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### Journal Item

How to cite:

High, Chris and Nemes, Gusztáv (2007). Social learning in LEADER: Exogenous, endogenous and hybrid evaluation in rural development. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 47(2) pp. 103–119.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© [not recorded]

Version: [not recorded]

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1111/j.1467-9523.2007.00430.x>

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# **Social learning in LEADER: Exogenous, endogenous and hybrid evaluation in rural development**

Chris High & Gusztáv Nemes

## **Abstract**

This paper considers the relationship between the centralised exogenous, institutions and the embedded, endogenous institutions of rural governance in Europe through an examination the evaluation procedures of the European LEADER programme. LEADER is presented in the literature as progressive in terms of innovation and stakeholder engagement. Yet while the planning and management of LEADER embraces heterogeneity and participation, programmatic evaluation is centralised and held at arms length from delivery organisations. The paper reviews previous efforts to improve evaluation in LEADER and considers alternative strategies for evaluation, contrasting LEADER practice with participatory evaluation methodologies in the wider international context. Can evaluation in itself be valuable as a mode of social learning and hence a driver for endogenous development in rural communities in Europe? The paper concludes by examining the challenges in producing a hybrid form of evaluation which accommodates endogenous and exogenous values.

## **Keywords**

LEADER, evaluation, social learning, multi-level governance, Europe, endogenous, rural development, participation.

## Evaluation and multi-level governance

The evaluation of rural development is concerned with establishing judgements on the effects and effectiveness of particular processes. While this can consist of broad studies of social and economic trends or of the wider effects of a policy, this paper concerns evaluation as a practice within the delivery of projects and programmes. This is not a particularly unusual focus; if one follows Moseley's (2003) conception of rural development as a deliberate process, then it is not such a leap to quickly turn to evaluation as the '*...evaluation of the programme*' (Moseley, 2003 pp. 194-5) or project. A project focus is reflected in the prevalence of definitions of evaluation in the literature such as "*...a periodic assessment of the relevant performance, efficiency and impact of the project in the context of its stated objectives*" (Casley & Kumar, 1988 p. 12); perhaps an indication of the strength of what Marsden & Sonnino (2005 p. 28) call the project state: "*An acceptance that the only way to govern is through setting up more and more competitively organised 'projects'.*"

In this context, evaluation concerns that formation of judgements about the course and impact of projects and programmes in respect of their goals, and is intended to improve future decision making and planning. The two main questions are "Will the project achieve its goals?", and "How might project performance be improved in relation to its goals?" Without getting too tied down in a discussion of the distinctions between monitoring, evaluation and assessment (Gosling & Edwards, 1995), it is worth noting that even in this goal-oriented form these are questions that might fruitfully be asked before or during a project, rather than merely at the end. In other words evaluation can be a concurrent process in the development and delivery of projects, and it is not only relevant during the latter stages of project management.

Note also that the questions point to something quite important that is not always recognised in practice - that if evaluation is an exercise in sense-making relative to

given goals, then it is fundamentally value-laden. That is, on the surface evaluation may seem to be about judgements of fact, but these are almost always intertwined with judgements of value (Checkland & Casar, 1986). As Robson (1993) puts it, evaluation is not so much a research strategy as a purpose. The methods, assumptions and values which underpin a particular exercise in evaluation, depend very much on the social and political context which has given rise to the need for judgements in the first place. Where multiple stakeholders are present, goals, purposes and understandings diverge. Even agreeing on the details of what has happened, never mind the consequences, is fraught with difficulties generated by differences in standpoint.

Divergence between standpoints is particularly significant in policy delivery in European rural development, because projects and programmes are delivered through multi-level governance; that is, a system of continuous negotiation among nested governmental and non-governmental actors at several territorial tiers (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Marks, 1993). This is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple stakeholders often with different definitions of the problem, working at different political levels (Murphy and Chataway 2005), and therefore a multiplicity of values and viewpoints become relevant. In the context of projects and programmes, it means that it cannot be assumed that values are aligned between and across levels. Any exercise in evaluation is likely to have political connotations, depending on the values and standards which it explicitly or implicitly measures against, and the nature of the evaluation process itself.

