

Organising local partnerships

“INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS”

NOTEBOOK NO. 2

LEADER EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY

This document was conceived and written by **René Caspar** (ESAP, France), **Gilda Farrell** (LEADER European Observatory) and **Samuel Thirion** (INDE, Portugal). The seminar and case studies were coordinated by **Samuel Thirion** in association with **Catherine de Borchgrave** and **Maylis Campbell** (LEADER European Observatory), **André Faggion** (Telide, France), **Yves Gorgeu** (Mairie-conseils, France), **Michel Keane** (University College Galway, Ireland), **Robert Lukesch** (ÖAR, Austria), **Malcolm Moseley** (Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, United Kingdom) and **Carlo Ricci** (Agriteknica, Italy). **Yves Champetier** and **Jean-Luc Janot** (LEADER European Observatory) helped in the final stages of this document. Christine Charlier (LEADER European Observatory) was in charge of production coordination.

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A.E.I.D.L. - Chaussée Saint-Pierre 260 - B-1040 Brussels

Tél: +32 2 736 49 60 - Fax: +32 2 736 04 34

E-mail: leader@aeidl.be

World Wide Web: <http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be>

Preface

This technical document is the result of three successive activities organised by the LEADER European Observatory in 1996:

1. **The completion of case studies on 7 areas in Europe** where **local partnership** practices are under way, either in the context of the LEADER programme or another local initiative. The areas in question are:

- > in Austria, **Eisenwurzen** (Upper Austria), where some managers, concerned about the future of their area, have set up an association to help create local partnerships and mechanisms for appropriating the idea, as well as sustainable development practices;
- > in France, the **Pays de Collombey-les-Belles** (Lorraine), where a 20-year mobilisation of the population and local elected representatives has led to the formation of a private-public partnership which aims to carry out a series of projects relating to the infrastructure and services. The main objective is to maintain the population's interest in the area so as to counterbalance the attraction of neighbouring towns;
- > in Ireland, the area of **Cavan-Monaghan**, where the local farming cooperatives, along with certain public authorities, have organised a partnership which, in the context of LEADER, aims at the economic diversification and structuring of other local groups, in particular the local associations;
- > in Southern Italy, the area of **Gargano** (Apulia), where in the context of LEADER, a group of service companies has organised a local partnership in a difficult institutional context, characterised by a certain mistrust on the part of the population vis-à-vis the public structures and any form of association;
- > in Northern Italy, **Vinschgau/Val Venosta** (Trentino-Alto-Adige), where the various public structures have come together to implement the LEADER programme while safeguarding their specific functions;

- > in Portugal, the **Margem esquerda do Guadiana** (Alentejo), where a group of people have undertaken to organise local actors in a context where private organisations expressing social interests are lacking. The process led to the formation of a partnership structure, the "Rota do Guadiana" association, which was subsequently given a LEADER programme to manage;
- > in the United Kingdom, the area of **Fermanagh** (Northern Ireland), where the various local interest groups are all represented within a LEADER programme management partnership, with the principal aim of contributing to the return of peace in this border region affected by political-religious conflicts.

In order to complete the range of partnership experiences in Europe as much as possible, two other analyses have been added:

- > in Sweden, where a coordination process for the creation of local partnerships at village level has been established **throughout the country**;
- > in France, the **Basque Country** (Aquitaine), where an extended partnership at regional level has been set up to structure a long-term development strategy.

1. **The organisation of a seminar entitled "Local partners for innovation"**, which was held in the Vinschgau/Val Venosta area (Italy) from 23 to 27 October 1996 with participants from 9 European countries, mostly involved in the management of LEADER programmes.

2. **Analysis of the discussions and conclusions of this seminar.**

All of these activities lie within the more general working plan of the LEADER European Observatory, whose objectives include **supporting the transfer of innovation in rural areas**.

**LOCATION OF AREAS
MENTIONED IN THIS WORK**



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Eisenwurzen | 5 Vinschgau/Val Venosta | 9 French Basque Country |
| 2 Collombey-les-Belles | 6 Margem Esquerda do Guadiana | 10 Iblea |
| 3 Cavan-Donaghan | 7 Fermanagh | |
| 4 Gargano | 8 Sweden | |

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Introduction

To be a partner is: *to take part in (involvement)*
to be a part of (choice),
to side with (commitment),
to impart (communication).

The partnership approach, which compels a person or an organisation to become involved and to take risks, marks a qualitative difference with the attitude of the mere actor who, by definition, “has a role” and “plays a character”: he is elected, is a professional representative, an entrepreneur, etc.

Local partnerships involve the formation of a network of relationships and solidarity at the level of an area whose aim is to better develop the area’s potential and enrich the sectoral actions with a “transverse”, inter-sectoral debate.

More than joint economic actions, local partnerships represent a will to build or rebuild a social link or even a search for identity.

The formation of a local partnership can take **very different forms**, depending on:

- the nature and number of partners;
- the context in which the partnership has been created, the natural or legal persons who are behind it;
- the objectives that have been set;
- the socio-economic “culture” of the area concerned (legal-administrative system, regulations in force, role of public authorities, institutional practices, exercise of citizenship, etc.).

This document is concerned with the formation and implementation of the partnership and therefore with the method that makes this approach both feasible and sustainable

Partnerships have indeed become a key element of innovation processes in rural areas.

At the very heart of the thinking behind LEADER is the expression of a new way of viewing development through a multi-sectoral approach, the result of negotiations and dialogue between the various actors concerned.

The transfer from actor to partner is becoming more and more essential for arousing an innovative dynamic in rural areas in the face of outside changes. However, **a partnership is something that can only be built over time.**

In the case of LEADER, “partnership” is not synonymous with participation of all the actors from an area but rather the expression of a group of actors who, through their legitimacy or knowledge of the area, find themselves in a position to organise and assume the responsibility of a joint commitment. At first, a LEADER partnership is sometimes only the “embryo” of a structuring of local actors around the management of a programme which gradually evolves by integrating other actors or giving rise to other forms of partnership at area level.

In addition to the practices of dialogue and consultation, partnerships enable a better understanding of the area and its living strength.

Nor is “partnership” synonymous with a lack of hierarchical structure: in almost all LEADER partnerships, a distinction is made between the methods of hierarchical organisation and a division of responsibilities; at first this is not always clearly defined but tends to become clearer as the local development project progresses.

Finally, the LEADER partnership does not, in general, concern all aspects of local development: depending on how well represented it is, the local partnership will either be able to play a “catalyst” role or not and have a strong influence at local level or not, going beyond the context of LEADER alone.

Apart from the fact that it is a condition for access to funding from the LEADER programme, the formation of a partnership is increasingly becoming the necessary and almost inevitable prerequisite for bringing about

processes of change and development at local level which are not within the means of one actor alone, even an institutional one. **In this way, a partnership is both an innovation and a lever of innovation.**

Although in some areas the practice of setting up partnerships was introduced by LEADER, constituting an innovation in itself, elsewhere it was in existence long before the implementation of the Initiative. The partnership created was in that case above all a way to coordinate and integrate a greater number of actors in actions analysing local needs and implementing projects to respond to these needs. The partnership developed at **Collombey-les-Belles** (France) is a case in point.

In order to create partnerships, methods have been devised outside the context of LEADER in countries such as Sweden and Austria. Initially this involved a national coordination campaign (“**The whole of Sweden must live**”) funded by the government, with the aim of introducing and/or reviving collective practices and of mobilising local skills for the implementation of certain services, some of which previously came under responsibility of the local authorities. **In some Austrian areas**, the lever used to create partnerships was to disseminate a certain concept of development, “sustainable development”. The partnership is then based on sharing an idea that is gradually incorporated in development policies and practices at all levels.

In those areas where partnership practices already existed, the arrival of the LEADER Initiative enabled the function of “programme management” to be consolidated in addition to the coordination or social structuring functions which were the main aim of the partnership. This, for example, was the case of **Rota do Guadiana** in Portugal.

In many LEADER areas, partnerships, which at first had a role of concerted management, expanded and evolved towards a more global role of coordinating and taking responsibility for increasingly diversified aspects of local development policy.

Although the expression “partner” incorporates the notion of “being part of”, the practice of partnership is becoming an anchoring point of development in rural areas: “being part of”, both actively and jointly, leads to the recognition of a common identity and the devising of a shared strategy which first takes into account man and his environment.

