



Local Government and the Changing Urban-Rural Interplay.

H2020-MSCA-RISE-2018. Grant Agreement no. 823961

Interview Report

Dear interviewer,

Please use this document to report on the expert interviews. Please do not summarize more than one interview per interview report. Wherever you have added questions, please add them also in this Interview Report. For any questions or concerns, please contact your local coordinator or logov@eurac.edu

Thank you very much!

Informed consent

See informed consent sheet

Can identifying information be shared with LoGov researchers?	[yes]
Use of real name for quotes?	[yes]
Archiving of non-anonymized audio-recording	[yes]
Archiving of anonymized transcript of recording	[yes]
Archiving of anonymized interview report	[yes]

Basic information

Date of the interview	08/06/2021
Name of the interviewer	CARMEN NAVARRO
[Name of the expert, check consent above]	MAITE GONZÁLEZ
Affiliation of the expert	LOCAL ACTION GROUP ADEFO CINCO VILLAS
Position/Job description	CEO
Gender	FEMALE
Years of experience	15
Area of expertise	RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Rural and/or urban focus	RURAL



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Part A: GENERAL ASPECTS OF ADEFO LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

1	<p>When was Adefo set up? How many members ADEFO has?</p> <p>Adefo Cinco Villas was created in 2020.</p> <p>Currently Adefo has 72 members. It used to have more (around 10 more) in previous periods, but some individual companies dropped out over time as they perceive they do not get benefits. Business associations remain as very active members as well as other type of associations.</p>
2	<p>What is the legal status and how is it structured?</p> <p>Adefo has the legal status of a non-profit association according to the Spanish Law. It implies having two institutional settings: an assembly and an executive committee (EC). Some LAGs have the juridical status of Foundation but the majority of them are associations. Legally all LAGs have to be non-profit institutions.</p> <p>All members interested in joining the association can apply for and get membership. They participate in the assembly meeting. Adefo members pay an annual fee (see below) but not all LAGs charge fees.</p> <p>The assembly meets once or twice a year. In previous years, it used to work in thematic commissions as well, but they have been eliminated after having proved not being very effective.</p> <p>Several requisites apply for the composition and functioning of the EC. It is mandatory by EU regulations that public actors (public authorities, municipalities representatives, etc.) cover no more than 49% of the total seats. The rest – a majority- are members from the civil society and the business sector, both associations and individual members (i.e. companies). In this way, a critical mass of societal actors and its participation in decision making processes are guaranteed. The Adefo EC is comprised by 11 members elected through a closed list system (somebody organizes and leads the making of the list/s involving actors who represent the variety of fields in the territory and the assembly members vote it/them). It is common that mayors are EC presidents; but there are many cases in which associations representatives are presidents.</p>

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	<p>The EC is the key body for decision making and proposals drafting. It has its own formal rules for its functioning. The EC meets once every month and a half approximately. The EC formal decision rule is simple majority, but they tend to reach consensus in almost all decisions. Actually, formal voting is very rare.</p> <p>Administrative structure of Adefo: 4 people.</p>
3	<p>What type of decisions does the EC typically take?</p> <p>Passing the budget</p> <p>The approval and reforms that affect the Leader strategy for each term.</p> <p>Decisions on hiring personnel or purchases/public tenders (Spanish regulations on public contracts apply to LAGs)</p> <p>The change in the criteria for selection of projects' funding. This is a sensitive issue. The EU demands a thorough justification of these changes and the room of manouvre is tight.</p> <p>In addition, rules on conflict of interests affects the decision-making process substantially. EC members cannot participate in decisions if they are "affected" in any way. For instance, coming from a municipality that will receive funding or being a distant relative of a potential recipient of funds is considered as conflict of interest and EC members have to abstain in decisions (leaving the meeting that decides on them). These strict demands might be considered "unreasonable" for these rural settings because, at the end of the day, everybody knows each other and conflicts of interests become the rule.</p>
4	<p>What have been the major changes in the last two decades from an organizational perspective?</p> <p>There have not been substantial changes. Stability has been the pattern.</p> <p>Only the fact that some EC meetings have been replaced by views exchange and management via whatsapp group, particularly during the pandemic.</p>
5	<p>Funding sources</p> <p>EU Leader funding (3,5 million euros in a period; in previous years they managed to get 8 million); the CCAA funds functioning expenses (1,5 employees); members' fees (associations 18 euros; business associations 90 euros; individual companies 30; municipalities (150 + 1,5 euros per habitant).</p>

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	<p>Provincial government; Comarca Cinco Villas also funds Adefo's courses (very small amount 8.000 euros, for activities).</p> <p>Some LAGs also charge fees to services users (ex. Courses, etc), but not Adefo. Whether they should charge for the services they offer has been a never endless issue for debate in the LAG community.</p> <p>All these aspects vary by LAG.</p>
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PART B: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ACTORS IN LAGs FUNCTIONING

