

The big bang - stimulating new alliances: remark and aim local energy

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Summary

There is a lot of energy and talent in local communities to work on their own vibrancy.

This briefing is on how new alliances are born. To remark, stimulate and facilitate the big bang and early development of a bright new-alliance-star.

Issue/Problems

Shared interest of local governments and communities is to have strong alliances in rural areas. What can they do to advance new rural alliances:

- How to remark driving citizens and entrepreneurs?
- How to help them aim their energy?
- What are the needs of a starting alliance?
- What can local governments do to stimulate and support the big bang?

Background

In rural areas population is shrinking, demographics are changing and local governments have less means. Therefore local communities can only stay vibrant if local governments, institutions, citizens and entrepreneurs act like partners and form new local alliances that take responsibility for the vibrancy of their own community.

In the Interreg project Rural Alliances 12 partners in 6 countries have formed an alliance on stimulating, advancing and professionalize new alliances in rural areas.

Alliances are growing in four phases: initiative, grow, stabilization, professionalization. This briefing is on initiative and grow (another policy-paper is on stabilization and professionalization). The initiative and grow phases are described as informal, improvisation, wheeling en dealing. There is primarily a lot of energy and dynamic; structure and organization are secondary.

Conditions for a big bang, the start of a new alliance, are people who are pioneers (strong natural driven persons), who are cooperative (do it together, search for matchmaking) and who are able to communicate (spread results, promote, invite, organize support, networking).

Interests in the issue

The goal of intermediary organizations, like the regional houses Het Groene Woud and Brabantse Kempen, is to increase the quality of the environment and vibrancy in their region.

They facilitate:

- governments finding enthusiastic local people and alliances with ideas and drive for their own community, working on local policy goals
- local people and alliances realizing their community goals and link them to (the knowledge and means of) local governments and institutions.

It is important for intermediary organizations to have knowledge on how alliances start, operate and what they need (of local governments).

Existing Policies

Roles of governments and communities are changing: from communities participating in government initiatives to governments participating in community initiatives. In the past governments were directive organizations knowing what was best for their communities. Now they are usually in dialog with their inhabitants. Local communities are becoming more and more aware and inhabitants want to take their own destiny in their own hands.

At this moment the shift in roles is going on to the next level: communities and governments being more and more partners in local alliances.

The partners in the Interreg Rural Alliances (9 intermediary organizations, 1 municipality and 2 universities) are studying and sharing experiences with (new) rural alliances working on their own vibrancy and have produced new instruments to facilitate (new) rural alliances.

Policy Options

Advancing strong new rural alliances (public-private networks) arise and grow when people are able to meet, get to know each other and share ideas and energy. Therefore the roles of governments and local communities have to find a new balance.

Governments (administrative and official) have to:

- change from initiator to facilitator
- give trust and support to local energetic groups of citizens and entrepreneurs & cover their backs
- help communities to start new rural alliances by bringing people together and teach them how to find their way in existing rules, regulations and financing
- be clear, resolute and decisive (prevent delay)
- share knowledge and experiences with other governments

Local communities have to:

- feel responsible for the vibrancy of their own community
- activate and gather local enthusiastic energetic (and skilled) inhabitants
- share with governments how best to facilitate rural alliances
- share knowledge and experiences with other communities

To facilitate this shift one could create a temporary regional intermediary organization.

Recommendation

Governments should advance the big bang of strong new rural alliances by facilitating local communities to meet, by getting to know them, by supporting energetic inhabitants and by relieve and protect them from energy leaks like bureaucracy, organization and administration.

Support them directly, or by organizing a (temporary) regional mediator; by supplying funding for the start and by supporting the regional house in their policy.

Sources

www.rural-alliances.eu

study 'Kernkracht', University of Tilburg (do-democracy in the Brabant rural area)

www.hetgroenewoud.com

www.brabantsekempen.eu

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