Chapter 1

From programme management to the coordination of local development

From programme management to the coordination of local development

1.1 Three starting points, three logics

Behind the diversity of today's local partnerships in Europe lies a certain similarity between three approaches corresponding to **three types of original partnerships**:

- **local partnerships created at the initiative of individuals**, often "local leaders" of the community who would like to actively intervene in the local reality, not only economically but also socially and culturally. Such involvement, usually militant, generally rooted in a very strong identity, gradually weaves the bases of a renewed citizenship;
- **local partnerships created at the initiative of businesses or more generally professional organisations** (cooperatives, associations of producers, etc.), which claim a privileged position in economic decisions;
- **local partnerships created at the initiative of the public authorities**, local or not, which, responsible for the common interest, compensate for a rare or failing private initiative in the problem areas.

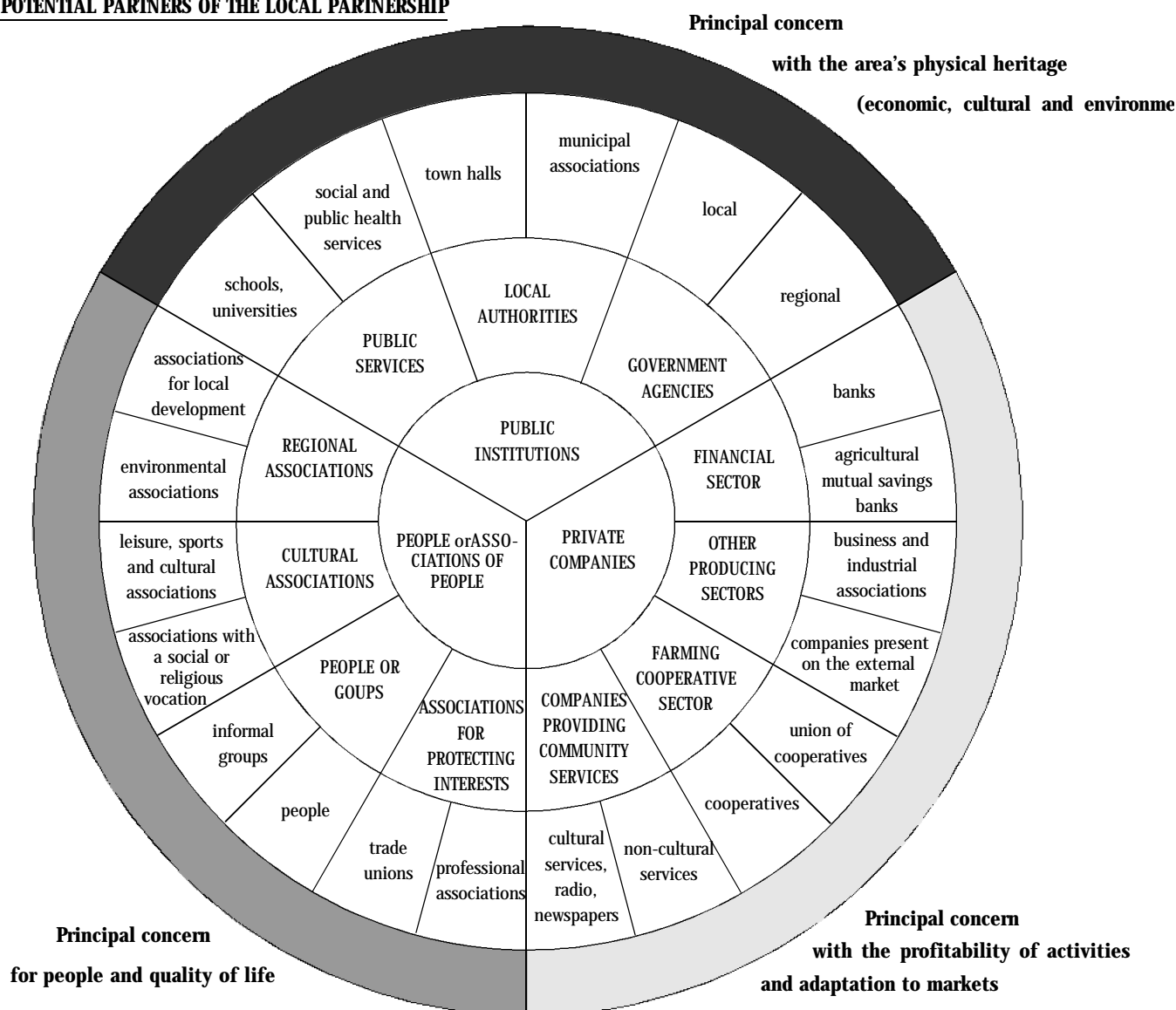
These three approaches correspond, in general, to **three types of initial objectives**:

- in the first instance, they are more geared towards **social issues** (social links, promotion of culture, identity renewal, etc.);
- in the second instance, they tend to be focused on **economic action** and the creation, promotion and management of project dynamics in this field;
- in the third instance, they tend to be concerned initially with a **logic of amenities** (setting up infrastructures, public facilities, etc.) and then with **taking into account the globality of the area concerned**.

The **nature of the process** is therefore different for each of the three cases:

- when initiated by individuals, the partnership quite often develops as a **militant exercise by several people**, which can give it a perspective of durability linked to an active citizenship;
- initiated by private actors, it is usually based on **sectoral interest** which means going beyond individual interests and creating progressive groupings on broader bases;
- when it stems from public initiative, the partnership is generally born of a **substitute desire to react to an unfavourable economic and social situation**.

THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS OF THE LOCAL PARTNERSHIP



THE PORTUGUESE EXAMPLE

Local partnerships responsible for a LEADER II programme in Portugal (45 programmes in the country in 1996) have the following partners:

- local authorities (78% of partnerships), representing the communes (76%), the "freguesias" (11%) and the communal associations (27%); *
- other public institutions (71% of partnerships): schools and universities (39%), regional bodies (36%) and community centres (9%);
- private businesses (78% of partnerships): farming cooperatives (56%); agricultural mutual credit savings banks (42%); newspapers (4%); other businesses (38%); industrial or business associations (36%);
- associations of people (76% of partnerships): farming associations (56%); other professional associations (20%); cultural associations (53%); religious associations (20%); associations for local development (27%);
- inhabitants participating in a private capacity (42% of partnerships).

[*] Portugal is divided into 333 communes, each containing several "freguesias"

1.2 Management partnerships, coordination partnerships

Whether an initiative by individuals, private businesses or a public initiative, **two types of partnership logic which are continuous** (evolution), much more than conflicting, can be identified:

- on the one hand, a **management partnership**, whose objective is closely linked to allocating, distributing and consuming a budget. This partnership is generally born of a circumstantial opportunity (programme, exceptional funding, etc.). It is limited in time and in its objective. It follows a project logic (to find and involve suppliers of means and know-how in the concrete assembly of an operation). This is therefore a purely technical-economic logic;
- on the other hand, a **partnership coordinating development or identity** at the service of a local development action involving an area, its survival and its promotion. This partnership aims to create a social project. It is based on an educational and rallying approach which takes time. Its objective is therefore to raise citizen awareness, to modify behaviours and to obtain a responsible commitment from as many people as possible.

The development coordination partnership is extremely diverse and evolves over time. It is constantly influenced by the management partnership, which sometimes responds better to certain needs such as:

- short-term efficiency and the projects' need for funding,
- administrative and political pressures,
- the quantitative criteria of the assessment processes.

1.3 The same trend towards opening up

In all cases, the same trend towards opening the partnership to other types of partners can be noted, particularly in the long term. In other words, the general trend is to extend the partnership towards one comprising both private and public actors.

Several reasons are behind this will to open up:

- the search for legitimacy (particularly if this involves an initiative of people or private institutions);
- the search for consensus to avoid conflicts within the area;
- the search to widen the field of skills and awareness. Diversity can in fact be a guarantee of success because it is from this that stem creativity, innovation and proliferation of ideas and solutions.

In actual fact, opening up the partnership is not left to chance: depending on where the initiators come from but also on other factors, the groups build a specific and suitable partnership. Sometimes they are forced to open up to partners of different origins, and the action's objectives and content have to evolve or even change. This may eventually lead to a **"variable geometry" of the partnership**, depending on five types of concerns:

- **the usefulness** in achieving the objectives that have been set;
- **the interest** in the expected results;
- **the efficiency** needed to successfully carry off the actions planned;
- **the motivation** required to take charge of the projects.
- **adaptation** to the developments imposed by the durability of the action;

Partnership Characteristics	MANAGEMENT	COORDINATION
AIMS and OBJECTIVES	Obtaining, distributing and consuming a budget	Identifying and mobilising the local actors
DYNAMICS and LOGICS	Presenting an application eligible for a procedure	Widening the basis of the development
RESULTS and EFFECTS EXPECTED	Carrying out a programme	Innovating and boosting
COMPOSITION and OPENING	Closed partnership between a few people	Opening reasoned around ideas and themes

In the long term, **the successful partnership then appears as the dynamic aspect of the development approach**, with the ability to mobilise local human resources, even though the forms it takes are impregnated with its specific origin and national traditions.

