

The linkages of Smart Villages & LEADER in practical terms



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EU Definition

Smart Villages are **communities in rural areas** that develop **smart solutions** to deal with challenges in their local context. They build on existing local strengths and opportunities to engage in a process of sustainable development of their territories. They rely on a **participatory approach** to develop and implement their **strategies** to improve their economic, social and environmental conditions, *in particular* by promoting innovation and mobilising solutions offered by **digital technologies**.

(Pilot Project on Smart Eco-Social Villages)

The magic “R40”

Number of supported Smart Village Strategies

Dilemmas

- What is Smart?
- What is a Village?
- What is a Strategy?

Food for thoughts based on the Smart Rural experiences
(...not the official position of the European Commission)

Key features of Smart Villages

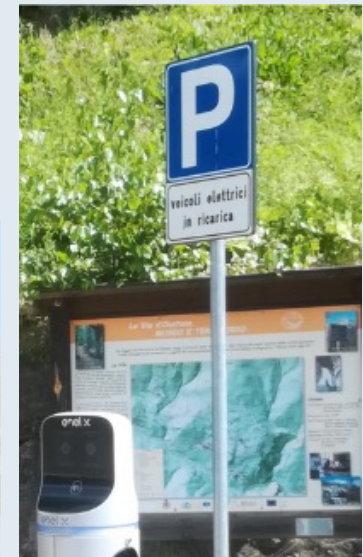
- **Smart:** Hardest to “pin down” (coming back to this...)
- **Village:** Local rural community level – no sharp limit in population (consider also DEBURGA)
- **Strategic approach:** holistic/ integrated approach – vision (format is flexible)
- **Participatory:** Engagement of community in planning & implementation (consider what it means in lagging behind communities).

Smartness in the process...

- Future-looking **vision** ...
- **Strategic approach**... addressing contemporary challenges (climate, food & energy safety, depopulation, lack of services...)
- Making the **most of knowledge & innovation** to achieve this (inc. modern technologies, digital) ... but not only.
- Engaging the local people in planning & implementation (as much as possible) – **social innovation**
- **Ultimately achieve a change at local community level** in response to pressing challenges – **social impact**

Ostana (Italy)

- They have had a **vision**: to reverse depopulation in a sustainable way (strategic thinking)
- They work on several themes in an **integrated way** (culture, environment, mobility, youth, tourism, newcomers...)
- They actively work with the local community
- They **reversed a negative trend** (kids born, school reopened) & starting **sustainable residency programme**
- They are modern but **digital / technological is not at the core** of their smartness



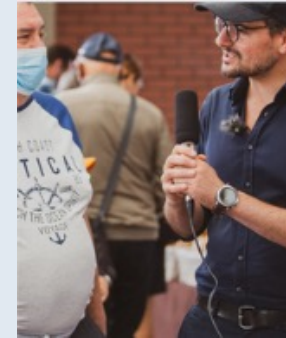
Stanz (Austria)

- They have had a **vision**: to create a sustainable living for the local community
- They work on several themes in an **integrated way** (energy, local services, mobility, housing, tourism...)
- They managed to maintain services and are **becoming energy self-sustainable** through community engagement
- They engage the community ... **but not everybody** (impossible in communities with more than 1000 people)
- They use modern technology (blockchain, energy, digital token system...) **but not in all of the smart solutions** (e.g. in housing/ shop / mobility)



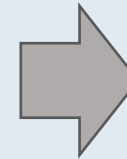
Tomaszyn (Poland)

- They have had a **vision**: to build regenerative agriculture & sustainable food production & invest in local community.
- They care **both for the environment and the local society**.
- They **keep experimenting with new old and new technology** (from re-using traditional irrigation system to investing in robotics)
- They are trying to engage local people (e.g. through employment) ... **but it's extremely hard to do "participatory" in lagging behind depopulating areas**



Common in all...

- LOCAL COMMUNITY (VILLAGE)
- VISION (STRATEGIC APPROACH)
- SOMEONE(S) TO LEAD
- OPEN-MINDED TO NEW/ EXPERIMENT
- CREATIVE
- COMMITTED
- SUSTAINABLE
- ... OFTEN FEEL NEGLECTED & BEING ALONE



CAN'T BE EASILY
CAPTURED THROUGH
DEFINITION OR
INDICATORS.

Lessons ...