In theory, under multi-level governance the role of the state shifts from one of control to one of co-ordination, using new mechanisms to guide a plurality of network actors (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Stoker, 1998). This requires appropriate capacity within local territories, and governance relations that are supportive of subsidiarity and devolution. The danger is that centre-led projects can be disruptive of established economic and social relations (Beckman & Dissing, 2005), eroding cultural and natural values. There is

therefore often an ongoing tension between the formal institutions of the political centre and the needs and established ways of doing things in developing regions. Institutions here and through the rest of the paper refer to North's (1990) rules of the game, the social contracts that provide common ground for negotiating and enacting power and influence in social relationships. Critically, in North's view institutions should be seen as dynamic, and multi-level governance can thus be seen as the working out of intersecting institutional realities, as different interest and value systems are integrated or not.

The interplay between institutions at different levels of governance can be seen in Hungary for example, where accession to the European Union (EU) has led to a significant growth in the influence of civil society by inducing the state to involve NGOs and civil organisations in decision-making processes (Nemes et al, 2006). Yet EU requirements and deadlines made the reform process hurried and difficult, often impeding organic development of new governance systems. In Europe generally, while the delivery of much rural policy has shifted outside of direct state control, there has been a compensating increase in managerialist institutions of control such as formal targets, contracts and indicators of performance (see Ray, 2000b). Ray links these explicitly, arguing that devolution gives rise to managerialism as a result of the need of the centre to ensure quality in public service. The link is also alluded to by Robson (1993), who associates an agenda of accountability in public policy with a growth in the need for evaluation, as public bodies seek to demonstrate that the project they fund are well-managed and deliver satisfactory results.

The tensions between centralisation and devolution in multi-level governance, and the values they represent, are illuminated by Nemes' (2004) depiction of two distinct systems of rural development. The central administrative system is characterised in terms of formal institutions: written rules, established procedures and formally derived and explicitly stated aims, with an underlying logic that is modernist and technocratic,

and expressed through bureaucratic control. Under the logic of this system, the development of peripheral regions serves the interest of the political and economic centre by building access to local economies, and through the creation of a stable environment for overall economic development. The local heuristic system, on the other hand, is based on bottom-up processes. Its elements comprise local economic, political and social actors, social networks and kinship relations. The institutions of coordination are often tacit, and based in personal and cultural values as much as externally visible mechanisms. Local heuristic systems are therefore socially embedded and highly specific to context, oriented towards keeping the processes and benefits of development under local control.

Nemes' work is grounded in an extension of the academic and policy discourse on endogenous development (Bassand et al, 1986; Van der Ploeg et al, 2000), where endogenous refers to a process that arises from within. The notion of endogenous development has been promoted in contrast to more a 'modernist' idea of development: exogenous development, which is driven from without. In European research and policy discourse, the concept of endogenous development is closely aligned with a developmental ethic that shifts attention from sectoral to territorial logics of change (Ray, 1999b) and that focuses on the role of multi-functional agriculture within the wider rural economy and landscape (OECD, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

While endogenous and exogenous development can be considered as simple dualism, Nemes and others have pointed out the challenge is to find a synthesis (Lowe et al, 1995; Nemes, 2004; Ray, 2000a); a hybrid view that goes beyond both endogenous and exogenous views of development and keeps in sight the dynamic interplay between such processes. Ray's (2000a p. 4) synthesis is what he calls neo-endogenous development, "*...endogenous-based development in which extra-local factors are recognised and regarded as essential but which retains a belief in the potential of local areas to shape their future.*" Nemes analyses the synthesis in terms of integrated rural development,

by which he means the situation where the exogenous and endogenous institutions of rural development operate so as to reinforce one another rather than in opposition (Nemes, 2005; Nemes et al, 2006).

