

**Interreg**  
**Alpine Space**



**SMARTVillages**  
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

# **“Make your own SmartVillages Community alive!”**

**Work package: WP T2**

**Activity A.T2.5**

**Deliverable: D.T2.5.3**



# **Vademecum “Make your own SmartVillages Community alive”**

**Work package: WP T2**

**Activity A.T2.5**

**Deliverable: D.T2.5.3**

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## 1.Introduction

ASP623 Smart Villages Alpine Space project, driven during 3 years from 2018 to 2021 has relied a lot on the concept of community. We assume that a SmartVillage approach relies on 3 pillars :

- existing local strenghts and opportunities
- a participatory approach
- includes ideally all sectors and benefits from cooperations and alliances with other communities

*Phil Hogan :“ Smart villages are essentially about people – they are about rural communities taking the initiative to find practical solutions to challenges” EU Rural Review 26*

During those 3 years in our test areas we have developped relationships though regional stakeholder groups and we have implemented actions in our test areas. All that work has been based on a strong collaboration among our partnership, 12 different structures around european alpine area.

That's why we want to share the lessons learned through all that project and processes about the animation of our transnational community and mainly about local stakeholder groups.

## 2. Initiate the process

Initiating a process around a local Smart Villages community could be summarized in 3 phasis :

### 2.1 Creating a common culture

Smart Village is still a new concept, that can be misunderstood in rural areas and for people far from digital issues. So we think the very first thing to share with the community is a work around “What is the smart village?”. We have to address fears and identifying local points of vigilance around the concept, around the digital issues on the territory. If all the fears have been expressed, then it is possible to begin a common work and find the local definition, the local vision for the smart village.

A second step in building that common culture can be to share experiences and practices existing already on the territory, obviously, but also in other territories across you country and across Europe. Be aware about your community brakes for that experience sharing : Is language some kind of barrier if you have to exchange in english or in another european language ? Is the rules framework or social framework so different that the practice could not be understood by your local stakeholders ?



*Figure 1: Exchange of experience March 12th 2019  
Study visit, La place des possibles, France*

## 2.2 Designing the community vision and path

When your community shares a basis of a common culture, you can try to create some Community Visioning and Community path to follow. In the Smart Villages project we used the Oregon's model, with quite good results.

*Community visioning can be defined as a planning process through which a community creates a shared vision for its future and begins to make it a reality.*

Here are the Oregon Model's steps, each of them described with different methodologic issues, and different working steps, in our other deliverables :

- 1) Where are we now?
- 2) Where are we going?
- 3) Where do we want to be?
- 4) How do we get there?
- 5) Are we getting there?
- 6) How are we disseminating and transferring our results?

The real interest of that method is that all along those different steps you develop that common culture among the local stakeholders group, in a collaborative way, so that allows to put the basis of the action on solid foundations.

One of the tools that can be used during those phasis is the smartness assessment we developed on our digital exchange platform, it can be very helpful to answer the question « Where are we now » and give also some clues for the question « Where do we want to be »


**Step 1: General information**

Filling this form will take you approximately 3-5 minutes. With the provided information we will be able to present you good practices tailored for your village.

Village name \*

Slovenia

Indiquez un lieu



Kind \*

Inhabitants \*

Assessor age \*

Assessor type \*

NEXT

Figure 2: Self assessment tool.  
<https://smart-villages.eu/>

## 2.3 Showing results adapted to the territory

When a common culture has emerged, a good way to make your community really alive, and interested in the long-term Smart Villages process is to quickly engage actions :

**To be able to do it quickly with the group of actors**, to take a first step in the action, in an aim of experimentation, and to give to see results by a concrete action, to motivate and amplify the mobilization;

**Initiate the approach by a thematic entry with a high stake or local need**, failing to think of a "global" and transversal approach with a long time conception of the approach which can there also demobilize:

development of digital access points, environment, relationship and information towards the inhabitants...



Figure : After a 4-month of designing the service, the launch and video-tutorial of the e-car sharing service in Vercors, September 2020.

<https://echodesfalaises.org/?Autopartage>

That point is really important to be driven in parallel of the long term work to create the common culture, to design all the path to a future village including all the dimensions of smart villages, with very collaborative processes...