It therefore seems evident that in spite of these circumstantial factors (capacity of the initiator, local history, etc.), the partnership must progressively integrate in the course of its construction the needs of the development action that it underlies; it must therefore evolve and adapt to the different stages of this to guarantee its durability.

The following table summarises for each stage of the development action the characteristics encountered in practice at partnership level.

Necessarily schematic, this table must be easily adaptable to the different practical cases of which it is a synthesis. However, it shows that in spite of a specific entry for each type of initiator (a limited number of people initiate the approach), the public authorities become involved from stage 3 and the individual or collective project holders from stage 4. Gradually, therefore, the partnership expands under pressure from the needs of the development action and in order to respond to the five concerns previously mentioned (usefulness, interest, efficiency, motivation, adaptation).

DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT										
NATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP	1	Initialise	2	Discuss	3	Validate	4	Assemble	5	Evaluate
		Detect		Position oneself		Schedule		Carry out		Adapt
		Mobilise		Propose		Finance		Monitor		Relaunch
	Essential partners	A limited number of people or organisations involved	Institutional and professional representatives, people-resources from society	Financiers and investors, Banks and managers, various government agencies	Individual or collective project holders	Direct and indirect participants from an area and from production networks				
	Form of organisation	Informal organisation based on voluntary support	Working parties based on objectives or themes	Institutional dialogue based on agreement	Personal commitment based on an obligation to achieve a result and on the contract	Strategic group based on identifying and seeking the common good				
Origins of the dynamism	Militancy usefulness	Cooperation interest	Expertise efficiency	Responsibility motivation	Integration citizenship					
Curbs and limits associated with composition	Spontaneous initiative, sometimes taken badly by the institutions and/or the community. Fragility due to the limited number of people involved	Corporatist pressures and takeover by the institutions or specific sectors of activity	Limitation to institutional logics and financial constraints	Suffocation in a project dynamic running out of steam	Dilution of the action and lack of notable interest for global actions					

Phases 2 and 5 of development, essential to the maturity and durability of the action, are not, or are only rarely, entries because they are phases that are not directly productive whose value and necessity become apparent only with time and by preventing the pressure of “doing” from eclipsing the question “why are we doing this?”: allowance for the time factor (long term) and the area (identity, culture), the need for a strategy (anticipation) and the value of evaluating and remobilising (appropriation) are all discoveries which are not immediately apparent but which form the ultimate value of the partnership and ensure its durability.



1.4 **The consequences of opening up**

The diversity created by opening up the partnership allows different skills and access to means and to actors from different sectors to be brought together. It also enables actors to come up with ideas and intervene in the area in a new way, which each actor individually is unable to do.

Although what is systematically sought is the complementarity of different skills, which is of obvious interest, each partnership nevertheless develops its own vision of the diversity of skills.

Associating different ways of seeing and reasoning is generally less expressed but plays a determining role in the ability to create and innovate local partnership.

The diversity of the partners also allows different sectors of activity and means to be combined, notably between financial, physical and human resources. **This combination is an innovative factor in rural areas.**

SUMMARY TABLE: LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND INNOVATIONS						
BRINGING TOGETHER 		<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Points of view</i>	<i>Interests</i>	<i>Abilities to mobilise</i>	<i>Know-how</i>
DIFFERENT PARTNERS	People and voluntary sectors	of the social and cultural aspects	on listening and dialogue	in people, quality of life	human resources	Coordination of discussion
	Businesses	of the economic aspects	on the time/efficiency factor	in the markets, economic profitability	financial resources and private heritage	Management and development
	Public institutions and local authorities	of the political and institutional aspects	on the general interest	in planning and providing facilities for the area (economic, cultural, environmental)	financial resources and public heritage	Institutional support
		improved <i>readings of the area</i>	new combinations of <i>ideas</i>	more mature <i>projects</i>	a more effective <i>implementation</i>	a better <i>durability</i> of the actions
ALLOWS THE FOLLOWING TO BE OBTAINED 		highlighting unsuspected opportunities	germs of innovation	integrating the interests of the different social groups and creating social cohesion	guaranteeing better risk management	based on the ability to be constantly renewed

Chapter 2

Principles, rules and foundations of a successful partnership

Principles, rules and foundations of a successful partnership

2.1 Finding the right solution according to the context

2.1.1 The diversity of the starting contexts

The motivations of the partners and the composition of the partnership will differ according to whether the initialisation of the latter is incumbent on individuals, businesses or public authorities.

However, the preponderance of needs is such that in the end, the partnership that is needed at a given stage of development is always obtained. This is referred to as a partnership of “variable geometry”, which is expressed both by a great variety of cases corresponding to the diversity of the issues to be resolved and by a great similarity of solutions as soon as the same problems arise.

Apart from this internal logic, the diversity of the starting contexts is reflected by a diversity of local partnership models which determines the choices made.

As has already been mentioned, the rural areas of the European Union have a wide range of contexts and therefore face very varied development problems:

- some rural areas are faced with serious conflicts and problems of reconciliation between different communities (the case of **Northern Ireland**);
- others are experiencing a shortage of local initiatives (mountain areas having suffered from the rural exodus, or certain heavily segmented rural societies some of which were under authoritarian regimes less than one generation ago) (the case of **Alentejo**);
- others, on the contrary, already benefit from a strong tradition of local initiatives and a great sense of the common good, giving them a high level of development and management of rural space. But these areas may today find themselves limited in their development by, for example, a far too individualistic local culture (the case of **Vinschgau/Val Venosta**);

- some areas, with long-standing experience in local development, are today faced with institutional problems (superposition of functions, dysfunctions, etc.);
- others are experiencing a loss of faith in the institutions and a certain scepticism towards the partnerships, the result of bad experiences in the past, where the dysfunctions, in some cases corruption, discredited the authorities, the public institutions and the collective initiatives (the case of **Gargano**);
- others are still faced with demographic problems (very low population density), resulting in an insufficient level of public services that requires alternative forms of organisation at local level (the case of **Sweden**);
- periurban rural areas see their human resources working in the nearby towns and thus risk becoming “dormitory zones” with no activity of their own (the case of **Collombey-les-Belles**);
- isolated areas, on the other hand, are faced with rural exodus and the fatalism of those who have stayed behind;
- finally, other areas, less affected by these problems and having reached an advanced level of development, are seeking alternative solutions for a better quality of life, both in terms of relations with nature and human relations (the case of **Eisenwurzen**).

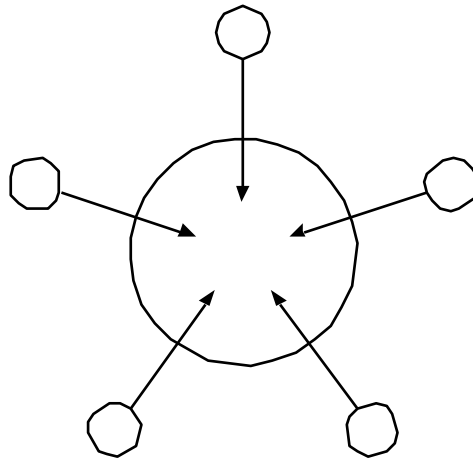
These very different situations call for very different solutions but these solutions all include local partnerships: whether by creating links between fractions in conflict, mobilising the initiatives or finding alternative forms of organisation, this always involves bringing together a certain number of local actors to resolve a problem affecting the whole area concerned. But the problems and the interest in overcoming them being diverse, the alliances to be created being multifarious and the local cultures being different, the solutions and the ways to achieve them will each time be different, creating a wide variety of models and processes for building the partnership.

2.1.2 9 examples of the diversity of local partnership models

UNITED KINGDOM

FLAG / Fermanagh Local Action Group
[Northern Ireland]

Model of social reconciliation through representation of all local interest groups within the same association: farmers, voluntary associations for local development, public bodies concerned with rural development, entrepreneurs, etc.



The model also respects a balance in terms of representation by religion. It is a management partnership which aims at a fair distribution of LEADER funding and which has brought together, for the first time in the area, many local partners within a private body limited by guarantee. The steering committee comprises 30 people, 14 of whom sit on the Board of Directors. Within the LAG, the partners are divided into five thematic groups: “rural tourism”, “agriculture”, “SMEs”, “technical assistance/ training”, “environment/living conditions”.

