



## Clustering 06

Istanbul Conference 25<sup>th</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> May

Workshop 7  
**Network & Support**

**Italian Experiences of  
Service Centres and Networking**

May, Friday 26<sup>th</sup> - Lidia Castagnoli

## THE ACTUAL SCENARIO

- > The age of manufacturing clusters - and Fashion clusters as well - seems to be over
- > Lack of marketing competencies and difficulty to integrate manufacturing skills and immaterial competencies.
- > *New objective*: to provide industrial clusters with services typical of no-industrial districts

## THE BDS: THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE

- > In Italy, the Business Development Service Centres became popular as policy tools to improve SMEs innovation and competitiveness since the beginning of the '80s.
- > Concerning the idea to set up a BDS Centre, they were:
  - > joint public-private initiative,
  - > fully public initiative
  - > fully private

## THE GENESIS

- > The involvement of the private sector has been very noteworthy in a large number of centres.
- > Prevalence of a bottom-up approach characterised by:
  - > the collaboration between the local manufacturing system and the local public institutions (municipalities or provincial bodies)
  - > Joint initiatives with the private sector, represented by Business Associations, Chambers of commerce, local banks, individual enterprises or groups of them

## THE ROOTS

- > The BDS centres reflects the peculiarity of the Italian industrial system:
  - > highly specialised local economic systems
  - > specialisation in “traditional” low-technology activities
  - > export-oriented.
- > The BDS centres are the coherent manifestation of the economic environment from which they originated and reflect both their strengths and weaknesses.

## EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

- > The number and variety of collaborations
- > Collaboration with firms
- > Collaboration with international Centres, number of institutions, including Universities and other research Centres

## SOME FEATURES

- > **Strengths:**
  - > They are good examples of producers of the right kind of services required by firms (“Real Services”)
- > **Weaknesses:**
  - > Involve SMEs in Innovation deep processes
  - > Plan market’s evolution and companies change
  - > Co-ordinate allocation of resources

**Many of them have been weak in their “political” role.**

## THE RECENT CHANGES

- > to create BDS Centres acting more as “network-facilitators” than as service providers.
- > to shift the role of some existing BDS centres towards that of “network-facilitators”, almost “brokers”, among different institutions (Universities and Research Centres, firms and their associations, service centres)

## THE REQUIREMENTS

- > The existence of:
  - > institutions, Universities, research centres, laboratories and training centres to set up the network.
- > The capacity of:
  - > sharing ideas and objectives
  - > harmonize different organisations profiles
  - > designing joint innovative activities.

## CLUSTERS TODAY NEEDS

- > Today industrial environment is **KNOWLEDGE-BASED** instead of capital-based:
  - > Innovation through the **DIFFUSION, SHARE AND USE OF KNOWLEDGE** is a key driver for economic growth of modern society
  - > **COMPLEX INTERACTION** at local, regional and world level among individuals, companies and other organisations are required
  - > **INTERACTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE** and skills, belonging to different sectors are necessary

## THE NEED OF SUPPORT & NETWORKING

- > Companies – and above all SMEs – rarely have the strength to innovate alone, in isolation:
  - > they can more easily innovate if they are in condition to be active and aware part of a network and dynamically interact with a set of actors.
- > In this perspective, **inter-cluster and inter-sector co-operative networks** become the possible pattern enabling this knowledge transfer and facilitate SMEs performances improvement

## SUPPORTING ACTIONS FOR TODAY CLUSTERS

- > Local economies are now required to face a double challenge:
  - > To individuate and **define their own manufacturing skills** to offer as local assets on global market
  - > **To integrate with other local areas** offering complementary specialisation and knowledge
  - > **To reach additional assets through** the set up of business and knowledge **networks**

## THE NECESSARY SKILLS / ACTIONS

- > **SELF-ORGANISATION OF THE CLUSTER**
- > **CONCERTATION / SOCIAL DIALOGUE**
- > **AGENDA DEFINITION**
- > **NETWORKING ACTIVITIES**

## HOW TO MOVE AHEAD: SOME EXPERIENCES

- > **BIELLA**: big historical textile cluster of SMEs located in Northern Italy specialised in woollen production
- > **LAVELLO**: very small district of Southern Italy specialised in lingerie production made of Micro and Small subcontracting companies

## BIELLA: THE BACKGROUND

- > The organisational model of the fashion business (designing, manufacturing, marketing, distribution) has changed and needs to move towards a new integrated model (**Culture, Society and Communication**)
- > The existing **resources (material and immaterial)** are not sufficient anymore to face the new competitive scenario

## BIELLA: Open To Knowledge Project

- > To design an innovative development plan for revitalizing the Textile industrial cluster located in Biella through social dialogue tools:
  - > **add the intangible knowledge-based contents** to the local manufacturing tradition
  - > **attract additional resources** from outside
  - > involve the **local stakeholders** in the development of innovative tools for social growth and re-qualification of the cluster.

BIELLA: "Open To Knowledge" Project (o2k) 17

The screenshot shows the O2K website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'site map | contact' and a 'login user' field. Below the header, the main content area is titled 'project's main characteristics:'. It describes the project's aim to experiment with skill development and its strategy to attract resources. A diagram on the right illustrates the project structure with four interconnected components: 'the project', 'project partners', 'study and research', and 'experts database'. The footer includes the European Union logo and text: 'EUROPEAN UNION European Social Fund Article 8 Innovative Measures. The contents of this website reflect the views of the author. The European Commission is not responsible for any use in a public forum | links'.

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## o2k: THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- > to extend the “social dialogue” approach, moving from the traditional “manufacturing centred” to a “knowledge centred” industrial culture.
- > To offer an alternative to the dismantling of the traditional local know-how.

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## o2k: THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- > Emphasize the local strengths
- > Develop and reorganize the processes
- > Strengthen and spread new creative skills
- > Open to the market and the consumers
- > Internationalize the cluster not only the production
- > To develop a services strategy
- > Diversify the productive system
- > Attract new resources (citizens, researchers, technicians, talents, professionals, young people)

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## o2k: THE ACTIVITIES

- > To develop specific actions for supporting restructuring processes in the artisan subcontracting network.
- > To offer “Capacity building” actions for the stakeholders in the field of innovation and creative thinking for new strategies development aiming at improve local attractiveness.

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## Lavello: RENEWED ENTREPRENEURS

- > It is a so-called **weak cluster**:
  - > Small and marginal area of South Italy
  - > Micro companies
  - > Subcontractors
- > The local stakeholders decided to rethink the cluster and use public funds to generate innovative processes
- > It is an example of interaction between an national tool of industrial policy (Patto Territoriale) and the local stakeholders initiative (Cluster Committee).

## Lavello: THE OBJECTIVES

- > Accompany the entrepreneurs from the **subcontracting production to the market**
- > To **break the dependency from market intermediaries** approaching directly the market

## Lavello: THE ACTIONS

- > **RE-QUALIFY THE COMPANY SKILLS**
- > **RE-QUALIFY THE PROFESSIONALS SKILLS**
- > **OFFER SPECIALISED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
- > **ENSURE INSTITUTIONAL AND BUSINESS NETWORKING**

## CONCLUSIONS

- > **Importance of local agents and institutions sharing the same objectives**
- > **Necessity to offer management and technical skills and qualified services to companies**
- > **Need of creating linkages with existing firms, institutions, similar organisations**
- > **Definition of a cluster agenda**
- > **Shared programmes involving the stakeholders.**