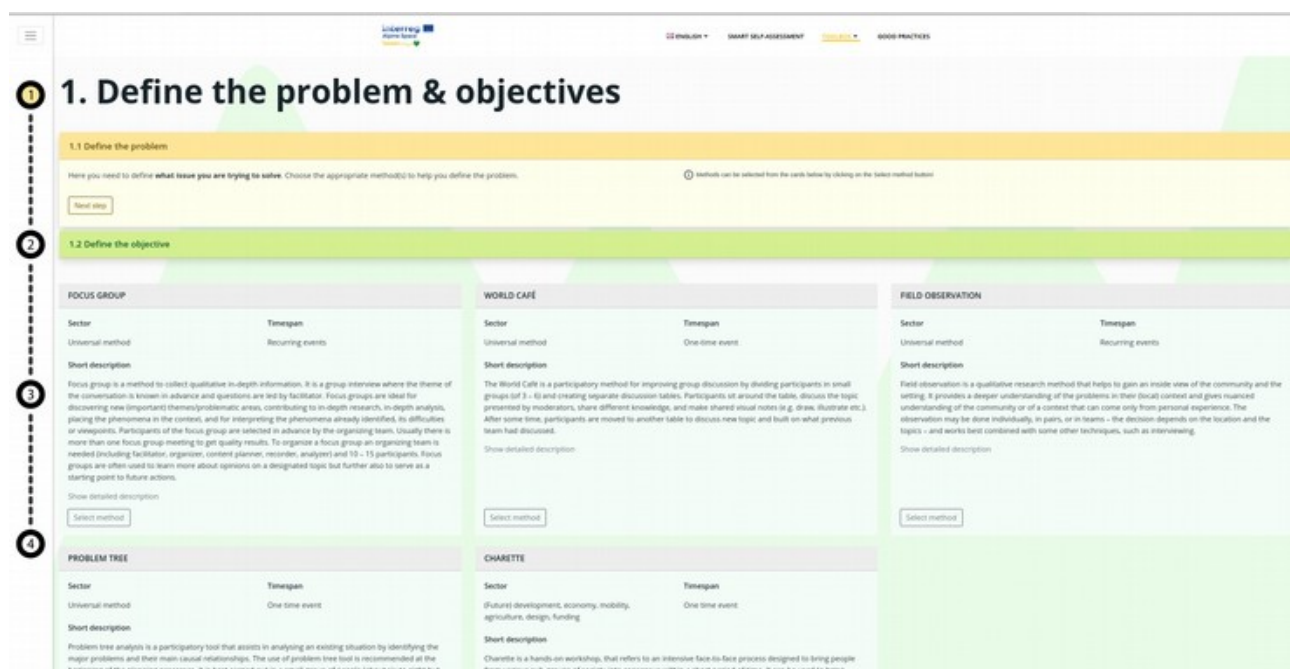
You have to show that approach can quickly give results on the field.



### 3. Good levers to animate the community

The "Smart" approach applied to rural areas calls for broad mobilization to lay the foundations for a sustainable participatory approach. Some approaches use service design and the "Living Lab" model. These approaches attest to the effectiveness of the community of actors to think strategically and act positively on the future of the territory. The implementation of participatory processes appears to be the cornerstone of the initiation process of "Smart" approaches. Digital technology plays a facilitating role in their implementation, by accompanying a new way of "doing community", supporting a transformation from traditional ways of doing things to participatory meetings for example. Let's see what are exactly those levers.

#### 3.1 Inspiring collaborative methods



The screenshot shows the '1. Define the problem & objectives' section of the Smart Villages Toolbox. It includes a progress indicator on the left with steps 1, 2, 3, and 4. The main content is divided into two rows of cards. The first row contains 'FOCUS GROUP', 'WORLD CAFE', and 'FIELD OBSERVATION'. The second row contains 'PROBLEM TREE' and 'CHARETTE'. Each card displays a 'Sector' (Timesgen), a 'Universal method' (Recurring events or One time event), and a 'Short description'. There are also links for 'Show detailed description' and 'Select method'.

Figure 3: Smart Villages Toolbox entry page

The toolbox, developed during the Smart Villages project, and connected to our Smartness assessment is a very useful tool to identify participatory approaches that can be brought to your community in an effective way.

Proposed methods in that toolbox are proposed depending on your specific context : groups size, time of the meeting, period / phasis of the project... That is very



important to use the good methodologies at the good moment to enhance participation. For example you can use different creativity methods in a participatory meeting aiming at the emergence of new projects (brainstorming, futures wheel, world café...) but methods to act supported projects will be really different (decision by consent, different kinds of vote...)

Two big pitfalls have been identified during the project :

- try to map your key decision-makers quite early, and to make them the more convinced ambassadors of those participatory approach ! If those people are not convinced that will be quite difficult to address a participatory process if at the end all decisions are taken in their closed office
- find the good scale to address the problems and mobilize the community. For example, a regional stakeholder group at the french Alps scale can be very useful as a resource to identify / mobilize fundings, or to share experiences and very particular skills. But it won't be effective to solve problems in a smart way for your local territory, like last kilometer mobility issues, or dedicated place for digital support.