The significance of this for evaluation is that the different logics of development suggest different logics of evaluation, aligned with the needs of different rural development systems. The basic metaphor of much top-down, exogenous evaluation practice is one of measurement; based on the experimental methods of the natural sciences (Mtshali, 2000). This lends itself to an approach which emphasises financial and other quantitative metrics, though qualitative methods based on indicators are becoming more common (eg Baker & Schuler, 2004). Irrespective of the form the evaluation data takes, the basic underlying metaphor of communication and knowledge at work is that of information as a transferable commodity. This rests on a view of communication based in conceptions of coding, signalling and transfer - most clearly expressed by Shannon & Weaver (1949 cited in Richardson 2004). It entails a realist epistemology, conceiving information as an asset that can be passed around. Where questions about the facts of a matter arise, their resolution is a matter of interpretation that can be cleared up through reference to a shared external reality.

What exogenous evaluation conceals is that projects, programmes and other initiatives are sensitive to context. Different stakeholders are entrenched in power figurations with intertwining relations of dependency and accountability, making it difficult to argue for rational, value-free judgements on the effects of a project and the lessons that need to be carried forward, something that becomes even more difficult when the question of who the lessons are for is asked. This is most important in the case of evaluating social impact where understandings of impact are intrinsically socially constructed. Thus endogenous development is aligned with a logic of evaluation that is embedded and intersubjective, compatible with modes of knowing of the local heuristic system. Endogenous development is thus based within the ongoing interactions of social

beings in a particular context. The underlying metaphor is that of a dance (Krippendorff, 1993), where knowledge unfolds within ongoing, social relationships. The underlying epistemology is a constructivism that has been expressed in theoretical frameworks such as situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) and social learning (Finger & Verlaan, 1995; Ison et al, 2004; Keen et al, 2005; Leeuwis & Pyburn, 2002).

Thus considering the evaluation of rural development under multi-level governance potentially reveals much about the extent to which integrated rural development is being achieved. Furthermore, evaluation not only carries us into a territory which is theoretically very interesting but it also has profound practical consequences. Evaluation forms an important part of creating understandings about situations because it is an opportunity for different stakeholders to surface and negotiate judgements of fact and value. What is understood about a situation configures purposeful action within it and beyond it, and that in turn rests on *how* it is understood. In other words, it is not only important what we know about a situation, but how we know it. What is recognised as knowledge has profound social consequences, or as Scheurich (1997) puts it epistemology is ultimately political or ethical. In the following sections, this claim is grounded in a discussion of the LEADER programme; arguably a good example of integrated rural development, drawing together endogenous and exogenous resources and capacities in its design and delivery.

### **The LEADER programme**

LEADER is a strand of European Union rural development funding, which has promoted rural development in territories across Europe (Moseley, 2003). LEADER, an acronym derived from the French '*Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale*' - 'links between actions for the development of the rural economy', is a progressive programme in intent and execution; much admired and imitated for its



ability to deliver heterogeneous rural development plans which draw in multiple levels of governance in the service of local development priorities (Saraceno, 1999). Since 1991, it has promoted local development through funding programmes based on consultation with local and national bodies in each participating country. The initiative aims to provide the conditions for innovative rural development actions to emerge that emphasise the engagement of indigenous financial and cultural resources to produce sustainable development. The result is a set of programmes which are said to have a disproportionately high beneficial impact relative to the resources committed to them, and which address issues of social cohesion induced by other development approaches (Farrell & Thirion, 2005).

Thus LEADER represents a high point in the continued mainstreaming of participation and multi-level network governance within European policy and practice, in spite of the fact that there was not much indication of this in the earliest announcements and call for proposals that led to the establishment of LEADER I (Midmore, 1998). The initiative has attracted considerable academic attention, giving rise to a considerable body of work (Farrell & Thirion, 2005; Midmore, 1998; Moseley, 2003; Ray, 1997; 1998; 2001; Sociologia Ruralis, 2000). Although its current incarnation, LEADER+, finishes in 2006, it has been announced that the LEADER approach will form an important axis in all future rural development programmes, to comprise no less than 7% of total rural development funding (European Commission, 2004).

