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RURAL 3.0

: SERVICE LEARNING
  FOR THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Case based materials

Summary

Community analysis

Community assessment is a strategy to identify local needs and resources of local communities. Needs and resources assessment allow a deeper understanding of the context also in terms of culture and social structure.
Assessment will encourage community members to consider the community's resources and how to use them, as well as the community's needs and how to address them.

Connecting with rural communities

The best way to contact rural communities for the first time is through a local organization (local partner) that facilitates the connection between university and local stakeholders.

The first contact

The local partner maps stakeholders living and working in the community and potentially interested in the project.

The first meeting - community's needs and resources analysis

Community needs and resources assessment through the focus group technique.

Data analysis

Data is transcribed and analysed by qualitative methodology (thematic analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis, etc.), depending on the aim of the project.

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Community analysis

The consideration of the community's needs and resources can be the first step for stakeholders to learn how to use their resources to solve problems and improve community life, developing projects and interventions. Community assessment is a key process to involve community members from the beginning of the process. Full community participation in planning and carrying out an assessment also gives voice to those who may feel to be invisible and promotes leadership within the community.

The second contact

Once the results are obtained, a second meeting with stakeholders is convened. The aim is to give some feedback to the communities and discuss the development of a project.

The second meeting - showing results to the rural community

The university team and local partner share results of the community assessment. Results are discussed and commented with participants. The second part of the meeting is dedicated to developing projects.

Developing community-based projects into the SL Framework

The development of the RS-L projects could include one stakeholder or a collaboration of many depending on the common interests. The drafting of the project begins during the meeting, but it could be completed into some weeks.

Last meeting before action

During the last meeting, the final versions of the RS-L projects are presented and discussed. Finally, organizational aspects are discussed.

Il Pagliaio- Sarsina

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Consulta Giovani- Sarsina

Santa Sofia Library

Auser- Santa Sofia

Via Romea Germanica- Santa Sofia

Case based materials

Rural Community: Sarsina

3372 inhabitants

Province of Forlì-Cesena, Emilia-Romagna region

Area with many agricultural enterprises, green fields, hills

Friendly and welcoming mindset

Il Pagliaio

Il Pagliaio

The organization
The owners aim at fostering a sustainable mindset in regards to humankind, nature and agricultural production. Their enterprise is based on multifunctionality: they breed farm animals, produce dairy products and jams, they work with children in a natural environment, they receive people in a holiday house and they organise various events for the whole community. Their donkeys are famous amongst children and adults alike for the emotional therapy they provide, within various activity packages.

Main objective

To gather information and turn it into new sharing opportunities with the community and the outside world.

Specific objectives

Summer camp: Support the planning of new educational projects

Promotion of local network: support the promotion of a territorial network to pursue cultural and touristic goals

The owners expressed their desire to gain a fresh perspective on their activities as well as novel ideas to implement within the community.

Objectives

Methodology

Participant observation

We have participated in the farm's daily activities to get a better perspective on their needs and mindset.

Ethnographic diaries

We have filled in daily entries reflecting on the activities and the relevance of the experience in the Service Learning framework.

Qualitative interviews

We have asked specific questions that could help us understand their perspectives, needs, strengths and contribute to novel ideas and proposals.

Into the field

Most of the activities we participated in were very practical. One of the challenges we experienced was how to converge such concrete activities into new proposals for the community.

Intensive everyday service

Working side-by-side to the owners of the farm allowed us to experience a farmer's everyday life and the obstacles this profession encounters. This also contributed to the creation of a common ground of trust and communication.

From the reflective practice

We had the opportunity to detect controversial practices as well as virtuous ones. We confronted each other on how we perceived certain dynamics opening a dialogue. We discussed the farm's vision and mission, we discussed what we perceived as sensitive topics and we brainstormed possible solutions for the community that they could implement.

