

# Presentation of the CONSORZIO ALTA VALDERA

INTER-MUNICIPAL CO-OPERATION  
Ad-Hoc Projects or Permanent Institutional Structures?  
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Introduction  
to slides

One of the more complicated and difficult things to do, today as yesterday, is to integrate people, organizations, stories: on the one hand enhancing the characteristics, the needs of individuals and promoting, on the other, the creation of a team spirit. Whether we are talking about small groups or complex organisations it matters little: of course, when numbers become significant, the analysis becomes more complicated, but basic instances remain the same. The question becomes, therefore, to understand what may be the glue that integrates the different sensitivities and the different knowledge: in my opinion, this glue in our case is given by a mix of participation and sharing of languages and tools.

This very short general preamble was necessary to try to give a soul to the slides I would like to use in this presentation. In the slides I will show you, I will try to explain **what** the Consortio Alta Valdera is, **when it was born**, what it does today and what it is about to do in the future. I will also try to highlight the main critical points that during its history, and now are more than ten years, affected its way of being. Finally, starting from what I thought is the central element that sums up well the operational philosophy of the Consortio, I will introduce you the monitoring system of services as an instrument of dialogue with the municipalities that believed in this structure and that must have tools to know,

be informed and then directly affect its functioning.

As a matter of fact, I believe that this is the main factor on which to work in order to have people perceive that the new body **Consorzio** is an instrument of the Municipal Administrations. And now let's go back to what I called *soul, participation and sharing of languages and tools*.

This latter consideration - the **Consorzio** is a tool of the Municipal Administrations - which might seem tautological, must account of what small administrations have already experienced in recent years and in, in some ways, similar situations. This can include the management of water works and the provision of water services to citizens, previously directly managed by municipalities and later passed to a subject that, working on a large area, should have provided the service with higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness. I do not want to enter into the details of the service, and wonder whether citizens receive a better water and/or at a lower cost. What is sure is that small administrations often experienced all these transfers of service as an emptying, and today they frequently attend the Assemblies of these new structures without knowing or being able to play a meaningful role.

What I mean is that the reorganisation of the functions of the Local Public Administration was not accompanied, in that case, by a parallel path of consolidation of management skills, thus transforming the process of re/aggregation of functions, in a substantial impoverishment. The shift of operational competences to a new structure, if not accompanied by a retraining of top levels and/or decision-making structures (i.e. administrators, the political level), produces exactly a sense of impoverishment and emptying, limiting the potentials inherent in these processes. This approach, with its results, resembles that of wild computerizing processes and technology and many projects of the public administration: even in these cases, without an adequate awareness, training and sharing of those who for various reasons would have to be the recipients of innovation, the added value that computerisation projects could give the Local (and Central) Public Administration was drastically reduced and limited in its potential.

We were speaking of history. That is, of the story of the **Consorzio Alta Valdera**.

About ten years ago the Conference of Mayors of the Alta Valdera started a project called **S.COO.TER.**, as homage to this territory which is the home of **Piaggio**, to evoke an instrument of **light, easy and cheap** mobility, and finally because acronym for **Servizio COOrdinamento TERritoriale** (Territorial Coordination Service).

An idea, therefore, of associated services management.

From this idea the projects and services gradually developed that in 2004 merged into the **Consorzio Alta Valdera**. After six years of associated management, the critical points relating to the coordination and functional integration had become

unbearable - first of all the management of employees by six different entities - and such as to make the transition of staff from the municipalities to the new entity essential.

Actually the story, and most of all the evolution of associated services, was more structured, just think that some services were initially held at the premises of the leader municipality, yet maybe it is not important to remember it here. This digression can only be used to let people further understand that the way leading to the establishment of the Consorzio was long and surely not free from obstacles of various kinds, which from time to time, with patience and determination, were removed.

If we want instead to list the services provided by the Consorzio, there are those related to **LOCAL TAXES** (ICI - municipal tax on real estates, tax on municipal solid waste, advertising and billboards), **BUSINESS ACTIVITIES** (which means the issuing of permits and licences for the exercise of activities,...), **LOCAL POLICE** (and therefore controls on the roads, on business,...), **STAFF** (and therefore emissions of payrolls and related money orders). Besides these, a number of other minor and supporting activities are characterizing the Consorzio as **Service Center**. The Consorzio provides notifications, calls for tenders and purchases, provides operational information support to the six bodies and carries out activities of territorial promotion thanks to agreements and synergies with the system of representation. By the Consorzio you can also find offices and services of other public and private systems: **INPS** (Social Security), **ASSEFI** (Chamber of Commerce of Pisa), **POLO DI TELEFORMAZIONE** (Tele-training Point of the Tuscan Region), **CONSORZIO BONIFICA**, **INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE**, **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION**, **INFOPOINT ON WORK** (Province of Pisa), **EUROPE OFFICE** (Confesercenti), **BOX OFFICE** (purchase tickets for performances and events).

As far as the prospects of development are concerned, within the end of the year the birth in Valdera of the first Municipal Union of Tuscany is foreseen. A 15-institution associated structure, into which the services managed by the Consorzio will merge, the ones existing on different areas and the new ones that are to be organized. Among these it is worth remembering the **CIVIL PROTECTION** service, the establishment of sub-provincial **CADASTRAL POLO**, the **STAFF TRAINING** function, **COMPUTER AND TELEMATIC SERVICES**, **SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL** services, the management of **PUBLIC LIBRARIES** and **MUSEUM NETWORK**. So, a set of functions and services that can change the reference frame of local public services system, improving their same quality and affecting the level of expenditure, namely reducing the costs to equal service.

After this long parenthesis you can perhaps understand the general coordinates within which the activities and services of the Consorzio are included.

To get a, let's say peculiar, character, namely relating to the organisational

culture and way of working, we thought it useful to speak of an information instrument (and decision support) that has gradually evolved, becoming an ordinary working instrument of the Consorzio and of the Municipalities part in it: I am namely referring to the **MONITOR** project, which was implemented since the establishment of the Consorzio (2004) and today has produced a further technology that enables the administrations to have under control the carrying out of the activities of the single services, addressing them, if necessary, towards particular areas.

The offices took part in the project, defining the articulation of services provided for macro activities. Periodically individual service operators compile the information sheets, highlighting volumes and/or timing of activities for each institution. These monthly aggregated files are put in the network (INTRANET) to allow administrators, or people in charge, to have control over the activities and, as we said, to give indications about them. These communications track remains in the system to allow the office manager to have the indications collected and find their meaning and feedback in the following months.

For its share the individual service is in this way *communicated* to the single administration, which may, as in direct management, have control on the progress of activities for its own administration.

The sense of emptying we have spoken of at the beginning can in this way be managed positively, giving real/useful answers and at the same time resizing many fears that the first implementation of the **Monitor** caused with some frequency: that service operates in an unbalanced way for the administrations... - we do not know the progress of activities and this does not allow us to monitor the dynamics of revenue ... And so on.

The process activated with the associated management of the Alta Valdera, started thanks to the foresight of local administrations, could get stronger and steady exactly because of this continuous process of sharing and “training on the job” of technicians and administrators.

What I mean is that to really think and work in an innovative way, an intervention is needed both at the formal and institutional levels and at the operational ones. Only in this way does the expected innovation produce its effects globally and reduce risks, often frequent in our country, that good laws, rules, guidelines and explanatory circulars remain only on paper, not implemented or enforced without being able to seize all the innovative potential that were behind them.