There are said to be seven primary features of the LEADER approach (AEIDL, 1999; Saraceno, 1999), namely that it:

- (i) is a locally based approach,
- (ii) is bottom up,
- (iii) incorporates the presence of a local action group, comprising local public agencies and/or local enterprises and/or by local residents,

- (iv) emphasises innovative actions,
- (v) is integrated rather than sectoral,
- (vi) builds connections through networking activities, and
- (vii) gives much freedom to local groups in terms of allocating spending.

Two features are worth highlighting here with respect to this paper. The first is the experimental nature of LEADER projects. The intention behind LEADER was to have:

*“...a kind of showcase for what we are trying to encourage on a larger scale in the mainstream rural development programmes; the emphasis of the new initiative (i.e. ‘LEADER Plus’) should therefore be on supporting pilot rural activities ...(it) must be a laboratory for rural development to encourage the emergence and testing of integrated and sustainable development approaches.”*

*EU Commissioner Franz Fischler, quoted in Mosely (2000 p. 111)*

Thus given that LEADER is supposed to be about learning from innovation, there is a clear argument for making opportunities to reflect on the progress and outcomes of individual LEADER projects a central part of the approach. Even while recognising that there *are* other opportunities for rural policy actors to learn from one another’s experiences of LEADER through the proportion of funding set aside for networking, Midmore (1998) makes a strong case for building evaluation processes into LEADER that incentivise learning within programmes and projects.

The second important feature of LEADER is its participatory nature. LEADER supports the engagement of local stakeholders in the formulation and delivery of programmes and projects, and it focuses on local resources and recognises different cultural and institutional contexts. This clearly marks LEADER as a member of a broad school of social and policy thinking linked to corresponding terms such as citizenship, participation, customer focus, governance and endogenous development. Each of these has its own extensive literature (High, 2002), and many of the same themes that

concern scholars of endogenous rural development have been discussed in the context of participatory development in Africa, Asia and Latin America (High et al, 2006). In Europe, many of the same themes are reprised in the literature on social learning, which has been defined in terms of collaborative knowing where sustainability is considered an emergent property of social processes (Ison et al, 2004). Social learning rests on three principles, namely that collaboration by individuals in the common interest is possible, that inclusive institutional platforms can be constructed to support collaboration, and that governance in this form requires alternative management and support arrangements to the mainstream of policy delivery. The approach emphasises the links between learning as a social process and participatory modes of governance.

The significance of the participatory nature of LEADER is that classically, participation highlights the tensions between local and external actors in development activities, challenging notions of power and control (Blackburn & Holland, 1998; Pretty et al, 1995; Webber, 1994). It is not that these tensions are not present in non-participatory forms of governance, but rather that the contradictions between endogenous and exogenous control is revealed by a focus on participation. Often a gap between aspirations and reality is highlighted within the literature, as in Bryden's (2000) observation that in practice any idea of a new rural policy in Europe trails well behind the rhetoric. For Nemes (2004), a central difficulty in endogenous development is the inability of the European centre to simultaneously enact its rhetoric on endogenous development and local participation, and also comply with its own rules on accountability and transparency for public spending. In another context, Ison et al (2004) observe the same phenomenon with the European Water Framework Directive, where they argue that formal institutions are a disabling factor for the social learning approach promoted by the directive.

The tensions between endogenous and exogenous development is particularly evident when programmatic performance across a spectrum of projects, localities and cultural

contexts becomes important. The success of participatory initiatives depends on localised particularities which may be suppressed by the structural institutions which hold wide-scale programmes together. In the case of LEADER, as it grows in importance and the scale of funding committed to it, there is considerable force behind demands for public accountability giving rise to the managerialist trends highlighted by Ray (2000b).

