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How to cite:

High, Chris and Nemes, Gusztav (2006). Evaluating LEADER: canonical, endogenous and systemic learning. In: The Rural Citizen: Governance, Culture and Wellbeing in the 21st Century, 5-7 Apr 2006, Plymouth, UK.

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# Evaluating LEADER : Canonical, endogenous and systemic learning

Chris High & Gusztáv Nemes

## Abstract

*In this paper, we touch on a key theme in rural governance - the reconciliation of centralised procedures and the embedded institutions of rural society - through the lens of the evaluation procedures embedded in the European LEADER programme. LEADER is in many ways a highly devolved European initiative, true to its origins as a progressive rural laboratory in terms of innovation, stakeholder engagement, social learning and systemic methodology for addressing rural needs. The design and operationalisation of national and local LEADER programmes and projects is tailored to local circumstances, and aims to direct LEADER funding to local needs while building the institutional and social capital that underpins successful rural development. Yet while the delivery of LEADER embraces heterogeneity, programmatic evaluation is centralised and learning at the national and local level is subservient to the need to defend the LEADER approach in Brussels. This requires evaluation to be held at arms length from delivery organisations, even though there is evidence that where local evaluative capacity is robust, centralised evaluation is enhanced.*

*This paper reviews progress to date on improving the canonical forms of evaluation employed in LEADER, based on cumulative feedback from previous iterations of the programme. We then consider alternative evaluation traditions that engage with endogenous capacity for sense-making, and the extent to which they might be taken up within LEADER. We conclude by proposing that more attention needs to be paid to institutionalisation of systemic evaluation within LEADER, which could engage with a much wider range of perspectives in rural development, across different scales of governance and national and regional contexts. This would require the reconciliation canonical and endogenous forms of evaluation, but would align LEADER evaluation with the values and methods embodied in the rest of the programme.*

## Keywords

LEADER, evaluation, multi-level governance, endogenous rural development

## 1. Evaluating rural development under multi-level governance

The evaluation of rural development is concerned with establishing judgements on the effects and effectiveness of particular development processes. This can consist of general studies of broad social and economic trends or of the wider effects of a policy, but in this

paper we are interested in looking at evaluation as a practice within the delivery of projects and programmes. This is not particularly unusual, as if one follows Moseley's (2003: 4) conception of rural development as, '*...deliberately induced, not naturally evolving,*' then any discussion of evaluation is likely to quickly turn to the '*...evaluation of the programme*' (ibid: 194-5). Nor is this is not an isolated example. It is widely reflected in many definitions with the broader evaluation literature, such as Casley and Kumar's (1988: 12) definition: "*...a periodic assessment of the relevant performance, efficiency and impact of the project in the context of its stated objectives*"; perhaps an indication of the strength of what Marsden & Sonnino (2005) call the project state: "*An acceptance that the only way to govern is through setting up more and more competitively organised 'projects'.*"

In general, such 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 (Jones, 1982: 7). Thus the two main questions are "Did it work?", and "How might we do better?", though it should be said that in many evaluation traditions, these are questions which can be asked all the way through a project, rather than merely at the end. Note that both the goals and these questions are 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: 170-2) 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 often diverge, and therefore even agreeing on the details of what happened, never mind the results, is fraught with difficulties generated by divergences in standpoint.

This is particularly significant in policy delivery in Europe, because projects and programmes are delivered through multi-level governance. That is, rural policy in Europe is constructed in terms of '*a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers.*' (Marks, 1993). Bache and Flinders (2004) emphasise both vertical and horizontal dimensions, pointing to the "*increased interdependence of governments operating at different territorial levels*' as well as the '*growing interdependence between governments and non-governmental actors at various territorial levels.*' Thus a multiplicity of values and viewpoints become relevant, and governance is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple stake-holders often with different definitions of 'the problem', working at different political levels (Murphy and Chataway 2005). In the context of projects and programmes, this means it cannot be assumed that values are aligned between and across levels, although one might hope to find or construct instances of accommodation (*sensu* Checkland & Scholes, 1990: 29-30) between different interests.

In theory, under 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 (Stoker, 1998; Bach & Flinders, 2004). This requires appropriate institutional capacity within local territories, and governance relations which are supportive of subsidiarity and devolution.