Population of the area: 55 300 inhab.

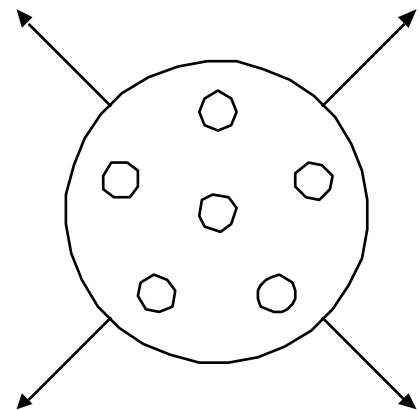
Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 14 (including 6 collective structures)

Legal nature of the management structure: private company limited by guarantee

PORTUGAL

Rota do Guadiana Integrated Development Association (Alentejo)

Model structuring the society and relationships with the local authorities within an association comprising an increasing number of people.



The association operates in a traditional rural society context, which is relatively unstructured, where after fifty years of authoritarian regime, despite the last twenty years of democracy, there still reigned a certain organisational vacuum beside the local public authorities. The members (75 in total) therefore structure their action within 9 thematic groups. Informal “Nuclei of local action” have also been created at the level of each municipality as well as an advisory council for each programme at area level. The association has also led to the creation of several businesses in an area where the business culture is poor.

Population of the area: 49 000 inhab.

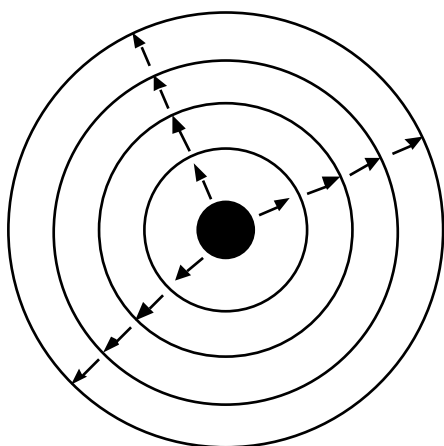
Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 75 people and 8 collective structures (including 5 communes)

Legal nature of the management structure: association and informal groups

AUSTRIA

SPES Association (Eisenwurzen, Upper Austria)

Model expanding local partnership practices through concentric circles from a “core” of militant people.



Around the first circle of four founders, which is responsible for managing and coordinating the association, the members (around 20 people) form a second circle sharing and putting into practice common values for personal development and for sustainable rural development. The association is finally based on a third influential circle, which is much wider, comprising many local actors with whom it works to put these aims into practice. The SPES association (“Hope” in Latin) is in particular seeking to favour cooperation, responsibility and fairness. This has led it to play the role of “catalyst of local partnerships” and to become a member of a LEADER II group.

Population of the area: 56 587 inhab.

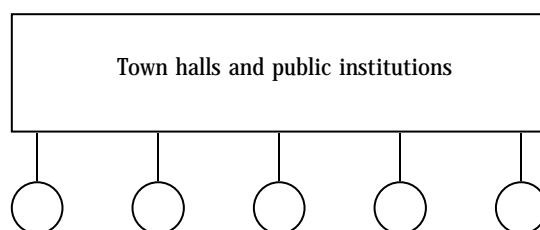
Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: about 20 people

Legal nature of the management structure: association

SWEDEN

National level

Model for forming small local groups to make up for the lack of public institutions.



The very low population density in Swedish rural areas, combined with the grouping together of many communes, has steadily created a decline in “nearby” public services. To make up for this, local development groups have been set up in Swedish rural areas. In 1996, there were 3500 of them, comprising 70 000 mainly voluntary people. In the villages, these groups play the role of representative, even that of a pressure group, to town councils, in particular when public funds are being allocated or a project’s impact is being evaluated. The groups organise very different activities, favouring cultural activities and services for the community. There are many groups which directly manage development projects (these projects represented ECU 43 million in 1995).

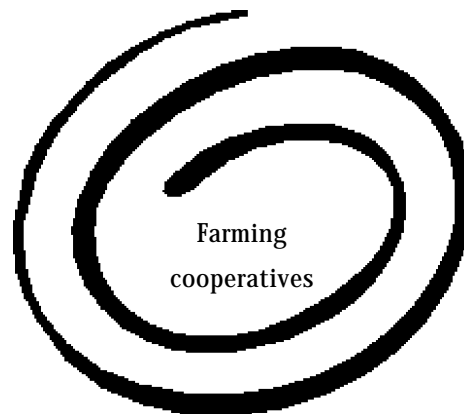
Population of the area: approx. 2 000 000 Swedes live in areas classed as “rural”.

Number of people and/or organisations involved: 3500 “local groups” (70 000 people)
Town halls and public institutions

IRELAND

Cavan-Monaghan LAG

Local partnership model started up by representatives of the main local activity (farming) and then expanded to the other economic sectors.



In a region which is very agricultural but which today must seek development alternatives, the farming cooperatives are practically the only local structures which have a sufficient institutional and financial basis to engage in a process of local development. They therefore make up the nucleus of a LEADER local partnership and, through this, have been led to gradually open up to other sectors, in particular by creating various associations which have subsequently become members of the LAG.

Population of the area: 106 000 inhab.

Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 16 constituent organisations

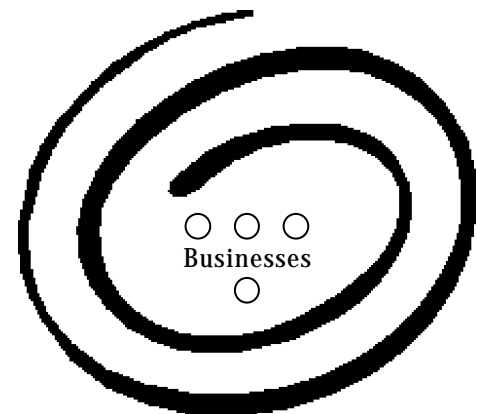
Legal nature of the management structure: cooperative

Farming cooperatives

ITALY

Gargano LAG (Apulia)

Partnership model comprising local businesses, formed as a result of a mistrust of associations and authorities.



In an area where trust in the public institutions and associations is limited, several local private companies have taken charge of a LEADER group and have successfully managed to gradually rebuild a local partnership between the private and public sector through the installation of several specific structures, notably an organisation for economic advancement.

Population of the area: 17 132 inhab.

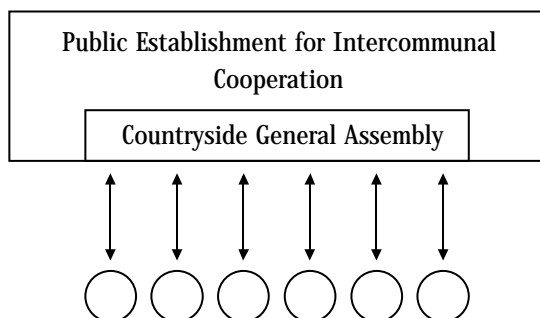
Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 11 collective structures (including 2 communes)

Legal nature of the management structure: cooperative

FRANCE

Collombey-les-Belles (Lorraine)

Partnership model resulting from a large mobilisation of the population. Numerous working parties supported by a “countryside assembly” share the decision-making with the elected representatives.



In an area where the living strength is sucked up by the nearby urban centres, a group of people and representatives has managed to recreate mobilisation for local development through the formation of a “Public Establishment for Intercommunal Cooperation”, based on around thirty sectoral working parties. The delegates from these working parties have the opportunity to take part in the decision-making, together with the elected representatives, within a “Countryside General Assembly”. The plan of action seems to be effective since a high percentage of the population is currently involved in the approach.

Population of the area: 6 500 inhab.

Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 300 to 500 people with various functions

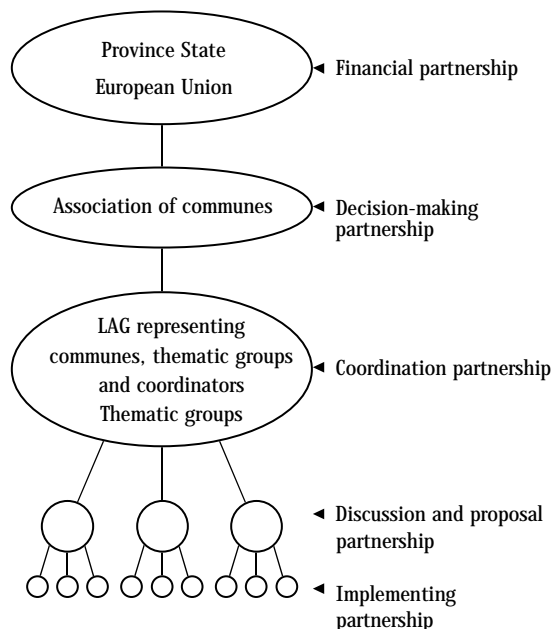
Legal nature of the management structure: (PEIC)
Public Establishment for Intercommunal Cooperation

(Public Establishment for Intercommunal Cooperation Countryside General Assembly)

ITALY

Vinschgau/Val Venosta LAG (Trentino-Alto-Adige)

Multiple partnership model enabling collective work while highlighting the legitimacy of each task.