According to Saraceno (1999) there is a gap in the literature on endogenous development, which she says is strongest on development as a more or less spontaneous process and lacks sufficient material on how these observed characteristics may be turned into policy prescriptions which can then be implemented. In response it might be pointed out there is existing research related to these problems in the international development literature, and therefore a comparative review of work on neo-endogenous and participatory development with a focus on practice would be a timely task. It should also be said that 'policy prescriptions' is perhaps the wrong metaphor for the relationship between policy and endogenous development. This relationship is by no means straight-forward (see Rengasamy et al, 2001; Vorley, 2002), but perhaps seeing policy in terms of framing and resourcing development rather than driving it would be more productive.

In this sense, LEADER with its devolution of decision-making represents significant progress in the centralist facilitation of endogenous processes, perhaps because it enables an alignment of the interests of sub-national territories and the European Commission (Ray, 1999a). In terms of design and delivery at least, LEADER has a good claim to being a case of integrated rural development. However, a different story is revealed when considering how evaluation is institutionalised.

## Exogenous evaluation of LEADER

When LEADER was initially established, evaluation of any kind was weak (Midmore, 1998), and there was little pressure to co-ordinate LEADER programmes with other modes of funding rural development. This has changed as the LEADER approach has become more established within European rural policy, and there has been a growing institutionalisation of evaluation within the programme as a whole. Indeed it is clear from the European Commission's guidelines (2002) and associated documentation that an important political agenda behind this increased focus on evaluation is a political project to defend the position the LEADER provides value for money, compared to other sources of funding for rural development. This requires an overall narrative that describes what the programme as a whole has achieved. The result is that achieving a standardised, exogenous evaluation has become more important as the share of rural development resources channelled through devolved LEADER and LEADER-like approaches has increased. This link between devolution of decision making and centralisation of evaluation is explicit in the programme specific guidelines for LEADER:

*“Precisely because there has been a decentralization of decision making in favour of the local level, it is legitimate that providers of funding would want to know what has been achieved by each group aggregating evaluation information at regional, national or European levels. This, or any other information needs that may be established, requires common questions and issues that allow classification of responses into common categories which can then be compared. The issue is not so much to find appropriate indicators in this aggregation exercise, but rather, as with statistics, to find the appropriate and meaningful classificatory variables and categories of analysis to understand what has been accomplished.”*

*From “Guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes” (European Commission, 2002 p. 8)*

The primary framework for evaluation in LEADER is the European Commission guidelines on evaluation (European Commission, 1999) for all rural development initiatives supported through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. These state that:

*“Rural development evaluation must provide information on the implementation and impacts of the co-financed programmes. The aims are, on the one hand, to increase the accountability and transparency with regard to the legal and budget authorities and the public and, on the other hand, to improve the implementation of the programmes by contributing to informed planning and decisions concerning needs, delivery mechanisms and resource allocation.*

*From the introduction to “Guidelines to the evaluation of rural development programmes” (European Commission, 1999 p. 4)*

The regulations are intended to co-ordinate rural development across the EU, helping to relate aspects of development initiatives to the general objectives of rural development set at European level, and emphasise relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, utility and sustainability. The resulting form of evaluation is exogenous - constructed in terms of the needs of the centre for accountability and transparency. LEADER+ evaluation takes on the form of an audit, requiring objectivity and independence from operational management of programmes, something that has been noted in the values underpinning evaluation in many other contexts (Estrella, 2000).