In Hungary, for example, EU accession has had a significant positive effect, inducing political institutions to involve NGOs and civil organisations in decision-making processes. On the other hand, EU requirements and deadlines have made the reform process more hurried and difficult, often impeding organic development of new governance systems (Nemes et al, 2006 forthcoming).. There is an ongoing tension between the formal, canonical (*sensu* Brown & Duguid, 1991) systems of the centre and the needs of developing regions.

Within the project state, the danger is that without appropriate consultation and consideration of local needs, centre-led projects can, as Beckman and Dissing (2005) put it “...*overwhelm communities by stifling initiative, disrupting the traditional economic and social relations, as well as eroding cultural and natural values.*” This highlights that in practice, while the delivery of European 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, 2000). Indeed, in the wider literature on evaluation, we find that Robson (1993: 170-2) links the growth of evaluation in public policy specifically to an agenda for accountability; an expectation for public bodies to demonstrate that their spending is well-managed and delivers satisfactory results.

The tensions between centralisation and devolution in multi-level governance, and the values they represent, are illuminated by Nemes’ (2005) distinction between different systems of institutions of rural development. The ‘*central administrative system*’ is characterised in terms of top-down interventions from the political centre. It relies on formal institutions: written rules, established procedures and bureaucratic control. The underlying logic is modernist and technocratic, and 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 economic development. The ‘*local heuristic system*’, on the other hand, is based on bottom-up endogenous processes. Its elements comprise local economic, political and social actors, social networks and kinship relations. The institutions of co-ordination are often tacit and based in personal and cultural values as much as externally visible mechanisms. Local heuristic systems are therefore socially embedded - highly specific to context and the underlying logic is essentially participatory; the logic of the endogenous rural development paradigm (van der Ploeg et al, 2000).

The different logics of development in turn suggest different logics of evaluation. The basic metaphor of much canonical evaluation practice is one of measurement; based on the experimental methods of the natural sciences (Mtshali, 2000: 69). This lends itself to an approach which emphasises financial and other quantitative metrics, though qualitative methods based on indicators are becoming more common (Department of the Environment, 1996; Goyder et al, 1998; Baker & Schuler, 2004). Irrespective of the form the evaluation data takes, the basic underlying metaphor of communication and knowledge at work is that of 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, where information is a commodity to pass around. Where doubt arises, it is a matter of interpretation that can be cleared up through reference to a shared external reality.

What canonical evaluation conceals is that projects, programmes and other initiatives are contextually sensitive. 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, before the question of who the lessons are for is even asked. This is most critical in the case of evaluating social impact, where understandings of impact are intrinsically socially constructed. Thus the local heuristic system is aligned with a logic of evaluation that is endogenous, embedded and intersubjective: based in knowledge that arises 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 approaches such as situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) and social learning (Finger & Verlaan, 1995; Leeuwis & Pyburn, 2002; Ison et al, 2004; Keen et al, 2005).

The evaluation of rural development under multi-level governance therefore carries us into a territory which is both theoretically very interesting, and 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. That is, it is not only important what we know about a situation, but how we know it, and what we recognise as knowledge is profoundly political. As Scheurich (1997) puts it, ‘...*epistemological enactments are ultimately political or ethical enactments.*’ In the next section, we turn our attention to the EU’s LEADER rural development programme, which is planned and delivered under quite different political and ethical lines to much European structural funding. However, as we shall see the difficulty is that the evaluation of LEADER appears to be working under a different epistemic logic than its operation.

## 2. The LEADER programme

LEADER is a strand of European Union rural development funding, which has promoted rural development in territories across Europe (Moseley, 2003: 11-14). 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 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: 439). Since 1991, it has promoted local development through funding programmes based on consultation with local and with national bodies in each participating country. The initiative aims to provide the conditions for innovative rural development actions to emerge that valorise indigenous financial and cultural resources to produce sustainable development. The result is a set of programmes that Farrell & Thirion (2005: 282) argue has a disproportionately high impact relative to the resources committed to it, and which helps to re-integrate some of the losers from other development approaches back into the ongoing governance of their local territories.

In its current manifestation, LEADER+, the initiative 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: 412). The initiative has attracted considerable academic attention, giving rise to a considerable body of work (eg Ray, 1997; Midmore, 1998; Ray, 1998; Sociologia Ruralis, 2000; Ray, 2001; Moseley, 2003; Farrell & Thirion, 2005). Although LEADER+ finishes this year, it has been announced that the LEADER approach will form an important axis in axis in all rural development programmes, to comprise no less than 7% of total funding (European Commision, 2004).