In this region which has, for 50 years, benefited from an independent status and, as a result, from significant financial resources, the provincial authorities wanted to renew their interventions to promote rural society, which were traditionally limited to farming and the infrastructures. They have based this on a grouping together of communes which has led to a local, original partnership being formed which is effective on several levels: the proposal functions are assured by thematic groups representing inter alia the project holders, the decision-making functions are under the responsibility of the LAG, the funding functions are under the aegis of the LAG and the task of implementing the project is the responsibility of the beneficiaries. Thanks to a specific methodology based on the development of new markets and training, this structure enables a series of actions to be launched based on cooperation between the actors, in a context which initially did not lend itself to this (individualism of the population).

Population of the area: 31 116 inhab.

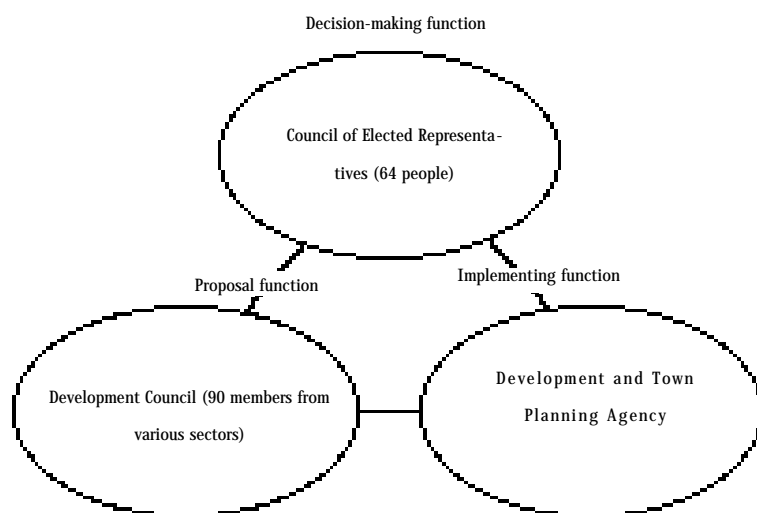
Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: 5 thematic groups

Legal nature of the management structure: association of communes

FRANCE

Basque Country (Aquitaine)

Partnership model based on a structuring of the different functions.



Mobilising the local actors for local development has already been in practice for more than 20 years in the various areas of the Basque Country, in particular in the Pays de Soule LEADER 1 area. That is why the local partnership which is being set up throughout the French Basque Country is the result of a very long process during which the various local authorities, the holders of the financial means, the professional circles and other local actors have got to know one another and have explored the best ways of cooperating and participating together in the interests of everyone. A local partnership has thus been set up separating and effectively structuring the proposal functions (assured by a “Development Council” with 90 members from various sectors), the decision-making functions (carried out by a council comprising the 64 elected mayors, general councillors, etc. - from the area) and the implementing function (carried out by a development and town planning agency).

Population of the area: 240 000 inhab.

Number of people and/or organisations involved within the partnership: around 100 (including 64 communes)

Legal nature of the management structure:
Public institution

These 9 models are but a very small sampling of the diversity of local partnerships in European Union rural areas. They do, however, bring to the fore the following initial conclusions:

- to each territory and each phase of its development corresponds a particular context involving specific constraints and needs calling for a certain type of local partnership;
- there therefore exists an infinite number of local partnership models, probably at least as many as there are different contexts;
- generally speaking, a distinction should be made between:
 - > the contexts which require a partnership following a *mobilisation logic* (this means, for example, reconciling parties in conflict, making up for certain shortcomings in the institutions, refocusing the local energy on the area, etc. In fact this means creating local partnership practices from scratch);
 - > the contexts which require a partnership following a *structuring logic* (the institutions are strong, the partnership practices are old; above all, the problem is one of structuring the different functions and sectors).

2.1.3 A decisive problem as anchoring point

The problems that need to be confronted in order to guarantee the revival or intensification of an area's development are multiple and very different. There is, however, a key problem facing each area, which is more important than the others, and which will form the starting point and the principal objective of a local partnership.

This key problem corresponds to an element which slows down, limits, and in some cases even blocks all the development processes. This is a problem which affects the local community in its essence, a “**lock on development**”, whose necessary resolution will result in a local partnership being created.

Among these “locks on development”, it is worth mentioning:

- those linked to **geographical or physical matters** (very low population density; periurbanity or, on the contrary, remoteness from the main centres, deterioration of the environment, etc.);
- those linked to the **existence of very strong pressure groups**, representing economic or institutional interests which impose a balance of power making it difficult to express the collective interest;
- those linked to a **negative experience** which has greatly affected the collective memory and is reflected by a social rift, either between social groups or politico-cultural groups or between the community and the institutions;
- those linked on the contrary to a “**social vacuum**” or an “**initiative vacuum**” because of a recent end to a dictatorship or a heavily hierarchical society which has impeded the construction of social links, or even because the area has experienced such a tremendous rural exodus that the only remaining population is the older generation;

- those linked to **matters of a cultural nature** which may be very different: e.g. heavy individualism causing a loss of interest in the local partnership; on the contrary, the collective will to highlight a strong cultural identity.

Depending on the situation, each area may be faced with one or several of these problems, but most of the time there is always one which is more decisive, which is going to constitute the **anchoring point of the local partnership**: the problem which appears to be relatively the most serious is tackled.

When there is no problem which gravely affects the area, the mobilisation of actors and the population will focus more on searching for a better quality of life and human relations. In many cases like this, however, there is a danger of only having opportunist partnerships managing a budget.

In a very general way, the classification of European regions for the purposes of cohesion reflects the diversity of the development problems and in many cases enables the objective, indeed the types of partnership to be created, to be identified:

- in the Objective 1 regions (“lagging behind in development”), it is more a question of encouraging initiatives and taking advantage of human potential;
- in the Objective 5b areas (“fragile rural areas”), the initiatives are generally already firmly in place. What is needed in most cases is to consolidate them, redirect them or restructure them for a better local development;
- in the Objective 6 areas (“Nordic areas with a very low population density”), the main problem is the dispersion of actors and services.

2.1.4 Finding a bypass strategy

Local partnerships provide a solution to the main lock on the area's development, but in most cases this is not a direct, head-on solution: the partnership will instead seek to "get round the problem", to turn it into a lever, an innovative opportunity, a booster for development. For example,

- in a context of periurbanity, emphasis will be on the human potential that has specifically enabled the nearby urban pole to develop. There will be an attempt to set up an extremely mobilising and motivating partnership for the local actors by creating, for example, structures to share decision-making powers (**the case of Collombey-les-Belles**);
- the mistrust towards public institutions and associations will be turned into an opportunity to create an original local partnership, at the initiative of private businesses, that ensures the coordination of development (**the case of Gargano**);
- if the area is suffering from a lack of initiatives, this will be specifically highlighted in order to create a broad structure for coordinating local development, bringing together a large number of people and local actors (**the case of Rota do Guadiana**);
- in the case of an area which is experiencing a serious conflict between politico-religious groups, a very open partnership will be set up with a view to involving and bringing together the various community representatives and local authorities within the same structure. It is then a powerful mobilising and social cohesion factor (**the case of Fermanagh in Northern Ireland**);
- extremely low population density, which does not enable the municipalities to guarantee a good level of public services at an acceptable cost, becomes an opportunity for very active local partnerships to be formed (**the case of Sweden**).

In other cases, the lever constituted by the original problem is not easy to identify. An opportunity is then sought elsewhere within a different problem: one that does not, once again, have to be tackled head on. Thus, in **Vinschgau/Val Venosta**, the wish of the provincial authorities to renew actions in favour of rural society has become an opportunity to create an independently coordinated area enabling the promotion of a whole series of partnerships between local actors, eventual holders of new forms of power-sharing.