The development of the evaluation guidelines for LEADER has not solely been a straightforward application of standard procedures. As Midmore (1998), Saraceno (1999) and others have pointed out, conventional European evaluation procedures (which tend to focus on standardised quantifiable measures) fail to measure much of the added value provided by the LEADER approach. Furthermore, there is a need to aggregating the

results of individual programmes and projects developed in response to very different local conditions:

*“To meet these needs, the information about the performance of individual programmes must be given in such a way that it allows for the aggregation of data from the local level upwards (a bottom-up procedure), a comparison between groups and the recognition of models of best practice.”*

*(AEIDL, 1999 p. 12)*

The challenges in evaluating LEADER are summarised by Saraceno (1999) as follows:

- (i) How to define and assess the distinctive features of LEADER separately?*
- (ii) How to relate these to development outcomes?*
- (iii) How to aggregate LEADER outcomes at national and European level?*
- (iv) How to produce relevant evaluation information for different governmental stakeholders?*

These challenge informed the work on LEADER evaluation by those associated with the LEADER II European Observatory, which focussed on developing a more qualitative approach that could nonetheless aggregate information across different programmatic and national implementations of LEADER. The result was a set of evaluation guidelines (European Commission, 2002) for LEADER+ that supplement the general guidelines to the evaluation of rural development programmes. This augments the required quantitative measures of performance with a qualitative evaluation tool in the form of a standard set of questions which an evaluator should investigate.

The resulting framework relates outcomes to the overall objectives of LEADER, and gives guidance on the formulation of programme-specific evaluation questions, depending on the features that individual LEADER+ programmes have emphasised. This meets the challenge of providing evidence for added value, and a starting point for aggregating data across regional and national boundaries. Thus the current evaluation

arrangements represent significant progress the Moseley's (2003) criteria for improved *ex-post* evaluative tools in rural development, by providing a capacity to capture the less tangible outcomes of development initiatives.

What the current guidelines do not do, however, is to meet another of Moseley's requirements for better evaluation. He suggests that effective evaluation should aim to build capacity amongst local actors, and thus becoming part of the development process, rather than outside of it. An important difficulty is that in line with good audit practice, exogenous evaluation of LEADER+ is carried out by external consultants. This provides a degree of independence to the results, but removes evaluation and the opportunities for learning and improvement that arise within it from local view. Is an exogenous form of evaluation the only one possible within the framework of the LEADER programme?

### **Endogenous evaluation**

Given the emphasis on endogenous development and the devolution of decision-making within LEADER, it seems a paradox that the institutional basis of programmatic evaluation is so exclusively exogenous. That is not to say that endogenous evaluation - evaluation based in local contexts and endogenous knowledge systems - does not occur. The existence and value of endogenous evaluation is sometimes recognised within the literature associated with LEADER (Midmore, 1998; Moseley, 2003; Saraceno, 1999), and it seems reasonable to assume that many local forms of social learning and evaluation go unrecognized, as Estrella (2000) notes elsewhere. However, even though there is a stated ambition not to preclude a "*bottom-up, integrated approach*" to evaluating the impact of LEADER+ in the guidelines (European Commission, 2002), the guidelines do not discuss endogenous evaluation in any detail, nor do anything to incentivise it.

This is a pity, because evaluation is potentially much more than an opportunity to demonstrate the value of an investment to exogenous funders of rural development. It



is also an opportunity to foster social learning within rural development, and to demonstrate integrity between the values of the programme and the practices which it institutionalises. These points are all taken up in the literature on evaluation. Moseley, for example, argues that an appropriate methodology for evaluation of rural development programmes needs to be strongly participatory: ‘...*involving the stakeholders to both achieve some learning and developmental spin-off*’ (Moseley, 2003 p. 198). Estrella (2000) suggests that good evaluation practice emphasises participation and learning, adding two other characteristics: negotiation and flexibility (both values that are present in the process of setting up a LEADER programme in a particular territory). For Patton, endogenous evaluation is an opportunity to highlight and build on local capacities and empower local project stakeholders, by avoiding “...*the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something done to people*” (Patton, 1990 p. 129). Failing to support endogenous evaluation gives a different message to the rest of the LEADER ethos, and further research into whether this undercuts the capacity-building element built into LEADER is therefore indicated.