There are said to be seven primary features of the LEADER approach (LEADER European Observatory, 1999; Saraceno, 1999), name 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 private resident,
- (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.

Within this list, we want to highlight two features in particular. 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.”*

*F. Fischler, quoted in Mosely (2000: 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 recognising that there *are* other opportunities for rural policy actors to learn from one another’s experiences of LEADER (the networking funding springs to mind), we argue that it follows that evaluation should have a high profile and be well integrated into LEADER programmes and projects, rather than something outside of its ongoing operation at the local level. This is not by any means a novel argument, and has been previously presented by Midmore (1998) for example.

The second important feature of LEADER, as it has evolved, is its participatory nature. For example, LEADER supports the engagement of local stakeholders in the formulation and delivery of programmes and projects, 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, social learning, customer focus, governance and endogenous development. As with many interesting concepts, these defy universally agreed definition and we do not suggest that they shouldn't. Participation, for example, has an expansive literature (High, 2002: chapter 6) and can refer to a correspondingly broad range of practices, but in essence it entails that the planning and delivery of projects and services should include those stakeholders whose livelihoods are most directly affected by them. This clearly includes but is not limited to potential beneficiaries, and many participatory analyses focus on those who may experience detrimental outcomes.

In European discourse on rural development, many of the same themes as participatory development in Africa, Asia and Latin America are reprised in discussions of endogenous development (Bassand et al, 1986; Van der Ploeg et al, 2000; Nemes, 2004a). The notion of endogenous development, as suggested by Bassand et al. (1986) has been promoted in opposition to more 'modernist' notions of development. It is perhaps best understood as "*the hypothesis that improvements in the socio-economic well being of disadvantaged areas can best be brought about by recognising and animating the collective resources of the territory itself*" (Nemes, 2004a). The concept of endogenous development is closely aligned with a developmental ethic that shifts attention from sectoral to territorial logics of change (Ray, 1999a) and recognises the role of a multi-functional agriculture in the wider rural economy and landscape (OECD, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

However, as Saraceno (1999) points out, the literature on endogenous development is strongest on development as a more or less spontaneous process and there is less material on how these observed characteristics may be turned into policy prescriptions which can then be implemented. This is perhaps reflected in Bryden's (2000) observation that in practice any idea of a new rural policy in Europe trails well behind the rhetoric. For Nemes (2004a), 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. Nevertheless, LEADER in terms of its delivery seems to represent significant progress in the coupling of a centralist facilitation of endogenous processes, perhaps because it represents an alignment of the interests of sub-national territories and the European Commission

The significance of the participatory nature of LEADER as a process of governance is that classically, participation highlights the tensions between local and external actors in development activities, challenging notions of power and control (Webber, 1994: 111-2; Pretty et al, 1995; Blackburn & Holland, 1998: 192). 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 highlighted. The paradox is that when delivery across a spectrum of projects, localities and cultural contexts becomes important, the very localised particularities upon which the success of participatory initiatives depend may be suppressed by the structural forces which hold wide-scale programmes together. While a small-scale pilot study or experimental project can go astray without much recrimination, there is considerable force in demands for public accountability when an

approach such as LEADER begins to consume greater sums of public funds, as it has during each incarnation, giving rise to the managerialist trends highlighted by Ray (2000).

In response to this, we note that there may well be existing research which addresses these problems in the international development literature, and in particular a comparative review of work on endogenous and participatory development with a focus on practice would be timely, although a daunting task. In response to Saraceno's observation we would observe 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 there is much interesting research coming forward that suggests how it may be elucidated. An important factor to take into account is that the professional skills and expertise that are required within many governmental agencies and organisations are completely at odds with those required for endogenous development. Working in partnership, across institutional boundaries (Williams, 2002), requires a shift in emphasis from management to facilitation, and from 'expertise on top' to 'expertise on tap' (Gibson, 1996; Chambers, 1997; High, 2005: 139). Does Europe lag behind other parts of the world in this respect?