2.2 Building one's partnership

2.2.1 Funding as a trigger element

The LEADER Community Initiative has played a key role in strengthening or setting up joint working authorities. Two situations are possible depending on the degree of preparation of the local groups:

- either there already existed before LEADER a discussion and maturing process, with the result that the Initiative is an opportunity to give concrete expression to the ideas and assumptions elaborated, and to formalise a local partnership. From the start, a partnership for coordinating development takes shape and in a way, LEADER plays the role of revealing the potential;
- or this process did not exist and LEADER leads to the creation of a partnership. In this case, it will most often be a management partnership, which may or may not evolve towards a partnership for coordinating development. If it does not evolve, it will disappear along with LEADER; at best, it will become a pool of knowledge and skills.

2.2.2 A few principles and rules of operation to move forward Starting conditions for consolidating an action

The necessary adaptation of the partnership to the needs of the development action is an opportunity to first specify the **starting conditions**, without which it is doubtful that a local partnership can be created:

- **realism** - the objectives and deadlines for completion set by the partners must always be credible;
- **pragmatism** - the partnership is seeking responses to clearly identified needs, for which tangible and rapid results are expected, even if this means discovering other opportunities and the importance of longer-term debate;
- **relevance** - a tool at the service of the action, the partnership must make it possible to move forward, break deadlocks and create acceptable solutions;
- **sharing a common vision of the area**, which, of course, will be enriched as the development project progresses.

The partnership which is built little by little on concrete concerns ensures the advance of a development action. It gives it a boost and enables it to be gradually consolidated through the discovery of its **true foundations**, which, apart from the simple implementation of micro-economic projects, are generally:

- **the creative enrichment and innovative capacity** that allows multi-sectoral dialogue between the social groups;
- **the support of a favourable social environment and the discovery of solidarities** which are created from a modification of behaviours and the promotion of a renewed identity, open to the outside and to the future;
- **anticipation and the strategic debate**, which give a feeling of security and enable the partnership to be better positioned in a competitive context;
- in short, the **awareness of a common good**, which unites people in the area in which they live through specific interests. Evidently, the consumption of a financial budget and the assembly of certain selected projects are then no more than a stage or a mere opportunity when such an awareness was attained through the partnership approach.

Rules of operation giving concrete expression to a “small steps policy”

The inter-relation between the partnership action and the development action that it must promote also implies observance of a **set of operating rules**. However, it should not be forgotten that these “rules of the game” draw their source as much from the capacity of the individual partners to manage human relations as from the basic principles of any social communication. That is to say that these few rules are only very ideal markers and that what is important is the way in which they are applied.

In this respect, the partnership is a “small steps policy” and one of “mutual recognition” based on:

- **openness and flexibility** allowing the greatest number of people possible to take part in the approach and to guarantee the diversity necessary for creativity and innovation;
- **listening, respect and confidence**, in order to overcome the surface opposition, integrate the different points of view and reach agreements rather than vague consensus;
- **mutual understanding**, which makes it possible to discover what the various partners know how to do and can do, recognise one's own skills and quickly find the best way of organising oneself and sharing responsibilities when faced with a given situation;
- **understanding of and adaptation** to the needs of the different social groups which give a human reality to the area, in order to motivate, mobilise and make the entire population responsible;
- **transparency and the concern to communicate**, so that everyone may be part of the action and so that mentalities change;
- **the personal and social calling into question** of each partner, his role, function and action, in order to generate support and commitment;
- **a necessary strong boost**, usually given by a limited core of people, guaranteeing the cohesion of the project as a whole and preventing the sprinkling of actions.

These rules must eventually lead to a new division of responsibilities, which takes full advantage of each person's recognised or discovered abilities.

It is easy to understand that building a partnership is initially a rather fragile learning process because there is no room for error.

It is also seen that there is always a **phase of assertion** where the founder members, a strongly unified group, seek to assert their abilities and their will to earn recognition from the other actors.

Chapter 3

Optimising the results

Optimising the results

3.1 Factors for assessing the results

3.1.1 The quality of the partnership's action

The first result lies with the local partnership itself, i.e. the **quality** of its action, which will guarantee its **vitality** and the ability to be a **tool for coordinating** the area's development. This quality can be assessed at three levels:

1) local partnerships as an instrument to rally members of the community and to achieve social cohesion - in most cases, partnerships are evolving towards enlargement. They gradually bring together representatives from other sectors of local society around common interests, bridging ideological or social divides. **This still constitutes an innovation in rural society.** The nature of the initiators will remain a very decisive factor in the direction taken and the results obtained:

- in partnerships started up by individuals, the aim is to expand the action by using all of the area's "living strength". The representatives of the various sectors of activity are then only one of the components involved in a partnership extended to all sections of the population, including those which are traditionally excluded from debates and decisions (retired people, women, the underprivileged, etc.). Through its flexibility, this type of partnership allows a great diversity of status and opinions as well as total freedom to participate. Technical, economic, territorial and social solidarities are then discovered;
- in partnerships started up by undertakings or organisations of an economic or professional nature, the exhaustion of a sectoral partnership focused solely on the carrying out of mainly economic projects signals the need for a strategic enlargement at area level to guarantee the durability of the dynamic. The problem of enlarging the partnership is then a different one: should it be extended to people or organisations? Should it be enlarged to make it more effective or rather aim at a better geographical representation? In some cases, the business partnership leads to the formation of other groups,

which are gradually integrated in the original partnership, allowing it to diversify its activities and become better established in the area. The original partnership does not necessarily change its structure but is obliged to go beyond its initial interest;

- in the case of partnerships started up by public authorities, even though the procedure (LEADER, etc.) is temporary, it may be an opportunity for the relationship between the population and its political or professional representatives to evolve towards decision-sharing;
- in all cases, **any enlargement of the partnership is based on a representativeness effectively recognised by the local actors and not simply on formal representativeness, which is too often of an institutional nature only;**

2) local partnerships as an instrument of dialogue and decision-sharing - the enlargement of the local partnership is in principle a first step towards formally sharing decision-making power, even though this novel approach should be carefully considered: the formal management of local partnerships is often controlled by certain types of partners, particularly in a large number of Member States, the local authorities. In fact, the genuine sharing of decision-making power between actors from an area is always the result of a particular situation where this power is granted by the party that holds it.

But more than in terms of sharing decision-making powers, the problem is one of dialogue between the area's actors. In order to promote this dialogue, the local partners are often organised into working committees by theme and/or by geographical sector, enabling a large number of actors to be mobilised in collective discussion. The dialogue reaches a high level of quality as soon as it is no longer based on a logic of sharing resources but on elaborating a common action plan that, moreover, is not limited to the mere juxtaposition of proposals drawn up by the various working committees.

3) partnerships as an instrument to implement local development - the effectiveness of the local partnership in terms of development is essentially based on three conditions:

- its legitimacy as the area's "development agency" (acquiring legitimacy enables "protection" from any calling into question by the formal or informal authorities on the ground);
- its recognition by the local actors as an instrument of action for local development (this recognition is acquired through practice and the results obtained);
- its ability to act (this depends above all on the diversity of the actors in the local partnership).

3.1.2 Transformation of practices and opening-up to innovation

- **The partnership favours a better mutual understanding between the area's actors.**

As a result, it controls relations between the groups, people and the institutions, gradually substituting relationships built on trust and cooperation for balances of power based on narrow interests.

- **The partnership can also create and, in particular, strengthen the identity and recognition of a collective project at area level.**

As a result, it will be possible to mobilise and bring together the area's actors and unite them in projects, and a social innovation dynamic or productive invention dynamic allowing new comparative advantages to be found will also be possible.

- **Departing from traditional types of representation, the partnership introduces specific forms of democracy at the base, thus enabling a greater involvement of actors in the debate and action.**

The decisions relating to planning and infrastructures can then be discussed by the population, and a comparison of the criteria and points of view enables the long term to be better accounted for. In this sense, the partnership actively participates in the management of the use of space and in the rational use of finite natural resources.

Hence, coming together to preserve the common good of an area, adopting collective working practices and aiming for a sustainable development are testimony of the acquisition of a partnership culture.

3.2 Guiding, supporting and boosting the partnership

3.2.1 The needs updated

The partnership dynamic evolves according to the stages of development whose successful completion it ensures through the mobilisation of the different actors and their gradual integration.

It thus plays a big part in the inclusion and positive utilisation of diversity, in the joint elaboration of a local perception of the area's problems, in the collective elaboration of the most widely acceptable solutions and finally in this radical modification of behaviours which transforms actors into partners and competitors into associates.

