Workshop 2: Research and Evidence-based Advocacy in Rural Areas

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Main issues and lessons identified

Research, particularly participatory and action research, has an important role to play in rural development.

It is important that researchers engage with communities / stakeholders – allow scope for research 'subjects' to be research 'participants'. The co-creation of knowledge, via participatory research, requires that researchers have the appropriate skills – to engage with people. Thus, their formation ought to provide for such skills acquisition. In tandem, as experiences (among workshop participants) have shown, it is important that researchers triangulate their data properly, and stakeholders can play an important role in such processes.

Research can, and ought to, be embedded in the development process, and not just pursued to satisfy funders or 'tagged-on' to the end of a project or initiative. This requires investment in research (and evaluation).

Inter-disciplinary approaches and collaborations are generally more beneficial, and provide more holistic datasets, than does with research in 'silos'. Approaches, including the presentation of findings, need to take greater cognisance of the wide diversity of rural areas types. Thus, bespoke approaches that take account of place (the spatial, as well as the temporal) are important.

Ideas and Case Studies relating to the theme

Geodesign: www.geodesignhub.com

Rural Vibrancy in North-West Europe – the case of South Kerry (2015)

Cromane Community Economic Development Plan (2018)

Note: Participants are going to keep in touch with us to send on additional ideas.

Messages for the Manifesto

Research is not explicitly mentioned in the manifesto; yet, it is implicit in much of the manifesto's content. Many of the principles and best practices in respect of participatory and action research chime with the Manifesto's content, particularly in respect of partnership (statement 9), civil society networks (14) and education (27).

Note: Two of the participants are going to send us on some complementary text. They are currently working on this.

Knowledge is power! So, let's make it useable by / for rural communities.
Knowledge is power! Let's share it.

Research governance systems – how to 'manage' complexities / harness dynamism.

Create demand for rural research, by allocating more funds within LAG budgets.

Trust / mistrust: understand when you need to put the 'rubber boots' on!

Language is important – if you want people to understand and be involved.

Adapt your narrative for your audience – for effective communication an engagement with all stakeholders.

Research is crucial. If there is no research, there is no evidence. If there is no evidence, we can only guess and make assumptions. This is dangerous. When we make assumptions, based on NO evidence, things like Brexit can happen.

Oriented research to orientate decisions.

Research at territorial level to explore scenarios and adapt policies.

Research to identify needs and potential.

Research to strengthen public databases.

Networks / organised civil society is an important actor to bridge the gap between research and policy (translate science into mainstream language / lobby funding organisations / brief policy makers) – connect.

Gatekeepers: help the researchers get the information they need.

It is important that researchers incorporate the skills of community developers and vice-versa.