It may be that the reason that endogenous evaluation does not play a more central role within the institutionalisation of evaluation in LEADER is a perception that it has no place within centrally supported rural development, or that it is too difficult to implement. However, outside of LEADER, there are well-established alternative traditions of evaluation that claim to involve:

*“...stakeholders and beneficiaries of a programme or project in the collective examination and assessment of that programme or project.[They are]...people centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation”*

*UNDP evaluation handbook (OESP, 1997 p. 8).*

This participatory style of evaluation harks back to the 1970s (Wadsworth, 2001), and seeks to appreciate and integrate the knowledge of both insiders and outsiders (Davis-Case, 1990) and professionals and beneficiaries (Wadsworth, 2001). The result is an increasing number of resources and toolboxes for practitioners interested in how to do participatory evaluation (Jackson & Kassam, 1998), and over 20 years of practical experience to draw on within the mainstream of development assistance organisations, including FAO, the world Bank and the Western donor agencies (Estrella, 2000).

The scholarship surrounding this form of evaluation and the wider developmental paradigm behind it is both broad and deep. There is encouraging evidence that participatory forms of development are no more expensive than exogenous ones (Jackson & Kassam, 1998), that participatory evaluation can be used to inform policy (Estrella, 2000), and that ultimately the process effects of participation and social learning are ultimately more persistent than the immediate products (Bunch & Lòpez, 1996). At the same time, there is a well-established tradition of critique and academic debate about the path participatory practice has taken as its application scales up (eg Cooke & Kothari, 2002; Hickey & Mohan, 2005). Some of these critiques are highly relevant, such as the finding that participatory processes can favour non-marginal groups where society is stratified (Gupte, 2003). An important conceptual traps to avoid is the assumption that an internal/external dichotomy of knowledge is the whole picture, when in fact much 'local knowledge' represents a complex mosaic of different standpoints (Goebel, 1998; Guijt & Kaul Shah, 1998).

In practice, a spectrum of engagement can be observed, from evaluation where efforts are made to include a wider range of stakeholders to evaluation that is led by lay stakeholders who take a substantive part in designing and enacting opportunities for project actors, funders and gatekeepers to learn about the project (Davis-Case, 1990; Wadsworth, 2001). The common thread is that endogenous knowledge is valued, and social learning is facilitated. Facilitation skills are therefore essential (Jackson &

Kassam, 1998), and a limitation on the capacity for exogenous agencies to provide an enabling environment for endogenous evaluation (or endogenous development in general) is that the professional skills and expertise that are required within many governmental agencies and organisations are often at odds with those required for endogenous development (Williams, 2002). Working in partnership across institutional boundaries requires a shift in emphasis from management to facilitation, and from 'expertise on top' to 'expertise on tap' (Chambers, 1997; Gibson, 1996; High, 2005).

In summary, endogenous evaluation occurs within LEADER, but the scale, nature and impact of it is not clear. There is no extant general review of evaluation practice across different European territories (notwithstanding partial examples such as Midmore, 1998, which is UK-centric), and research into the institutional frameworks of evaluation in different national contexts would be therefore timely. Even a partial review would provide an interesting laboratory in which to understand the mediating role that institutions can play between endogenous and exogenous logics of development.

By failing to institutionalise endogenous evaluation into the current LEADER+ evaluation arrangements, the evaluation process is out of step with the way that LEADER+ is planned and delivered. If this analysis is correct there is a missed opportunity to build local capacity for social learning, and Saraceno's (1999) challenges could be extended with the following two:

- (v) How to evaluate LEADER in a way that respects the diversity of local knowledge, in accordance with the aims and approach of the programme?
- (vi) How to institutionalise evaluation in LEADER, so as to build local capacity for social learning and rural development?