6	<p>What is the role of the UE in the development of LAGs action?</p> <p>Approves and finances the Framework Strategy that sets the outline and criteria for the projects funding</p>
7	<p>What is the role of the Spanish government in the development of LAGs action?</p> <p>The Spanish government sets and organizes the Red Rural Nacional (Ministry of Agriculture) to promote rural and agricultural development. LAGs are members of this Network.</p> <p>The Ministry also sets the Marco Estratégico Común (Strategic Framework) with a general outline of priorities and action.</p>
8	<p>What is the role of the Autonomous Communities in the development of LAGs action?</p> <p>Each AACC designs and sets a Rural Development Program. In the future (term 2023-2029) there will only be a National Program, but AACC will have some room of maneuver.</p> <p>In Aragón, the regional government gets the European funds from LEADER, sets the call for proposals and transfer the funds directly to the recipients. Before 2014, the LAGs themselves got the funds, but this created problems of insolvency in case recipients had to send funding back.</p> <p>The regional government devotes a lot of personnel to control and supervise LAGs functioning because of all the activities they do and the EU demands on control.</p>

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9	What is the role of the provincial and “comarcal” institutions in the development of LAGs action?
	They fund the functioning and some activities of LAGs
10	How would you rate the involvement of private actors in the LAG decision making processes?
	Private actors are intensely involved in drafting the proposal to be sent to EU LEADER in each term. But the involvement in all the later phases of its management is 0. This is because of the procedural rigidities of funds management (everything is set once the EU approves the funding program. Paradoxically LEADER methodology (participation) does not apply in the management of European funds.
11	Has the LEADER participatory approach proved to be effective? (better decisions, higher impact)
	Public participation is much higher in other programs delivered by the LAGs in parallel, namely “cooperation projects”. Cooperation projects are LAGs partnerships financed by the regional government (annual call). These are independent and additional to the LEADER program. Participation works very effectively here. LAG personnel contact groups and involve them in the decision-making process to propose activities (to have an idea if its scope: 180.000 euros for one year, shared among 20 LAGs). This is where participation makes a difference, networks among actors are enforced and outputs of these interactions are effective.

Part C: HORIZONTAL NETWORKS

12	Are there horizontal interactions among LAG members of CEOs?
	Red Española de Desarrollo Rural (Spanish Rural Development Network), almost all LAGs belong to it. Now it is acting as a lobby in this moment of depopulation issues being at the top of the agenda. They demand a more prominent role in making problem diagnosing and proposing solutions. It is a Federation of Associations in organizational terms. There is another network: Red Rural Nacional. Organized from the Ministry.

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	There is a European Network as well. But they do not participate in it. They produce a lot of information, for instance in best practices. But they are not involved and do not know how to get involved.
13	In your opinion, are LAGs characterized by diversity or by common patterns of functioning?
	<p>Positive assessment on the overall, from the general perspective.</p> <p>But negative evaluation of the evolution. Rigidity characterizing the processes and lack of trust (AACC towards LAGs) are</p>

Part D: LAG IMPACT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

14	What are, in your opinion, the key aspects for a LAG success?
	It depends on how you measure success. Here there is a confronted view between regional administration and LAGs managers. Regional bureaucrats emphasized the correct fulfilment of procedures as the signal of success. They are not interested in outputs or impact but just in meeting the administrative requirements. While LAGs managers look at impact. From this perspective, key aspects for success are good knowledge of the territory, continuous presence in the territory with activities and building trust with the population. This will allow that LAGs end up being the reference for residents when it comes to making activities. And technical capacity of LAGs personnel. The worse strategy for a LAG would be adopting a “civil servant” perspective (fixed hours)
15	Could LAGs be considered as effective strategies for facing depopulation?
	Absolutely. Not it is called facing depopulation, but before it was defined as rural development or reactivation, which is the same. If a municipality develops it implies development for the territory which fixes population. If they work in supporting entrepreneurs, supporting social or cultural fabric so they organize activities so population feels happy, this attracts and fixes residents. Projects like “Pueblos Vivos” o “Abraza la Tierra” assists people who wants to move from the city to villages in finding a job. The project “Retorno de talentos” makes agreements

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	with local companies to provide internships to locals after their period of University studies in the city.
16	How do you define the problem of depopulation ?
	<p>Egea de los Caballeros (main municipality in the area, where Adefo has its headquarters) has 17.000 inhabitants and it is not losing population. From her perspective depopulation emergency is on small villages.</p> <p>Each village has a different set of problem's causing depopulation. Among causes she points to: 1) enough services 2) the cultural paradigm of city life and 3) work opportunities. They key to retain population is that people want to live in a village. And the cultural element is extremely important.</p> <p>She thinks we are currently witnessing a change of paradigm. Last week, in a seminar she teaches in the Rural Erasmus Program of Aragón, students confirmed her that they were experiencing this change.</p>
17	<p>Other contacts to interview from different AACC to test variety:</p> <p>LAG CODINSE (Segovia). President Program "Abraza la Tierra" (Hug the Earth); CEO Mari Mar o Eva codinse@codinse.com 92 1556218</p> <p>LAG Montaña Palentina. Manuel Merino (mayor) leadercal@montanapalentina.es</p> <p>LAG La Serena. Extremadura. Manuel CEO. gerencia@cederlaserena.es Tel.: 924 77 24 08</p>