Refival's development approach, conceptual frameworks, goals & mission statement

Refival is a personal initiative I took in 2015 to design a blueprint or conceptual framework for refugee integration following a product/business development approach instead of an up till now mostly used (dominantly) humanitarian perspective. The design method I used is comparable with the innovation approach I successfully applied in the past to develop the first forms of electronic media collaboration (TNO-Telesearch, Centraal-Beheer Kijktelefoon, Hannoversche Leben Teleberatung) and Interactive Television (Aquarell-TV at DKZ in Bremen, TV-Windows at MTM-SBS's TV2 channel in Hungary).

Since this type of development is not very generally known, I will explain it a bit more in detail and although I am clearly not Elon Musk, I will use an analogy with Tesla cars to "visualize" my approach.

-1- Any (disruptive) innovative development starts with an idea. In Elon Musk's case the idea was/is to propel a car electrically. In Refival's case the idea was/is that there is the possibility that social and economical synergy can be achieved between the inward "migration of refugees" and addressing Europe's "rural decline/revitalization" issues. -2- The next step is to transform such an idea into a vision.

In Tesla's case this meant to make an inventory of all parts and services required to build, sell, operate and maintain an electric car and to create a blueprint of a basic car platform and a related business plan to build the infrastructure needed to produce and sell electric cars. In Refival's case, this meant to analyze migration/refugee streams, integration methods/issues, rural development perspectives, cost structures and the roles of all stakeholders involved, and hence develop a holistic conceptual framework for synergy/efficiency improvement, which covers all these aspects and to document the outline and structure of it. -3- The next step is to test the theoretical feasibility of one's vision.

For Tesla, this meant to explore the availability of existing components and potential partnerships. For Refival, this meant/means to study the availability, similarity and feasibility of all conceptual elements which have been previously used in projects elsewhere. (Examples: Riace, Mingoola, Samasource, Ruralshores, educational systems etc.). -4- The next step is to create/realize implementation potential.

In Tesla's case, this meant to raise money. In Refival's case, (where the basic framework was/is primarily based on reallocating already existing budgets) it means to "address"/"to lobby in relation to" potential stakeholders (refugees/migrants, EU bodies, member state central and local governments, community grassroots, private sector employers, trade unions, policy makers….). The target is to ask/convince them to connect to/participate in a consortium/pilot-project in order to define common goals to test the by then "on feasibility assessed" vision in practice. -5- The next step is to implement and evaluate projects.

After raising money, Tesla designs specific car-models, uses existing components and partnerships, develops and produces the additionally required parts or relationships and starts assembling and selling cars. After initiating a Refival stakeholder consortium, a specific implementation within Refival's conceptual frameworks will be set (parameters specified) and a (pilot) project and cooperation between partners established. From here, the actual plan/project can be executed and monitored. Refival's role changes at this stage from an initiating to a catalyst or consulting one. (This is why, on purpose, Refival has not applied for a formal NGO status; it itself is no full stakeholder in the projects it designs/initiates).

Tesla and Refival have in common that in order to scale/roll-out their vision, all components must be in place. A Tesla car cannot drive without wheels; Refival's vision cannot be implemented without all stakeholders properly involved. Further, of course, one could manually build a single electrical car or one could fund the revitalization of a single village. However, this is not the goal of this type of infrastructural vision(s) and this is also where Refival strongly differs from single party/NGO projects. Upon success, a Tesla prototype immediately becomes a production line; a successful Refival project becomes an innovation model to be immediately multiplied elsewhere. This multiplication of its applications is the core mission Refival has and through which it targets to achieve large scale economically and socially sustainable results for currently deprived areas and groups of people.

Looking at the combination between rural decline and refugee integration potential, most likely a pilot-project would take place in Spain, Italy, Northern Scandinavia, France or Eastern-Germany.... If it were to be EU initiated and driven by "grassroots" rural initiators, the list would look quite different (not taking political impossibilities into account here, but looking at real needs and success potential) and would definitely include Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia and Slovakia. All these countries have faced/face a strong urbanization or outward migration, in which people are not replaced and economical activity potential gets destroyed and all these countries (with the exception of France) also face extremely low birthrates. Without (urgent) counter measures, in one or two decades from now, there will be no rural communities left in most of these countries.

Unfortunately the European political agenda has since 2015 shifted from refugee integration to return and border control (and although Refival in principle saves money on existing budgets, this is not on the political agenda at the moment); cooperation and funding issues are hard to discuss in such a climate. Another bottleneck in the past four years has been to find private-sector support and willingness to (based on economical arguments of longer-term workforce development) relocate Internet facilitated tasks to rural areas (and refugees) in order to create proper inclusion. Finally, because of its background, Refival is further lacking the "credibility" to operate in the public and NGO sectors and for a long time it has therefore been looking for a "patron" who could/would support the goals of Refival and who could open doors for it. Alternatively, it has been looking for a better connected and longer established organization to take over its activities, so that Refival would be able to focus more on practical implementation instead of networking and lobbying.

So, with whom does Refival want to work or get in touch? In principle, with anyone who has a longer-term vision of combining rural revitalization and (re)migration. To be more specific, with those who are able to politically initiate a pilot-project or social experiment to test Refival's meanwhile fully developed conceptual frameworks.