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SOCIAL & CREATIVE

TALIA Policy Briefing n. 2

BUILDING TRANS-LOCAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

Project co-financed by the European
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THE TRANS-LOCAL DIMENSION

Trans-local innovation systems are those that develop in a double dynamic: on the one hand they are deeply embedded into trans-national networks and, at the same time, they are strongly grounded in local innovation communities. The resulting interplay between the local and global dimensions strongly reinforces innovation capacity. This trans-local dimension is easy to proclaim – witness the diffused use of the catch phrase ‘glocal’ – but not so easy to achieve in practice.

One of the main difficulties is the fact that the predominating model of how innovation works has very little to do with the features of the place where it happens. Innovation is generally considered to be a predominantly economic process having as its object a given technology, process, or organisational model. It is widely recognised that different sectoral or disciplinary perspectives contribute to the success of an innovation, but these are not related to cultural factors or any specific attribute of place. This leads to an “aspatial” model of innovation (lacking spatial features) where we all speak business English, offices are located near to airports, and markets are global. In this context, the contribution of the local dimension – beyond a recognition of differences in local markets – is considered irrelevant.

In addition, innovation funding inevitably shapes the behaviour of actors and the collaboration models they adopt. When innovation initiatives are funded by a specific corporation, attention is generally paid to bringing value to the company; even open innovation approaches are ultimately company-centric. If the source is regional funding, then the focus is generally on bringing together local actors and building regional clusters;

even regional internationalisation programmes focus more on commercial relations more than cooperation. If the source is European funding (including initiatives such as the Interreg-MED programme), the focus is on bringing added value at the transnational level; even when local authorities are involved, the funding mechanisms rarely allow to build a critical mass of players at the local or even national level.

As a result of these differences, the competencies and organisational models for the people and institutions engaged in innovation at different scales are often quite separate. As a result, within a given region, those working in corporate, European, and/or local and regional innovation initiatives are often separated by language, methodology, and normative practices. Quite often an institution or company will have a separate “European office”, based on the networking and linguistic competencies required, that too often risks being cut off from the mainstream activities and policies that are more “internal”.



Overcoming the dividing gap between the local dimension and outward-looking networks can however bring important benefits to all types of innovation initiatives, from three main perspectives:

- In the emergent “place-based” model, innovation capacity is directly related to collective creativity, which in turn is based on how local communities extract value from their specific territorial assets (natural and physical capital, human, symbolic and cultural capital, etc.). Such cultural and territorial anchoring adds significant value to the innovation processes themselves.
- Enhanced local identity reinforces the value and contribution of regional participants in European and global innovation value chains, and increases their likelihood of playing a leading role in transnational partnerships.
- Linking local and networked innovation initiatives quite simply puts people in contact with each other and allows for circumscribed project partnerships to open up, connect research and piloting from a bottom-up perspective, and significantly increase their market and policy impact. In addition, linking local initiatives to global networks and vice versa improves policy coherence, as individual initiatives connect to form regional innovation ecosystems that contribute more effectively to the high-level innovation policy objectives.

Participation of local organisations and institutions in European projects therefore constitutes an important opportunity for a given region, but the benefits are not automatic. This Policy Briefing gives examples and suggestions on how local and regional policy makers can maximise the potential for impact.



SUPPORTING TRANS-LOCAL INNOVATION

TALIA, Territorial Appropriation of Leading-edge Innovation Actions, is the Interreg-MED Programme's horizontal project promoting the coherence and impact of individual modular projects dealing with social and creative innovation initiatives. TALIA operates in three main directions: engagement and support, communication, and attaining impact. TALIA builds on these on-going activities to translate results as they unfold – in real time, so to speak – into useful instruments for policy action, through the aggregation of evidence, identification of relevant indicators for creative and social innovation, and development of a common model of Mediterranean innovation.

More specifically, the TALIA project is working to promote trans-local innovation clusters for creative and social innovation by providing instruments that allow trans-national MED modular projects to connect with local innovation communities, starting from the regions of participating partners. The main steps include:

- A thematic mapping of innovation actors across the Mediterranean. This allows to identify local and regional communities of those participating in modular projects, local pilot initiatives, and so forth.
- A series of regular networking events aiming to build local communities of interest by bringing together participants sharing the same local and regional contexts who work in different but related innovation initiatives.
- A series of 6-monthly international events each built on top of a specific meeting of a modular project and linking the local community to different transnational modular project networks as well as the European and global networks brought in by the TALIA partnership.