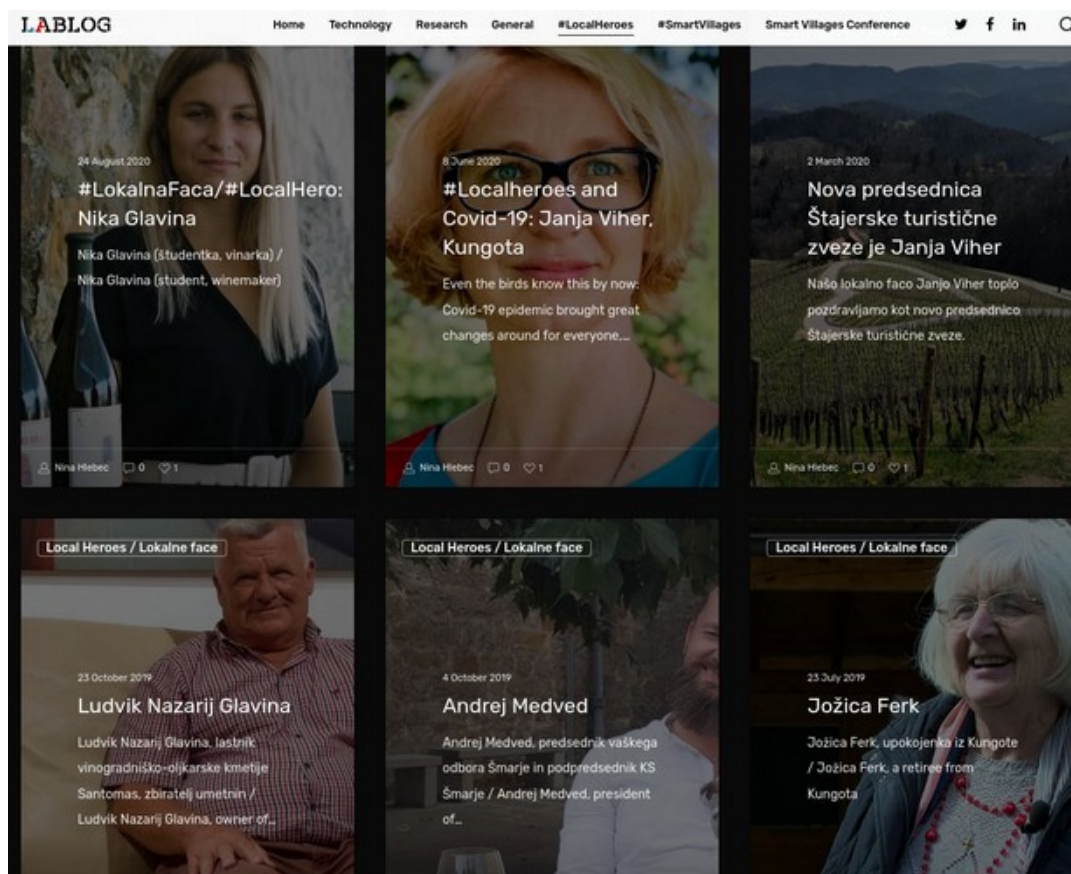
## **3.2 Role of digital Tools**

We observe that these processes can rely on the remote collaborative potential of digital tools: by allowing direct communication (chat), remote work (videoconferencing), synchronous or asynchronous work (collaborative work documents), collaborative work (choice of a common date, participative mapping) or by making the actions carried out and the actors involved visible (example of our digital exchange platform).

Try to find out what are the good communication and capitalization tools for your own community. Rely on what they are already using. For example if all your decision makers are using whatsapp, create a whatsapp group as it has been done in Valli del Sol. If your stakeholders are really digital geeks, and using Slack or more professional / evolved communication tools, you can use them. A good idea is also to try first those digital tools during a presential meeting before generalizing their use in your community.

And last thing, free software solutions, or at least solutions respecting private life and data exist for a large range of tools, so don't hesitate to benchmark them before using. For example you can use an Etherpad instead of a Google doc, or Mattermost instead of Slack.

### 3.3 Making local stakeholders the local heroes of the action



Figure

4: Slovenian local heroes - University of Ljubljana

University of Ljubljana has developed during the project a very interesting concept : Local Heroes. As the communities rely on persons, they often have to be lead or facilitated by « local heroes » that give more time, energy and a particular impulse to the community.

The idea, very simple is to show them and make them the ambassadors of the smart village process through little videos. That allows to show a more human way of thinking the projects and the approach. Different partners of the project reused that format with a nice success !

