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Social Learning In Innovation For Resilience Of A Territory Through University-Company Links

Ana-Teresa Herrera-Reyes^a *, María Rivera Méndez^a, Ignacio de los Ríos Carmenado^a

^a *Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Av. Complutense S/N, Ciudad Universitaria. Madrid, 28040, Spain.*

Abstract

Currently, given the importance of innovation for resilience of a territory and the need to unite in this process the planner's expert knowledge with the experienced knowledge of the affected population, universities have to make companies aware of its influence through the production processes and create the necessary links putting at the service its capabilities to improve production, thus to create an innovative culture involving social process that boosts resilience and the development of the territory. This paper digs out the experience lessons learnt from the link between Camposeven Company and the Technical University of Madrid, that have led to good practices and innovation by applying *Working With People* as model to handle the social learning between producers and farmers.

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1. Introduction

Given the importance that innovation involves nowadays in production processes for resilience and the development of a territory, the request consist in encourage local companies to adopt an innovation culture that is reinforced by collective learning processes in which is necessary to unite the planner's expert knowledge with the experienced knowledge of the affected population in order to increase profitability from the quality of the production and thus the improvement of life quality. The ability to introduce innovation and financial resources towards a real sustainable productive investment, that generates jobs, is crucial to achieve the development of any territory (Albuquerque, 2008) and requires of the ability to be able to adapt and recover in order to prosper in an environment characterized by change and uncertainty (Magis, 2010). This capacity to adapt and recover can be

*Ana-Teresa Herrera-Reyes. Tel.: +34 693 23 22 70
E-mail address: anateresah@gmail.com

understood as resilience, and it constitutes a process not a result, and opposes to stability (Wilson, 2012) and non-crisis conditions (Murphy, 2007); where social capital is not enough, however it is very much needed (Norris et al, 2008). More than analyzing vulnerabilities and identifying strengths that ease the process of adaptation and recovery (Norris et al, 2008; Sherrieb, Norris, & Galea, 2010), people should be proactive through individual and collective action (Maguire, & Cartwright, 2008; Magis, 2010) and promote resilience from a community or local level to a global sphere (Skerratt, 2013). This collective action warrants a key learning process in the production of research and innovation (Sandberg, & Ohman, 2011), as for both to take place, it is needed that users get involved (Albuquerque, 2008). On the other hand, innovation cannot exist without companies, technology transfer organisms, financing or training institutions, but neither without quality research (De los Ríos et al, 2002); also resilience, which requires research to increase understanding of the paths leading to it (Curtis, 2010). Therefore, the union university-company plays a fundamental role, in which fine technical communication that allows to share knowledge between members is essential, as well as strong personal relationships built on trust and values (Liew, Tengku, & Lima, 2012). Cooperation ties between organizations imply common I+D+i objectives that strengthen innovation (Segarra-Blasco, & Arauzo-Carod, 2008), and at the same time promote the development of competences and capabilities between the parts that propitiate organizational and territorial resilience. The aim of this paper is to dig out the experience lessons learnt from the link between Camposeven Company and the Technical University of Madrid, that have lead to good practices and innovation by applying Working With People as a model to handle social learning processes that have been achieved from a tight relationship with the producers and the farmers.

2. Methodology

In order to start analyzing information, data from different sources of information was needed. Firstly, were studied first-hand data obtained from structured interviews through email exchanges with Camposeven's Manager, as well as from semi-structured interviews done to various members of Camposeven's staff during a field trip visit on November 2013. During this visit, 3 interviews were carried out to different staff in charge of: the storehouse, the finance and the technical issues of the company. Secondary, sources of information have been studied to extract the problems found in the region of Murcia. The case study represents a successful experience of a university-company social learning process. The link between Camposeven and the Technical University of Madrid (UPM) has existed for more than eight years, through which Camposeven has looked for connecting knowledge and people's common action from the model Working With People (WWP). This is because, given the social nature of learning and innovation for resilience in a territory, they are aware of the need to work in close contact with the people. WWP can be reduced to 3 main components: ethical-social, technical-entrepreneurial and political-contextual. The interaction between the components needs adaptation and social learning within a social relationship system framework through a learning process (Cazorla, De los Ríos-Carmenado, & Salvo, 2013). Once the information from Camposeven was obtained, it was then introduced within each component of the model, demonstrating how they fit together to achieve resilience.

3. Results

Camposeven is an Agrarian Transformation Society (ATS) specialized in production, preparation and commercialization of horticultural products. It was created in 2007 in a context where every day, agriculture competitiveness has to face new challenges. Found in San Pedro del Pinatar (Murcia), Mediterranean Spanish region that suffers from profound environmental, social and economic problems and restrictions derived from an arid climate with a worrying lack of water and significant natural resource imbalances. Nevertheless, even if the Region uses up only the 3% of the national water resources, it has been able to evolve and establish its agrarian activity in front of the Spanish average, due to investing on the improvement of the supply and water treatment systems. In this context, based on the logic of learning and participation, Camposeven is a dynamic and pro-active group that bets on research and I+D+i; therefore encouraging its own company's resilience and contributing to the region's development. Understanding that resilience comes with aspects such as persistence (to resist change), adaptability (to face challenges) and transformability (radical change) (Folke et al, 2010); resilience implies collective social learning (Lloyd, Peel, & Duck, 2013) to identify factors such as learning to live with change and uncertainty, promoting reorganization diversity and renovation, and combining different types of knowledge and learning, as well as creating opportunities for auto-reorganization (Folke, Colding, & Berkes, 2003). Taking these aspects into

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