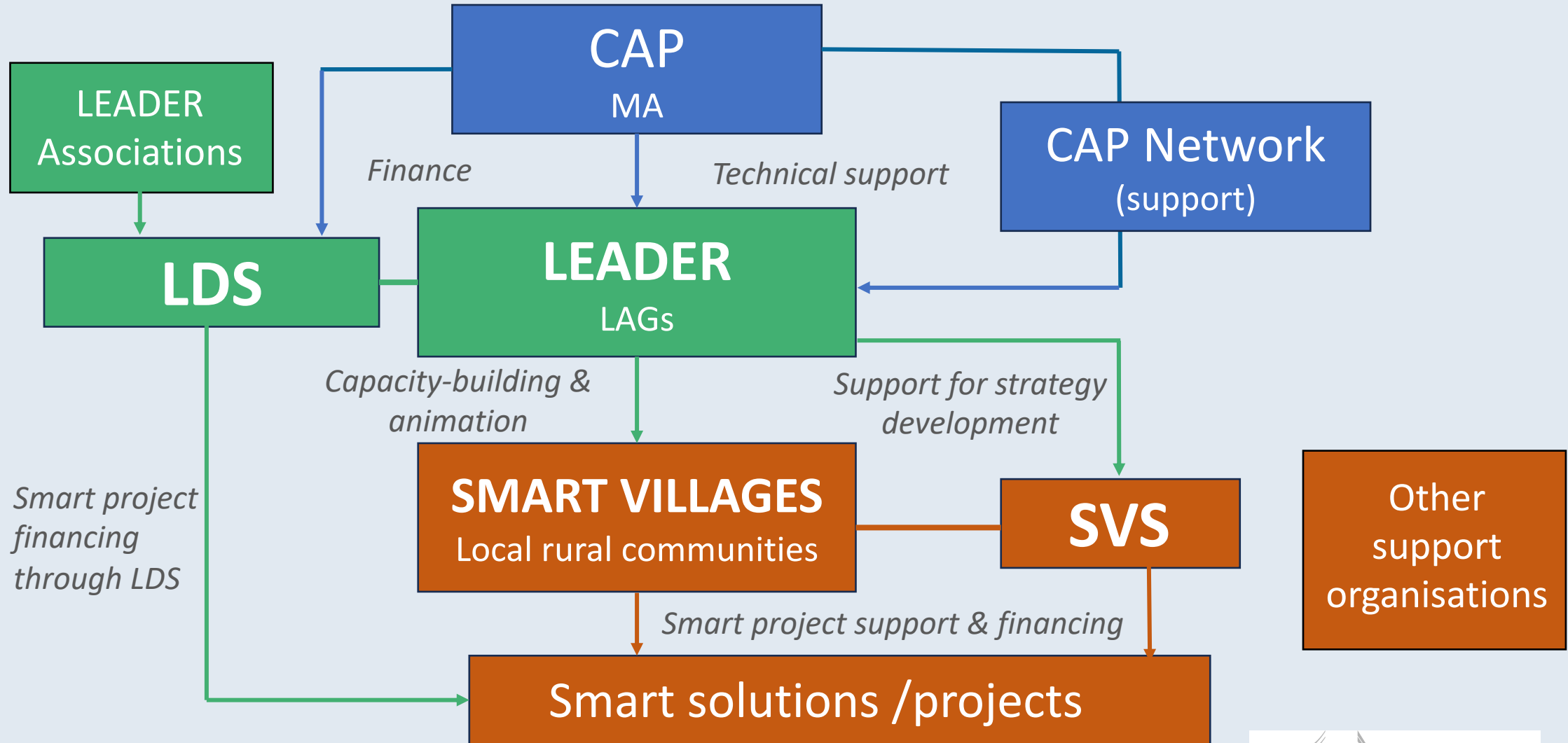
- Don't look for a more precise definition at this stage.
- We have to **TAKE ACTION** – Experiment (just like in LEADER in the old days).
- Get ready **to support the local communities** that have the potential.
- Be **flexible in administration**/ be open-minded: Don't start to push the burden downwards (EC -> MA -> LAG -> Local communities)



Key features translated into practice

- Need to help support the development of smart village “strategy” (some evidence for a strategic thinking/ vision) reflecting an integrated approach...
- ...at the local rural community level that is developed & implemented on the basis of participatory approach (as much as local societal conditions allow)...
- Using modern knowledge and technologies as much as possible (but necessarily all digital)...
- Aims to make a (considerable) change in response to pressing global challenges in the local society and area.

The programming framework



The project is funded by the European Commission. The opinions expressed in this presentations are that of the Contractor only and do not reflect the official position of the European Commission.