Institutionalise the Sustainability***

This is a very delicate action, that implies the involvement of different actors (economic and political ones) with different level of motivation, interest and power.

At this stage a negotiation action is required in view of achieving agreements between a number of different actors aimed at ensuring sustainability for the network of businesses and for the built relationships.

A strong Networking Action is entailed with more levels.

It means:

- to network people having key common desires and expectations;
- to construct links between economical and political actors in the area;
- to create links between local business and international markets.

**The entrepreneurial development** takes to the establishment of organized businesses' networks adhering to a Trade Code that obliges all the participants to respect accepted standards of quality such as:

**endogenous development** (all the community members participate in the conscious choice of goals and process of production development);

**environmental sustainability** (the production process is fully documented and respects a bio-farming quality charter, expressly defined for this purpose);

**socio-cultural sustainability** (working relationships and every relationship involved, as well as the development and training of competences, take place under the framework of a dedicated quality charter);

**economic sustainability** (production roles and processes are defined according to internationally recognized principles of equity);

**technology sustainability** (the introduction of new technologies, consistent with the development model, guarantees the suitable development of the community professional skills through investments in education, training and research).



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There are many possible adaptation and translation of the model into the real contexts.

The average duration is **24 months** including preparation and follow up.

A complete process manual is available on demand.

The total envisaged cost is **1.300.000 euro**.

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