These initiatives thus reinforce both aspects of the trans-local dimension, allowing transnational networks to dive into and better understand regional contexts and projecting local innovation initiatives onto the global stage. This both empowers the richness of territorial grounding and the identification of individual innovation communities, and at the same time allows global networks to connect with local realities.

CASE: TRANS-LOCAL INNOVATION IN PRACTICE AT THE TALIA KICK-OFF MEETING IN BARI

The TALIA project's kick-off meeting in Bari (IT), March 15th, 2017, is a good example of positive interaction between the transnational dimension of Interreg-MED projects with local initiatives, many of which funded by regional innovation policies.

- The **ChIMERA** project, aiming to empower creative clusters, held a session jointly with the Apulia Region's Creative District and started a fruitful discussion on the working definition of Cultural and Creative Industries as well as the mechanisms and preconditions for successful transfer of best practice from one district to another. Aspects such as the creation of Quadruple Helix communities at local level and the involvement of policy makers at all process stages have been emphasized.
- The **CO-CREATE** project, supporting cross-fertilisation between creativity and traditional clusters using the Creative Camp methodology, shared a session with the local Open Source School initiative, which was co-designed in an intensive week-long brainstorming process. The two projects will be connecting to share notes on co-creation methods, together with other MED projects expressing interest (CreativeWear, ProminentMED, etc.).
- The **CreativeWear** project, linking a network of Creative Hubs with the Textile & Clothing industry, joined up with Dhitech, the department of Bari's Technopolis involved in Nanotechnology and Smart Textiles. Dhitech offered to feed with information on Smart Textiles the Cultural and Creative Industries members of Creative Wear, as a source of inspiration for possible creations and reactions. CreativeWear partners offered to Dhitech to support their participation as a Making Lab in the H2020 TCBL project, with which CreativeWear is cooperating.





- **openDoors**, carrying out a study on the potential of the Sharing Economy, interacted with a local place of sharing economy, ExFADDA, in Bari. ExFADDA and its basic economic model, based on a community of trust, where each participating organisation can pay either in money or in services, will be included in the study as a best practice. The place not only facilitates the social integration of excluded young people but also allows the development of bartering for several services and interesting cultural activities. As a case, ExFADDA offers concrete different paradigms of how Sharing Economy can generate creativity, social innovation and jobs to exploit in openDoors study.
- The **COWORKMED** project, a survey on the territorial and development impact of Co-Working spaces, held a session with the France/Francophonie Network of living labs and the participation of local actors from the Apulia region. Here, the relatively fast speed with which the project results will be made available favour an early stage implementation of the TALIA vision of triple loop policy learning and will be an excellent driver of network building and capitalisation
- **ProminentMED**, using emergent innovation procurement approaches to address energy efficiency needs in public buildings in small municipalities, benefited from a presentation by the Apulia Region about their experience with Pre-Commercial Procurement in two areas: healthcare and water management. The ProminentMED project will be happy to draw on Apulia's experience in the field, as it explores a higher dimension of creativity and a more diffused goal for institutional innovation.

POLICY TIPS

Following are concrete suggestions of steps you can take to improve trans-local innovation in your region.

1. Make a regional mapping of people and organisations involved in innovation initiatives of any sort, together with the thematic sector and funding regime.
2. As you do this, go beyond the stakeholders you normally work with – as with “entrepreneurial discovery” in the Smart Specialisation process – to find out what’s really happening in your area. Make a special effort to identify those active in creative and social innovation.
3. Support the organisation of both formal and informal networking opportunities to allow local players to discover each other and connect: this can include public sessions linked to EU project meetings being held in your territory.
4. Provide institutional and organisational support to the formation of cross-programme thematic working groups. This can help identify areas of excellence in your region as well as provide input to policy making through position papers on specific topics.
5. Allow for the kind of flexibility in local and regional funding initiatives that may be required for different projects and programmes to join forces, share resources, and align workplans.
6. Make a census of the trans-European and global networks your regional actors are active in and signal similar opportunities for others to join the same networks and enhance your region’s presence.

7. Identify the priority themes where your region excels and participate directly in network events, to show institutional commitment and exchange good practice with other public authorities.

Above all, learn how to learn from the pro-active engagement of your region’s people and organisations in the Interreg-MED programme, and use the opportunities offered by the TALIA Project to connect with transnational activities to enhance and reinforce the effectiveness of your regional policies as a trans-local innovation ecosystem.

Want to stay up to date with activities and events related to creative and social innovation in the MED programme?

More information at:

- <http://interreg-med.eu/al/thematics/social-creative/>
- infotalia@regione.puglia.it



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