## **Conclusions: Towards a hybrid evaluation**

This paper has presented an overview of how evaluation is institutionalised within LEADER+ and examines the issues that arise when the purpose of evaluation is considered. On the one hand, evaluation serves to demonstrate whether or not public resources are being spent well and whether LEADER and related initiatives can be improved. Evaluation as a demonstration of public value clearly has a role to play, and through maintaining the political capital of the LEADER approach supports a proven successful approach to rural development that seems in many ways to embody integrated rural development. On the other hand evaluation potentially forms an important part of the value delivered by LEADER, if it can be done in such a way as to valorise local social resources (Ray, 1999c) and increase endogenous institutional capacity (Farrell & Thirion, 2005). Can this potential be realised within the overall institutionalisation of evaluation in LEADER? The current difficulty is that when it comes to evaluation, the institutional logic of LEADER+ appears to favour one institutional logic over the other. But need the current lack of articulation between endogenous and exogenous learning persist? Or is it that endogenous and exogenous development cannot be reconciled? It is the case that there are significant differences in the worldviews that support them, and therefore in the practices that they engender. But can some kind of accommodation between them can be constructed?

The interest in endogenous and participatory evaluation in other contexts seems to indicate that some kind of synthesis is tenable. If it is possible to evaluate federal programmes in the United States (Lawrenz & Huffman, 2003), and international UN (OESP, 1997) and World Bank (Baker & Schuler, 2004) projects using participatory approaches, then this suggests that at the very least it seems a good research topic for rural development in Europe. Or as Moseley (2003 p. 215) says, “*Just how to achieve those desiderata of the evaluation of local development while simultaneously helping*

*hard-nosed funding agencies to judge whether they have received value for money, is a question that could keep researchers busy for some time to come.”*

Rather than placing endogenous and exogenous evaluation in opposition, it may be more useful to consider evaluation in terms of the production of hybrid knowledge (Fraser & Lepofsky, 2004), where knowledge within participatory projects is considered in terms of the shared understanding that arises within the interactions facilitated within the project. Hybrid knowledge is negotiated and neither endogenous nor exogenous. Instead it arises at the interface between different institutional systems, mediated through brokers and boundary objects (Wenger, 1999). Given that hybridisation is achievable within the planning and management of LEADER, then perhaps it can be achieved within evaluation practice as well.

A hybrid evaluation would represent the extension of the neo-endogenous (Ray, 2000a) conception of integrated rural development (Nemes, 2005) to the practice of evaluation. It would require evaluation to be reconceived as concerned with the production of hybrid knowledge that is systemic and multi-layered. This would surely enrich LEADER evaluation as a whole, particularly if the difficulties of aggregation of participatory evaluation could be overcome. A hybrid evaluation would require attention be paid to the needs of different levels of governance, and the contradictions between the way that the values embedded at different scales and different contexts to be addressed. Given the depth of experience of multi-level governance within Europe, it is conceivable that a satisfactory hybrid between the current evaluation and more endogenously grounded approaches to evaluation could be institutionalised.

Achieving a hybrid evaluation requires work to reduce the contradictions between the current formal institutions of evaluation and the institutional settings out of which endogenous evaluation arise. It might also require a strengthening of the capacity for local evaluation and learning within LEADER, which would require the commitment of central resources to this area of management, just as happens with other management

functions in LEADER. But a rationale for this already exists in Saraceno's observation that:

*“The often-mentioned conflict between participatory self-evaluations at local level and external evaluations is greatly reduced when we enlarge the scope of the evaluation exercise to include all the stakeholders in the initiative, EU included. We found a great deal of complementarity between the different methods of evaluation. Those groups which voluntarily and periodically under-took evaluation exercises were also those that provided the best and most reliable information to external evaluators.”*

*(Saraceno, 1999)*

In other words, good endogenous evaluation feeds good exogenous evaluation. Surely institutionalising resources and incentives for endogenous evaluation is no more difficult than building in resources and incentives for endogenous planning and delivery. The additional resources required are defensible if the contribution to the quality of exogenous evaluation and to the endogenous institutional capacity that underpins the development processes itself can be demonstrated. Given LEADER's progressive profile, there is much reason for optimism that a hybrid evaluation system that reconciles endogenous and exogenous learning could become possible, and if it did, it would be a significant international model for others to follow.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge comments and suggestions from James Derounian, of the University of Gloucestershire.

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