

LEARNINGS OF THE SYMBIOS PROJECT



Symbios Project –Axis 4.80 of the European Social Found (ESF), is a transnational programme, which is promoted by the General Directorate of Family and Inclusion of the Xunta de Galicia. It is framed in the Regional Operational Programme of the European Social Found 2007-2013. Its objectives are the exchange and learnings on demographic change challenges and its consequences on welfare and social inclusion.

Symbios Project examines the existing relation between demographic crisis, and social and territorial exclusion. This is carried out identifying experiences which aim to promote social inclusion and generate employment that could mitigate demographic shrinking effects, as well as offer sufficient provision of social services. This could increase future expectations in population areas which are at demographic risk.

The project started in 2013 and it finishes in 2015. As a result of the work during these seven years, Symbios Project has identified criteria to improve welfare service planning in vulnerable territories pursuing the necessary innovation to provide quality services to those territories, and favouring an inclusive, intelligent, and sustainable territorial design, coherent with Europe 2020 strategy.

Symbios Project was carried out in three phases. During its first phase, it was carried out an academic approach towards the demographic evolution and its impact on the current model of welfare services provision. During its second phase, a modelling process was developed from different experiences which, despite the existence of the territorial exclusion cycle, are able to promote skilled inclusion dynamics. Its last phase is focussed on the criteria which needs to be incorporated to public planning in order to face territorial inclusion. As a result and synthesis of the whole project, these provisional proposals were created. They will be corroborated in different territories affected by the demographic crisis.



INCORPORATING THE TERRITORIAL DIMENSION IN INCLUSIVE POLICIES: TACKLING TERRITORIAL EXCLUSION

Territorial exclusion is a vulnerability factor which, together with other factors, can make people be in a situation of social exclusion, or it can intensify the process of those who are already in that situation.

Depending on where they live, many people find it difficult to carry out a life project comparable to the one that they could be carrying out in other territories.

Social exclusion is strongly influenced by the territory, and it needs to be tackled from this perspective, and not only bearing in mind individual or personal factors. Therefore, a territorial oriented intervention is needed.

Incorporating the concept of territorial inclusion has methodological and content implications. On the one hand, it is necessary to use new indicators and new resource assignment criteria, in order to deal with territorial inclusion from public planning.

Territorial exclusion acts as an accelerator of the “expulsion” process of inhabitants in demographic vulnerable areas. To compensate or mitigate both “objective” and “subjective perception” of exclusion by the population, specially by the younger population, fixing population is an essential requirement, an essential axis in Galicia’s strategic planning. Therefore, it is needed to incorporate in the contents of that planning actions that compensate the disadvantages, by designing positive action lines for vulnerable territories.





GUARANTEERING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

A department of an Administration, or of a social or private entity, have, on their own, a limited impact capacity. Therefore, it is needed to guarantee the transversality of different programmes, as well as the collaboration of different departments of different Administrations, and the active participation of civil society and citizenship.

Transversality between different departments of the same Administration favours integrated tackling. The collaboration and coordination between European, central, autonomic and local Administration, contributes to the efficacy on the use of resources, and they should guarantee that local administrations have a leading role as they are closer to citizenship, and, therefore, are aware of their needs (subsidiarity principle).

Participation has an important role on all the phases (design, execution, and evaluation). Citizens' participation, as well as the participation of social and private entities, guarantee the adaptation of them to population's real necessities, and it allows a higher degree of commitment and implication, which has as a consequence a higher impact. Their collaboration on the execution of programmes mobilizes resources, technical and community knowledge, and they can be a key factor to reach the whole population where population is scattered.



PROMOTING INNOVATION FROM IDENTITY

Identity and self-esteem are key elements when it comes to territorial balance. It is needed to overcome the collective prejudice that associates rural areas with backwardness, ignorance, and lack of comfort, as that prejudice expels population and inhibits new residents from coming. Therefore, it is needed that work on changing stereotypes goes together with economic opportunities and welfare services, so that rural areas are changed into a desirable option.



Working methodologies should use of knowledge and local identity, avoiding validating procedures according to urban models.

Recovering and spreading cultural heritage gives value to history, increases self-esteem and it will later constitute an important economic asset. Regarding European orientation towards a knowledge-based economy, as an economic competitiveness strategy, cultural tradition and diversity are an important asset, as they provide a differential value to services and products, making them more competitive.

Putting into value local identity does not mean saying no to innovation. Innovation has more success possibilities if it is developed from identity. As an encouraging factor, it is needed to promote meeting and exchange networks. It also needs to be consider that intergenerational exchange allows valorising and preserving rural cultural heritage.

The identity issue needs to be considered in participation methodologies, which have to be adapted to the territorial identity and to strengthen the capacity of community response. In rural areas exist a tradition of community participation which has its own characteristics: community works, open councils, mutual knowledge, or meeting spaces. All of these exists and should be the basis on which participation has to be constructed.