### **3. Canonical evaluation of LEADER**

The tensions between endogenous and exogenous orientations to rural development and the managerialist response to the challenges of governance are clearly present in the ways that evaluation is institutionalised within LEADER+. When LEADER was initially established, evaluation of any kind was weak (Midmore, 1998: 412-4), and there was reduced pressure to co-ordinate LEADER funding with other modes of funding rural development. As LEADER has become more established this has changed. A growing need was felt to evaluate the programme as a whole, represented in the current generation of LEADER evaluation in that evaluation is subject to the European Commission guidelines (DGA, 1999) for all rural development initiatives supported through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. These seek to insure 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 (DGA, 1999: 4)*

These regulations are intended to aid in co-ordinating rural development across the EU, helping to relate aspects of development initiatives to the general objectives of rural development set at European level in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, utility and sustainability. Thus LEADER evaluation, as it is formally institutionalised, is constructed in terms of the needs of the centre for accountability and transparency, and decision-making about the modes of delivery of LEADER, and the trend has become more important as the share of rural development resources channelled through LEADER and



LEADER-like approaches has increased. Indeed the link between devolution of decision making and centralisation of evaluation is clear in the evaluation guidelines as applied to 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: 8)*

It is clear from the European Commission’s guidelines (2002) and associated documentation that an important political drive behind the canonical institutions of LEADER evaluation is that there 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 difficulty was that 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.

A further difficulty is that of 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: 12)*

These challenges are summed 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?

In response, work associated the LEADER European Observatory (1999) and others focussed on developing a more qualitative approach that could nonetheless aggregate information across different programmatic and national institutionalisations of LEADER. The result was a set of evaluation guidelines (European Commission, 2002) for LEADER+, which supplement the 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 to the overall objectives of LEADER, and gives guidance on the formulation of programme-specific evaluation questions, which depend on the features that individual LEADER+ programme has emphasised. But although we recognise that the result of the reforms to the evaluation process represents progress over the bare quantitative procedures of the canonical European rural evaluation (DGA, 1999: 4), there are nonetheless difficulties that still need to be addressed. One of the biggest difficulties in our experience is that under the understanding of evaluation as an audit process, LEADER+ evaluation is carried out by external consultants. While national procedures vary, we are aware of situations where evaluation and local management of programmes and projects are almost completely divorced, and opportunities for learning and improvement in delivery are consequently lost. Need this be the case?

#### **4. Endogenous evaluation**

One source of answers to the question whether the current canonical forms of evaluation in LEADER+ need to be as they are is to look at how evaluation is institutionalised elsewhere. That is, 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. It is people centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation*” (OESP, 1997). This participatory style of evaluation harks back to the 1970s (Wadsworth, 2001: 45), and seeks to appreciate and integrate the knowledge of both insiders and outsiders (Davis-Case, 1990) and professionals and beneficiaries (Wadsworth, 2001).

Participatory approaches to policy delivery and governance have a particularly strong representation within thinking and practice in developing country contexts, where they became a favoured mode of development assistance by international aid agencies from the 1980s onwards. There is a robust relationship between participatory practice and the rise of participatory modes of research and action (Berardi, 2002), and 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 common finding that participation is not straight-forward, and participatory processes can favour non-marginal groups where society is stratified (Gupte, 2003). In terms of evaluation, one of the main traps highlighted 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). A possible way out of this trap could be considering evaluation in terms 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 by the project.

In terms of participatory evaluation, a spectrum of practice 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: 46). The common thread is that endogenous

knowledge is valued. However, we would argue that hybrid knowledge is more likely to arise where endogenous sense-making is valued, and intentionally triggered. This seems to us to be more congruent with the values that have come to be embedded in the LEADER approach than the current canonical procedures. Evaluation could not only be an opportunity to demonstrate the value of their investment to exogenous funders of rural development, but an opportunity to highlight 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: 129).

As it stands, the potential of endogenous evaluation in LEADER is recognised in the literature (Midmore, 1998; Moseley, 2003) and 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). But in practice, while endogenous evaluation is permitted and perhaps recognised, it is seen as something quite separate to the evaluation of the initiative as a whole. In our experience of LEADER groups, centrally mandated evaluation not only becomes a task quite divorced from the reality of LEADER delivery, but it taints evaluation as something onerous, which directs resources away from delivery. 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. Furthermore, if this analysis is correct there is a missed opportunity to build local capacity for social learning, through LEADER’s inability to build endogenous evaluation in to the system.