The Service Learning process

The promotion of local crops is essential to the process of raising awareness about the importance of sustainable models. The territory already seems to have strong predispositions towards non-intensive agriculture while respecting the environment.
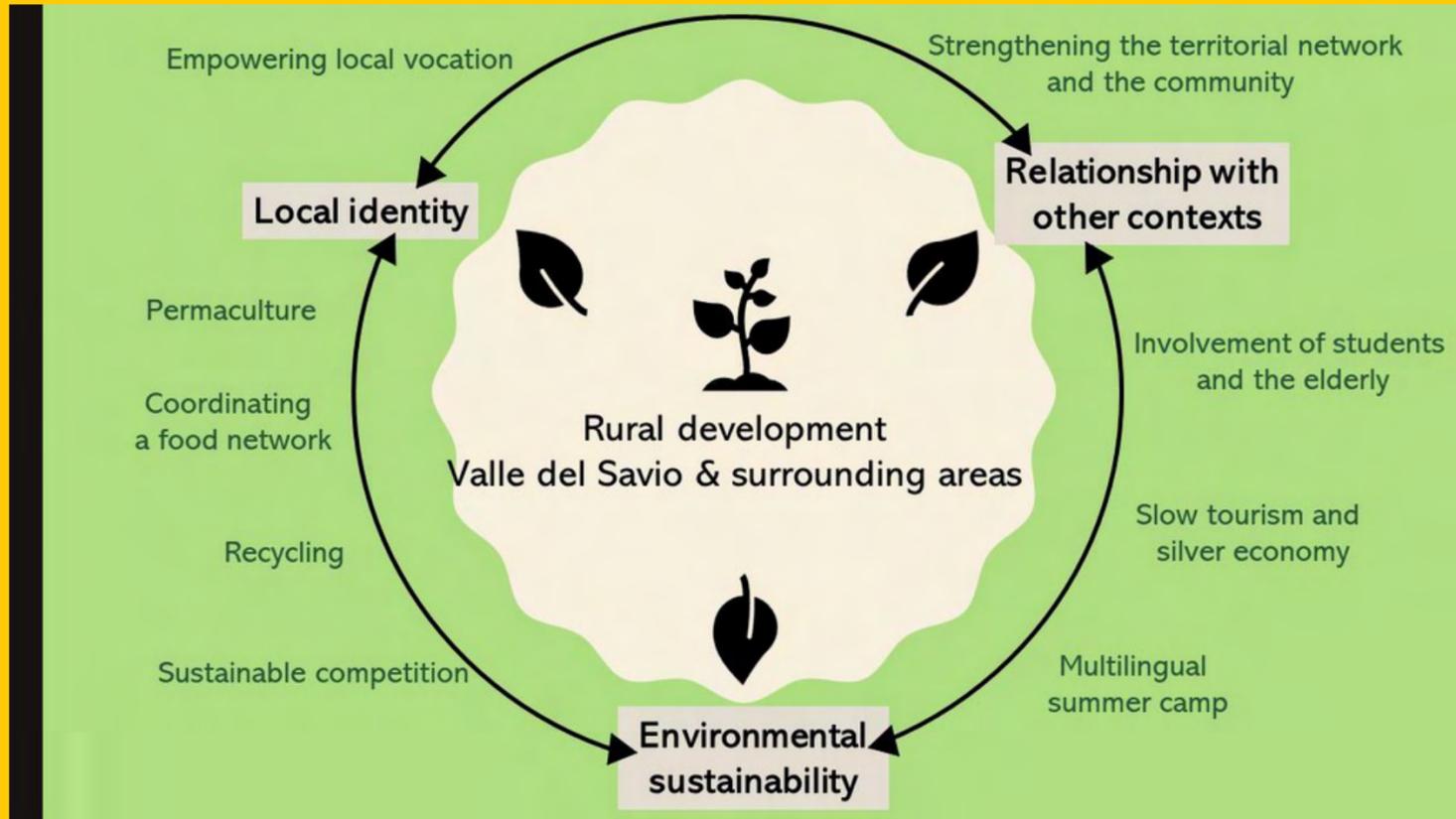
1.Local identity

Empowering local vocation;
Strenghtening the territorial network and the community

To strengthen the opportunities of the territory by enhancing the local identity as part of the Romagna tradition. The goal is to remember and promote local customs which constitute a rich cultural potential, without eluding the need to open up to new horizons.

2. Environmental sustainability

3. Relations with other contexts

Permaculture;
Coordinating a food network;
Recycling;
Sustainable competition

Involvement of students and elderly;
Slow tourism;
Multilingual summer camp

The collaborative effort between academia and the rural world that can be seen in the Rural 3.0 project can be made continuous by pursuing greater future connections with external actors. Growth and innovation are also the results of comparison and communication with realities other than the local one.

Three main pillars for innovation

La Consulta and Il Cammino di San Vicinio

La Consulta

The organization
Not only it is the birthplace of the Roman comedy writer Plauto, but it is also a famous destination of religious tourism because of the thaumaturge saint Vicinio. Laboratory of a cultural and multimedia marketing project for educational identity tourism based on traditional manual knowledge and the theatrical cultural heritage

Main objective

To promote a collective discussion about the scope and tools of rural development and agricultural policies

Specific objectives

Can the rural environment be at the forefront in the making of a sustainable future?