Such an evolution is evidently not easy and involves the use of "tools" able to accelerate it, amplify it and expand it to the different levels of the partnership.

That is to say that **coordination, information and training**, generally cited as decisive supports of the development action, apply as a matter of priority to the partnership by actually covering two sets of needs:

- Reinforcement of **the internal functioning** of the various partnership levels;
- Expansion and spreading of **the partnership's external influence**.

On the first point, coordination, training and information help to manage the oppositions, conflicts and the refusals resulting from the creation of a triple tension:

- **tension between different interests**, which causes different actors to adopt contradictory positions. Besides merely resolving personal disagreements, coordination must strip away easy consensus to reveal the underlying contradictions, and to look beyond those contradictions to find deeper meaning in the activity of each individual in order that new understanding may lead to closer ties and integration;

- **tension between pressure for quick results and the need to stand back.** The push for visible results encourages constant focus on the short term and a superficial approach to genuine problems; more forward-looking vision means taking into account a growing complexity and leads to actions which tackle sectoral action on a broad front or transform it radically. Coordination and training in local development can resolve this type of tension;
- **tension between the dynamic of a particular project inevitably run by the interested parties alone and the formulation of an area-based strategy involving a whole range of actors** in setting up the structural elements of sustainable development.

On the second point - the partnership's external influence - training, coordination and communication help find solutions for two types of needs:

- **appropriation of the work by the partners** - The fact that the partners formally belong to the local partnership in no way means that they actively participate in it, nor that they take over its activities and results. In the case of individuals, for example, while formal members of the local partnership, they may be absent or not regularly attend the activities organised by the partnership and therefore not be very informed. In the case of institutional partners, operators who are not really representative of these institutions may be the ones who participate or there may be a constant turnover of these people, making the appropriation of the action by the institutions concerned difficult or even impossible. The local partnership must therefore introduce mechanisms to avoid these pitfalls;
- **enlargement of the partnership base** - More than a mere necessity, this is the very expression of the evolution of local partnerships. Without this enlargement, the partnership would in the end no longer be a local partnership and only represent the interests of certain groups or individuals. This, however, does not mean that such an enlargement is permanent: analysis of experiences shows that it occurs at certain specific moments of the partnership's history, corresponding to phases of maturity when the enlargement appears as a necessity, or when the opportunity to do so arises. The enlargement can be either formal or informal. Informal partnerships are particularly useful as intermediary stages of a gradual process of enlargement.

3.2.2 Ways to satisfy these needs and shortcomings

The continual intrusion of the stages of development in the creation, construction and evolution of the partnership means that the same tools used to support the development action can be used for the partnership.

Thus the coordination of the partnership action and the training of the partnership's members are an integral part of the method and the communication.

Central role of coordination

It should not be forgotten that many LEADER areas are in difficulty, particularly because of a destructuring of their social environment (exodus, ageing, social rift, imbalance in the skills offered, etc.).

Consequently, "global coordination", in the sense that it is going to apply to a large number of target groups which are either already formed or are to be formed, seeks to:

- encourage ideas and turn them into projects;
- favour encounters between people, dialogue between sectors, the exchange of know-how and the use of skills.

Coordination is in fact the partnership's educational tool.

The action referred to here, which is different from technical support and advice, is given little recognition because its effects are only tangible in the long run. However, it is part of a strategic need since it is through the global coordination of the area and of its partnership teams that development will "take off", enabling the local actors to get going. That is why this immaterial investment, coordination, should be given an importance equal to that accorded to other investments.

The importance of an enlarged concept of local development training

This type of training incorporates the conventional stages of professional training (which aims at an individual acquiring, strengthening, updating and extending technical skills) in a broader approach which:

- takes into account all the individual's problems. Not only will there be an attempt to increase his skills but also to adapt them to his specific project whose implementation will be part of the training. In some countries this is referred to as “**training-action**”;
- inserts the individual into a group and an area because the project concerned depends on a professional dynamic of linkage and support (or even participation) of a social, cultural, identity-based environment that will try to be created and strengthened. This is then referred to as “**training-development**”.

In other words, in the case of training-action, the training is concerned with and **adapted** to an actual **economic project** that is already known; through this training the qualifications and the acquisitions needed by the **project holders** and the economic actors exclusively concerned by the project can be inserted.

In the case of training-development, the training applies to a **collective development project**, a notion that is broader than the previous one, since the **social** and **identity-based** aspects are also taken into account. The scope of action is then **larger** and the public **wider** since the concern is then with all the **direct and indirect partners** whose involvement is necessary to develop a network, a sector, an area and to provide an environment favourable to initiatives.

It is through and around these two sides to the same coin (coordination and training) that **information** and **communication**, two notions that are all too often confused, can then intervene:

- information has an internal purpose, that of “knowing” (technical). It helps bring a group up to par and contributes to the training;
- communication has an external purpose, that of “making known” (advertising, promotion, image). It is part of the coordinating and serves to create consensus and ensure that the specific work done by a few becomes the work of all. It contributes to the enlargement of the partnership groups and the diffusion of their action.

Chapter 4

The partnership matures

The partnership matures

4.1 Durability of partnerships and the point of no return

Local partnerships are not an end in themselves; their *raison d'être* lies in their capacity to transform social relations, ways of thinking and behaviour and to be an instrument of innovation and development.

The durability of local partnerships depends first and foremost on their capacity to produce tangible results for actors in the area. This calls for a degree of continuity in their strategy.

Analysis of local partnership practice under LEADER shows that, despite the relative “youth” of the Community Initiative, many LAGs have already had to tackle the problem of keeping their local partnership going, especially during the transition from LEADER I to LEADER II (1995). At the time, they devised and implemented a variety of solutions to deal with the problem.

4.1.1 The prerequisites of durability

The durability of local partnerships depends firstly on their capacity to secure the support of local actors and create social cohesion.

Durability depends on the capacity to bring together and secure the support and active participation - or at least the recognition - of the area's various social groups and forces, whether these be elected representatives or other manifestations of authority/interests, not to mention the most disadvantaged elements of society. *In the case of Rota do Guadiana, for instance, special working committees, including young people, women and the poorest families, were set up within the local partnership.*

Durability lies also in the capacity to bridge socio-political, personal, etc. divides and find common ground for action.

If local forces, representatives of social groups, and institutions in general are to bring real cohesion and durability, **each one of them must be able to play a full part within the local partnership.**

In many cases this results in specific organisational arrangements:

- in *Cavan-Monaghan* (Ireland), a Strategy Group has been set up which comprises the various agencies operating in the area. The Group meets once a month;
- in *Alentejo Centro* (Portugal), a similar structure (Strategic Discussion Council) has been set up which comprises representatives of the development coordination partnership and of the local 'authorities'. The Council meets regularly to air points of view and determine strategy (see the *Innovative Actions of Rural Development Directory*);
- in *Eisenwurzen* (Austria), alongside the coordination partnership proper, run by a lightweight structure of motivated actors trained for the task, a representational partnership has been set up which includes various forms of local 'authority' (elected representatives, local chambers, unions, etc.).

Durability also means knowing how to manage divergent interests positively and to find common points and new areas of solidarity which can be turned to practical use.

There are many difficulties in mobilising local forces: conflicts, tensions and divergent interests will all have to be dealt with.

What matters, then, is to open up new prospects leading to **concrete projects** in which everyone can find a place on the basis of shared or complementary interests. New forms of solidarity will then arise which will bring durability to the partnership.

In all the cases studied, **it was truly through planning and implementing concrete projects that the partners gradually saw the value of working together. From this discovery stems the desire to carry on, to perpetuate the local partnership.**

Durability then involves the capacity to mobilise local actors around new objectives.

It is often difficult to mobilise over a long period; a certain fatigue eventually tends to set in. Motivation has to be sustained by expanding and replenishing the pool of actors actively involved in the partnership. Some local partnerships manage to mobilise a large number of actors even after many years, as in **Collombey-les-Belles** where 500 people are still mobilised after 15 to 20 years of local participation. A certain mass has to be achieved which creates its own momentum. Such expansion and/or ongoing replenishment relies on actors deriving some personal satisfaction or enrichment from their involvement in the local partnership. This calls for a genuine sharing of responsibility and participation in decision-making - key elements of any partnership.

Durability is the capacity to reach out, not to create a vacuum.

Another pitfall is the temptation to centralise all activity within the coordinating partnership itself. The result may then be that coordination has quite the opposite effect to that intended: instead of acting as a catalyst, the partnership ends up absorbing everything and existing in a vacuum.

This will weaken a local partnership, as only a limited number of actors will be mobilised and there will be little scope for replenishing the coordinating team.