## 4. Be confident in the community to find the smart solutions

### 4.1 A culture of local problems solving

The Smart Village helps develop a culture of problem solving, and a digital culture to help solve them. The participative approach and common culture allow all the stakeholders of the community to bring their skills and ideas at the service of the common good. So don't worry, if all the conditions are here, good solutions will be suited by the community.

The emergence of problems to be solved, and how to solve them, regarding the different answers to Oregon's model questions, should be handled by the community.

Local and adapted answers will appear if the good sources of experience can be mobilized, if a real participatory approach is inside the community. And the success of those local actions will reinforce the confidence in the method and the Smart Village process.



Figure 5: Municipality of Löffingen : digital pilots are being trained to support the administrative services

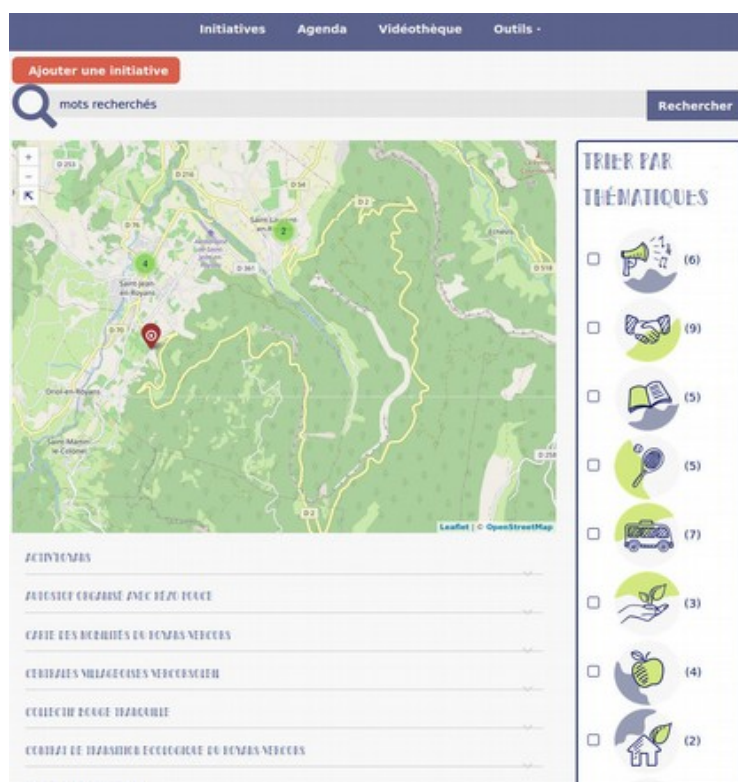


Figure 6: Echo des Falaises local participatory platform

### 4.2 To be communicated

Those successful actions should be largely communicated both through specific means like a local dedicated platform for example, and in local press or local social networks. That part is a key point to involve all citizens in the process, highlight the role of the different stakeholders like policy makers,



and make the Smart Village a central issue for the local development.

### 4.3 To be funded

The Smart Village is based on pooling, co-financing and new partnerships to create joint ventures.

The local collaborative community should also be interested in new ways of thinking economic smart models. Pooling resources can reduce the costs and optimize the use of different materials. New partnerships like circular economy can create new business models. And Europe can bring financial support, Smart Villages are one of the leading orientations for next programs period, in particular in Leader programs.

As examples during the Smart Villages project period :

- the rural « Canton » of Lucern West in Switzerland raised 3.6 millions euros to install fiber optic.
- in France in the Royans Vercors community the project allowed to make a call for proposals co-financed due to the ERDF funds. New projects have emerged due to that impulsion funding : electric bikes park, electric car sharing, and a participative web tv



*Figure 7: The local optical fibre network of Luthern is being installed*

## 5. Conclusion : Leader of a smart village community, a new job ?

While Smart Villages will tend to develop more and more, the fact that the Smart Village project is being carried out invites us to think that it is a question of rethinking the positioning and skills of local development professionals.

We can distinguish a pillar of three profiles that could constitute these "digital and sustainable territorial transitions" or "territorial developers of smart villages":

### ***Rural mediator***

- which links elected officials, residents, private and public
- excellent interpersonal skills, adapts to the contexts of the different worlds

### ***Territorial change Coach***

- uses his skills in participatory animation and collective intelligence.
- adopts a stance of accompanying change, of supporting transitions

### ***Digital and territorial data craftsman***

- enables the local group to support a reflection on the current and future challenges of digital technology as a strength, weakness, threat or opportunity. It masters the issues at least in part, from questions of data, digital strategy, infrastructure, digital mediation and digital inclusion.

- has a knowledge of networks and resources around digital issues, allowing a territory acting to put it in touch with people, resource networks, funding opportunities