Bottom-up processes have to be given priority to. These processes have to put into value the community as an asset capable of providing responses to their necessities, being the rest of agents facilitators of those responses, without taking the place of the community.

Lastly, it is important to insist on the necessity of promoting, on the one hand, decentralised and close meeting spaces and mutual knowledge spaces, in addition of promoting connecting networks that favour community organisation and territorial development. On the other hand, it is important to promote, not only at a local level, innovation in the territory through exchange between different actors of different territorial areas with similar specific characteristics.



PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL DIMENSION



Technical staff that manages different programmes has a very relevant knowledge of the necessities and processes when it comes to provide services. This knowledge needs to be used for an appropriate design.

It is also necessary to incorporate working methods to improve coordination and technical cooperation between different Administrations departments, or levels, so that action protocols are shared.

Special attention is required by evaluation processes as key phases when developing projects. It is needed to improve the evaluation's usefulness as monitoring and inspection tool for planning. In order to achieve major efficiency and effectiveness, it is needed to measure impacts and its relation with the economic dimension, also hearing citizenship to be able to compare the information available.

In this way, stability and permanence over time of programmes is a necessary requirement to achieve an optimum degree of efficiency and effectiveness.

REFORMULATING SERVICES PRESENTATION IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THEIR ACCESSIBILITY



A scattered population, combine with depopulation and the disintegration of community response, formulates the challenge to services accessibility, a central element in the analysis of territorial exclusion. In order to guarantee population settlement, diverse services need to be accessible around the area, taking into account that the parish is a key space of community integration.

Criteria that is needed to incorporate in the reformulation of how services are presented are: flexibility, functionality, and the ability to perform a variety of tasks. In order to bring services to people it is needed to design them in a participative way. This reformulation should be orientated towards a greater flexibility and a variety of tasks.

ICT have an important role when it comes to reformulation and service accessibility. To make them inclusive, ICT have to be developed paying attention to users' characteristics and skills, as well as available infrastructures and communication. At the same time, it is necessary to work on digital literacy, and on improving digital infrastructures, in order to reduce or eliminate the digital gap.

Opposite to a model of service provision based on fixed structures, it is needed to evaluate the possibility of mobile or itinerant services.



ATTEMPTING TO MAKE ECONOMIC VALUE DERIVED FROM PUBLIC ACTION TO HAVE A RESULT ON THE TERRITORY



Proximity social services present a good quality and adequacy to population's necessities, at the same time that they generate job opportunities in the same area, preventing that those job opportunities are moved outside. Other public actions can also incorporate this objective, aiming for spending to be carried out as a future investment that will have a positive impact on the local population.



ADAPTING PUBLIC POLICIES TO EXISTING DIVERSIFY LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL AREAS



Opposite to the concept of employment, livelihoods in rural areas usually are diversified. It is necessary to take into account this reality and to provide an adequate support to this diversification, for example through tax measures and by making more flexible the Social Security contributing scheme, so that they are adapted to this reality.

Small farms, craftwork and diversification have a development potential. They are adapted to the smallholding structure, and they also offer positive externalities related to environmental and landscape conservation.

Promoting a sustainable smallholding model adjusts identity factors with added value factors that are successful in the actual market and positive externalities, such as territorial custody.

Environment and landscape are not only a consequence of nature, but they are also created by the human factor through different generations. Dealing with territorial custody means putting into value the role of people who live in that environment, considering them an asset for its conservation.

Administration has to adapt its criteria so that it does not create difficulties for these livelihoods based on diversification.

Sector regulations on public services, specially the ones dedicated to people's care –elderly and children–, need to bear in mind the singularity of rural areas, as well as the eventual demographic impact (loss of population) which could imply its strict and standardized implementation and, therefore, they should foresee exceptions to facilitate its adaptation to rural areas' peculiarities, as long as these exceptions allow to maintain a minimum quality of services and have an effect on the creation of economic activities for the inhabitants, through the diversification and complementarity of income.



MAKING USE OF RURAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIÓN



Different important local resources which are underused can make rural areas opportunity spaces for entrepreneurship and inclusion: the forestry sector, cattle breeding and ecological agriculture, sustainable tourism, cultural tourism, heritage rehabilitation, and traditional housing rehabilitation, etc.

In order to favour these entrepreneurship it is needed to work in an integral way, together with aspects of the economic activity, or others such as housing, education, leisure, or community relations access. It is also needed to overcome obstacles related to land access.

The forestry and social agriculture sector have an especial potential to favour inclusion of people with special employment difficulties.

Horticulture activities, caring of animals, traditional trades, or local history and legends are also resources that can be used to preserve the mental and physical health of the elderly.