Many local partnerships, aware of this risk, are geared resolutely towards 'reaching out' and creating new core structures:

- *the function of the **SPES** association in Austria is to generate partnerships;*
- *in **Vinschgau/Val Venosta**, the local partnership set up under **LEADER** gears its activity towards developing a whole series of sectoral/intersectoral local groups around concrete projects.*

Methods of coordinating local partnerships need to be continuously revised.

The type of local partnership and coordination best suited to an area's needs will change along with that area's particular circumstances. The functions, procedures and methods of the local partnership/coordination need to be continuously reassessed and adapted as the area enters new phases of social, economic, cultural development.

A rural area hindered by a lack of local initiatives, for instance, needs coordination geared primarily towards mobilising local actors. After a few years, however, it is often helpful to move away from this type of coordination towards one focused more on exploiting economic opportunities, failing which the mobilisation of the early years may wither on the vine.

This is without doubt one of the most delicate aspects of local partnerships. The capacity of the founders to find the right methods to build the local partnership is often as remarkable as their capacity to relativise these methods in relation to the specific situation toward which the area is evolving is in general weak, if not nonexistent: often, certain initiators of local partnerships will look upon the methods they have formulated, tested and refined over the years as universal principles to be applied in all circumstances, quite failing to see their contextual limitations.

It is important to **be able to evaluate and reassess continuously**. Ongoing evaluation goes a step beyond the usual approach: it is a question not of assessing results on the basis of quantitative indicators but of evaluating the quality of coordination strategy in its local context.

4.1.2 The point of no return

The durability of local partnerships depends also on durability of means, not least financial.

What happens to a local partnership once its one-off public funding, through a programme such as **LEADER**, is no longer available?

In the case of a simple management partnership, in which neither the leaders of the local partnership nor the local actors see any point in coordination work at area level, the partnership will wind up of its own accord once the money runs out. Some local partnerships simply broke off their activity once the **LEADER I** funds were spent.

The first step towards ensuring durability of means is awareness of the need to coordinate the area's development. Awareness can come about at two levels:

- **in the coordinators themselves.** They are sufficiently aware of the importance of their work not merely to invest their own efforts in it and achieve the highest quality, but even, in some cases, to be motivated to carry on when things get tough;

- **in the local actors** (local authorities, private partners and beneficiaries) **and government agencies in charge of development.** Coordination can be considered a standard operating cost, even when the one-off financial support is no longer available.

In practice, **this awareness is often confined to the coordinators:** local authorities and private partners are generally in favour of coordination as long as the cost is met by a special procedure or programme (LEADER, etc.) but are unwilling to take over the funding once the programme has ended. To continue their work, local partnership coordinators sometimes find emergency solutions, or more often than not another programme. After LEADER I funding ended, many local partnerships took care of their own durability by developing other functions:

- *in Cavan-Monaghan, and elsewhere in Ireland, the local team ensured a continuity of activity between LEADER I and LEADER II by pursuing commercial activities connected with tourism (travel agency run by the LAG), and providing consultancy services in such areas as the preparation of business plans, training and the management of other programmes;*
- *in Italy, the Iblea (Sicily) LAG survived this period by turning itself into a business offering services and consulting to the local and provincial authorities for the elaboration of development strategies.*

A partnership's financial durability is ensured when coordination becomes a 'natural' function.

In order to persuade local actors and the development authorities to make coordination a 'natural' function whose costs are built into the partnership's budget, the specific value-added generated by the partnership and by coordination needs to be brought to the fore.

The key elements of such value-added include **the capacity to innovate** (see next section) but also **the capacity to be "proactive"** (and not just "reactive") in the development process.

But more even than value-added, a '**sense of the common good**' is a key element in making coordination seem a normal function of local partnerships.

Analysis of current practice shows clearly that such awareness exists in some areas: *in Vinschgau/Val Venosta, although the highly individualistic local culture does not lend itself particularly to partnership, there exists among the population a 'sense of the common good' which translates into a generalised and spontaneous respect for the beauty of the landscape and archi-*

ture, without any need for prompting from the authorities. This is of immense benefit for the durability of the local partnership.

Which brings us to the '**point of no return**': a local development coordination partnership has reached the point of no return when it not only seems an obvious necessity to the local actors and authorities, but has also been fully integrated into the local culture.

4.2 Gradually establishing an order of things

4.2.1 Development and local participation

As it evolves a partnership is obliged to tackle the question of decision-making and power.

A clarification of positions, however gradual, is essential, as conflicts can arise - privately or in the open - which drain a great deal of energy.

Overcoming the tensions this problem generates is a sure sign of durability and will carry a partnership beyond the point of no return.

There being no ready-made solution (and such a solution would in any event be simplistic), methodological discussion will take the heat out of the debate by clarifying the terms of the problem and the questions that need to be answered in order to produce a solution tailored to each particular case.

Aside from the inevitable personal conflicts, clashes generally grow out of disagreements as to the expediency, indeed legitimacy, of choices entailing allocation of funds with which some partners are not happy. For instance, those making the decisions may be highly tempted to sacrifice the long term to the pressure of the short term, to apply programmes and budgets as quickly and simply as possible to predominantly material investment (facilities and amenities) with instantly visible effects.

In addition, there may be conflicts of an ethical nature regarding the right to take decisions, this right being all too easily left with whoever holds the purse strings.

Division of powers is essential, for:

- it prevents an institution from being the judge in its own case, and leaves no doubt as to the powers and responsibilities of each individual;
- it establishes a multi-tiered system, preventing excessive pressure from interest or other groups during decision-making.

Division of powers is a guarantee of the proper functioning of local democracy, which lies at the heart of a dynamic partnership.

It is important also to legitimise these various powers, identify their different functions for development and come up with new types of interrelation to enhance the participation, effectiveness and responsibility of all those involved in the decision-making process.

4.2.2 Interrelation of functions and levels

Decision-making involves taking on board a range of opinions flowing from autonomous entities, i.e. each pursuing its own purposes.

Such opinions may help to answer **4 types of question**

- *What do we want to do? (what is desired?)*
- *What should we do? (what is desirable?)*
- *What can we do? (what is allowed?)*
- *What do we have to do? (what is inevitable?)*

operating at different **levels** of concern

- *the social and cultural level of wishes and needs (what is good/bad,?)*
- *the political level of duty (what is good/bad for the area and the common good?)*
- *the legal level of the law (what is permitted/prohibited?)*
- *the technical level of obligation/constraint (what can/cannot be done technically, economically, etc.?)*

and fulfilling **functions** underpinned by legitimised powers and necessary for development:

- *social function of mobilisation, discussion, proposals;*
- *political function of arbitration and choice;*
- *legal function of protection and guidance;*
- *technical function of appraisal, preparation, financing.*

In terms of its purpose and its utility, a partnership is put together, evolves and is sustained via this multiplicity of mediation, necessitating interrelations

- *between functions,*
- *between levels.*

The functions will interrelate within an organisational plan tailored to needs at the various stages of development and opening the door (see diagram) to:

- *discussion and proposals;*
- *validation and hierarchy;*
- *negotiation and decision;*
- *appraisal and financing;*
- *preparation and execution;*
- *monitoring and evaluation.*

Interrelation between levels should ensure:

- *effectiveness and guaranteed results;*
- *a hierarchy of values.*

Problems arise from the difficulty of effectively accommodating these various elements while **preventing one level encroaching on another or one function being flattened by the rest.**

POSSIBLE INTERRELATION OF FUNCTIONS



Conclusion

This document has shown that there exists a huge variety of partnerships and explained why this is so, be it for external reasons linked to local context, or internal reasons relating to the composition, focus or objectives of the partnership and the stage reached in local development.

We have looked at the logic of partnerships as well, but also at the prerequisites for setting them up and developing them towards that 'point of no return' which is reached when all the problems facing an area are taken on board; at forward planning and the strategic vision; and at the balanced management of short-, medium- and long-term needs.

Finally, once a partnership has matured, the question sooner or later arises of sharing responsibility: a successful partnership should not displace existing authorities but legitimise them by refocusing them on clear functions which interrelate both with one another and with the local community.

But partnerships, like the development they serve, are open-ended, and the debate is far from over. Three further questions, in particular, need to be answered:

- **How can pre-existing partnerships be taken positively into account under LEADER or another local development programme?**
- **How can a partnership system change or influence major investment decisions which structure the area and local society?**
- **How can a balance be struck between a partnership's need for sustainable resources to ensure its continuity and its need to draw upon local efforts, a token and sign of maturity and responsibility?**