Objectives

Onsite qualitative research

Methodology

Video interviews

local citizens, farmers and peasants

We observed a deep and widespread hostility towards it. We realised that even if a large variety of organic food is sold we often have the perception that there are not enough industries to produce it

2. Industry

It is a matter of disinformation about the organic production chains. It is essential to share data and statistics in order to defend those farmers as well as to give them the credit they deserve

1. Wild animals

The reproduction rates of wild animals (mainly boars) grew considerably. Nowadays, there is still no arranged control therefore hunters represent the only solution farmers can count on.

we think it is necessary to stipulate guidelines together with citizens and veterinarians, to regulate the numbers of wild animals

3. "Being a farmer for a living"

Rural life conciliates with a frugal lifestyle because of desire or necessity. This mindset is inevitably associated with a political assertion

The refusal to accumulate could be dictated by the complexity to reach it through agricultural work or/and because the current process of accumulation is achieved in a way that contrasts agricultural work. It is also clear that whoever cultivates develops and maintains a strong connection with the land. Furthermore, those who for ethical reasons, decide not to use herbicides, pesticides and other chemical fertilisers firmly believe that it is time to safeguard and preserve natural resources.

Main challenges

around 4000 inhabitants

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Province of Forlì-Cesena,
Emilia-Romagna region

Area with many agricultural
enterprises, green fields, social
and cultural organizations

Social relations, traditions

Rural Community: Santa Sofia

The Library "Luciano Foglietta"

The Library

The organization

It is located inside the "Giorgi" Monumental Palace (since 2004), dating back to the XVIII century; it was founded in 1950 and includes a book heritage of around 9000 volumes. The Municipal Historical Archive is also part of its heritage, located outside the Library premises and located in the Municipal complex. The Library hosted the exhibition "The work of women in Giovanni Valbonesi's shots". The common thread of the exhibition has been women's work: women are portrayed while they are working in the fields, in farms, in forestry operations, in commerce, in the craft, in schools, factories and offices.

Main objective

To deepen the theme of female work conditions in the exhibition's historical reference period (between the 1950s and mid-1960s).
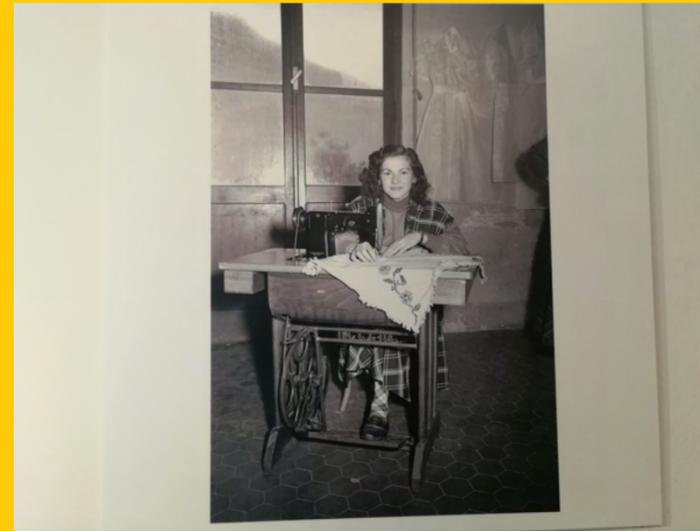
Specific objectives

- To analyze the theme among citizens living in Santa Sofia.

- To understand the meaning of female work conditions and its changes during the last 70 years.

- To make the Valbonesi archive known to a broader audience

Objectives

Study of Giovanni Valbonesi exhibition

Methodology

Context observation

Case study - Qualitative Interviews in the field

Local citizens, women working during the '50s-'60s

Non-structured interviews have been a winning strategy: people, feeling at ease, have told their story in a more authentic way. Moreover, it made the time more enjoyable for us and allowed us to better catch their feelings and emotions.

1. Dissemination of the theme of women's work in S. Sofia: reflection on women's working condition

Since Valbonesi Archive is largely unknown outside of S. Sofia, students, instead of making a research, could focus on making it known to a broader audience by using Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube..) or could create an App which illustrates the archive's story.

2. Connecting generations - strengthening social ties and sense of belonging

To use Social Media to connect young citizens to the topic of women's work conditions;

To create an App which illustrates the archive and makes the topic of women's work easier to see and consult;

3. Social Networks - community development

To give voice to the citizens;

Involvement of formal and informal leaders, and stakeholders as well;

To create a process: generation of shared history;

Development and strengthen of local social networks

To involve local students in the process;

To promote participation and engagement among different generations through a common history

Orfeo Amadori was very helpful for us, but I think that next time students should cooperate with the civil registry office if they decide to implement our project. Thus, they will precisely plan the sample of their research: how many people colud be interviewed,make a more accurate selection of cases, select representative inhabitants.

Main challenges

AUSER of Santa Sofia

AUSER

The organization

The Centro Auser of S. Sofia has been operating since 1996 to support older people and the weaker local population both in times of need and socialization. It takes care of accompanying elderly people to health/rehabilitation facilities; provide telephone company and support services to the guests of the nursing home, organization of initiatives/events also in collaboration with other local voluntary associations, projects aimed at pupils of the Santa Sofia school and reception of migrants. Thus, it promotes the active ageing of the elderly and enhances their role in society. It is open to relations of dialogue between generations, nationalities, cultures.

Main objective

To help AUSER to rediscover grit and vitality.

Specific objectives

- To promote AUSER active participation in Santa Sofia context;

- To strengthen the connection between AUSER and the context of Santa Sofia;

- To promote a generational change into AUSER.

Objectives

Active Participation to the AUSER activities - Participant Observation

Methodology

Qualitative Field Interviews

Local citizens, AUSER volunteers, municipality workers, refugees, shops and bar owners

Final Meeting with AUSER volunteers - group interview

To renew and increase dialogue with other realities of the area and other Auser centers, to coordinate and organize activities in cooperation.

1. Lack of participation both at volunteers and service users levels

On one side, youngers tend not to listen to mature organizations. On the other, mature organizations are less keen to welcome new proposals.

2. Immobility

To recreate a link with the community through activities open to all: visibility, new volunteers;

3. Subtle resistance to change

To understand the functioning of specific parties such as voluntary associations, public administration, and cooperatives;

To outline relational patterns of the community;

Community questioned itself - a consciousness exercise;

To identify key-organizations and create networks;

To renew and increase dialogue with other realities of the area and other Auser centers, to coordinate and organize activities in cooperation

More advertising: flyers, website, mailing list;

Publication of a book containing memories and stories of S.Sofia and its inhabitants

The presence of external observers made the associations curious and allowed the participants to question their situation and actions. Who are we? What do we do? How are we doing it? Why are we doing it?

Main challenges

Via Romea Germanica

Via Romea Germanica

The organization

"Via Romea Germanica" is an international association born to promote and enhance the walk traveled by the pilgrims that wanted to reach Rome from Stade (Germany). The walk follows the route that Abbot Alberto described in his Annales in the 13th century. The association, besides promotion, administrates the maintenance and cartography of the whole walk.

Main objective

Promotion of the Association and of the route itself
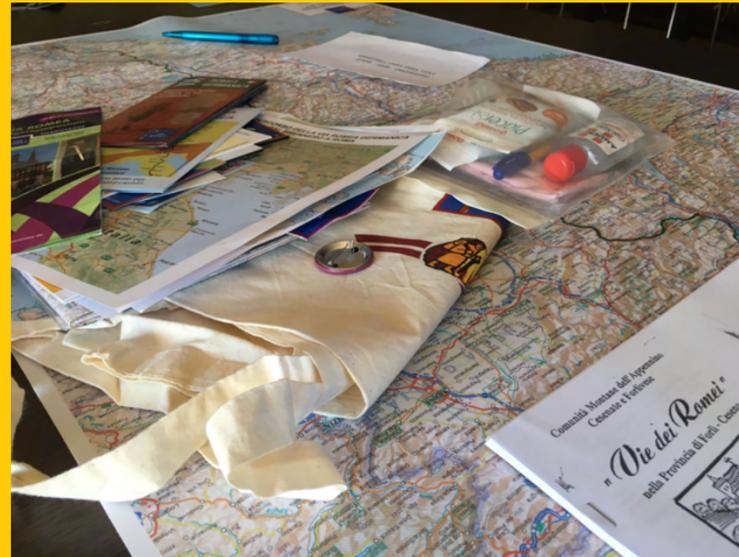
Specific objectives

-Promotion of the activities of the association and of the pilgrimage route itself;

- Development of new ideas to attract young people;

- Support for the communication strategy;

Via Romea Germanica

Objectives

Methodology

Mapping internal activities and resources

Field Interviews and Focus Group

With people inside and outside the organization; with the board and communication team

Objectives and Internal Structure Assessments

The organisation presents a high potential for development, but its structure based on volunteers hinders many actions and makes the administration more complex.

1.Strengthen communication

Internal and external communication with organizational units, partners, community, world;

To create efficient connections (social network) at the local and global level;

Promotion strategy.

Even in the area of Santa Sofia, where the Association was officially born, few people know the route

2. Work on the internal structure of the organization

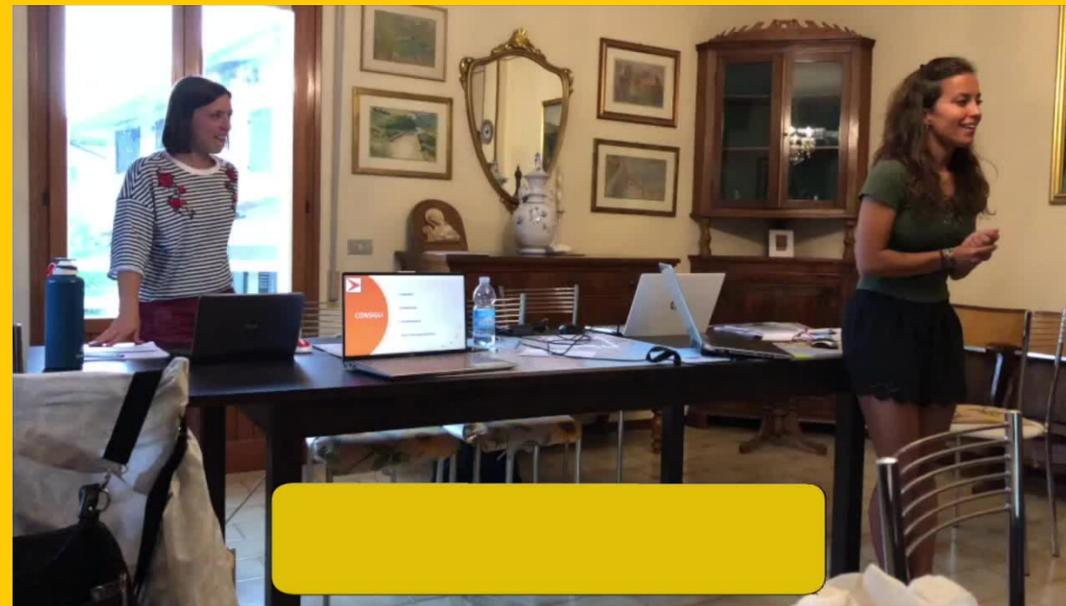Analysis of the organization (organization chart, social relations, roles, tasks, etc.);

Sustainability of the organization in terms of:
- work simplification (e.g. splitting tasks and delegate responsibilities);
- networking with local stakeholders (such as public institutions, civil society, enterprises etc.);

3. Engage young people

Social Media, Internet and Social Networks;

Mediation between young people and the organization.

We worked in order to design innovative ways to promote the route among young people.

Via Romea Service-Learning project

Main challenges

10 tips for Rural Service Learning

Knowing and understanding the context:
Collaborating with the rural community as a context, means to start a process of knowing and understanding the different assets and needs. It is articulated in starting from an observatory phase, proceeding with the preparation of the community to the researchers and students co-interventions, arriving to the students and community members proposals.

Identifying and recognizing tutors as a bridge between university and community
Co-working with the community means to create a constructive relationship with the community tutor who can support the immersion in the rural community and create a dialogue with HEI.

Identifying key stakeholders: recognizing informal leaders
Collaborating with the community means to recognize informal leaders as essential representatives of community life and relevant stakeholders.

Network construction
Maintaining and developing existing networks at local, national and international level is a core objective of rural service learning projects

Giving voice to community members: involving community members
The participation of community members before, during and after the implementation of rural service learning projects means to give voice and empower the local community.

10 tips for Rural Service Learning

Focus on assets, not just needs.
Find and emphasize resources as means to satisfy needs and promote community development.

Trustworthy relationships.
Develop and strengthen social relations with the community to create strong ties and mutual trust: better project participation.

Clear and context-related methods and techniques.
Identify methodologies and tools referred to a theoretical framework but also shared, developed and negotiated with the community that can also use them as an active subject of the project.

Creative mindset: to propose innovative solutions.
Flexibility, listening to the community, and bottom-up approaches are relevant for innovative ideas.

Considering risks, weaknesses, and stressful factors.
Individual and collective negative factors are always part of the project. It is important to recognize and manage them in order to not affect the project. Negative factors can also be a starting point for new questions and ideas.

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Rural 3.0 MOOC

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Service-Learning

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