It seems clear that different practices prevail in different national and regional contexts, and in the absence of comparative studies of local evaluation practices (and notwithstanding partial examples such as Midmore, 1998, which is UK-centric), it is difficult to make judgements on the scale of the issue. Even if there is extant work on endogenous evaluation within LEADER, it is almost certainly within the grey literature of the LEADER+ networks rather than publicly available, and we suspect that there has been no systematic attempt to compare different practices. Such comparative work would almost certainly be a necessary component of substantial research on how future LEADER initiatives might be better evaluated.

Within our current research, we are interested to pursue the issue of endogenous evaluation by developing methodologies which engage stakeholders in sense-making, generate enthusiasm and social energy, and respect living cultural forms that make sense to endogenous actors. One tradition we have some experience of and an interest in developing within this context is participatory video, which has been defined as a “...social and community-based tool for individual and group development” (Shaw & Robertson, 1997) where non-expert film-makers are facilitated in using video to make sense of their experiences. As with Freire’s (1972) conscientisation, participants are thereby presented with the opportunity to become the subjects and not just the objects of the process. It is therefore distinct from related applications of video to issues of social and environmental justice, such as Harding’s (2001) video activism.

Within participatory video, making a film becomes a learning process for participants, and the camera becomes a mode for directing the attention of participants rather than an audience. We are interested in how this can be harnessed to make judgements of facts and values and test them in public arenas. The benefits of doing so include the link

between video and broadcast television, a dominant cultural form in many societies, giving the method a potential route into embedded sense-making through the pervasiveness of television. At the same time, evaluation could centre around “...*the needs of the participants. Video is used to develop their confidence and self-esteem, to encourage them to express themselves creatively, to develop a critical awareness and to provide a means for them to communicate with others.*” (Shaw & Robertson, 1997). For Shaw & Robertson (1997: 14), much of the potential of participatory video arises because this cultural force can become active. As White (2003: 64-6) points out, we are conditioned by TV to accept video as a medium in which we are passive. Participatory video therefore enables self-expression.

Early indications are that rural stakeholders are more able to express themselves through video than text: in previous work we have found that producing a script for a documentary (High et al, 2001) in the context of a training workshop was much easier than documenting research outcomes (Rengasamy et al, 2001) with the same group of people, yet many of the same issues were covered. In Europe this, and approaches like this, have significant potential for processes of evaluation where the challenge is to adequately analyse and represent diverse experiences embedded in local particularities of culture and circumstance, and where an understanding of canonical evaluation procedures might be limited or where no sympathy for the canonical approach exists. The experience of participatory evaluators, particularly in developing countries, is encouraging and demonstrates that ultimately the process effects of participatory learning are ultimately more persistent than the immediate products (Bunch & López, 1996).

## **5. Conclusions: Towards a systemic evaluation**

In this paper, we have presented two alternative ideas of the purposes that the evaluation serves. On the one hand, evaluation serves to demonstrate whether or not public resources are being spent well and whether the approach as a whole could be improved. On the other hand evaluation could potentially form an important part of the value delivered by LEADER, if done in such a way as to valorise local social resources (Ray, 1999b) and increase endogenous institutional capacity (Farrell & Thirion, 2005). This would rest on an overall institutionalisation of LEADER evaluation, so as to build local capacity for social learning and rural development. Is such a systemic form of evaluation possible?

Given that in terms of its planning and management, LEADER and cognate programme seem to represent a good example of integrated rural development (Nemes, 2004b; Nemes, 2005; Nemes et al, 2006 forthcoming), where exogenous and endogenous rural development come into alignment, it seems to us that that current weakness in the articulation between these in terms of evaluation need not persist. We do not claim that endogenous and exogenous learning can not be reconciled, merely that there are significant differences in the worldviews that support them, in therefore in the practices that they engender.

Evaluation that took the production of hybrid knowledge as a desirable end, and understood knowledge to be systemic and multi-layered would enrich LEADER evaluation as a whole if the difficulties of aggregation of participatory evaluation could be overcome.

This 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 could be addressed. Yet 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 to us that at the very least it seems a good research topic for rural development in Europe, and it is quite conceivable that within the European rural development arena, a reconciliation between the current canonical evaluation and more endogenously grounded approaches to evaluation could be institutionalised.

An easier target and one which we see as urgent is to work to reduce the contradictions between the two, in order that local capacity for evaluation and learning can be built. A possible roadmap to such a position is to note Saraceno's (1999) 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."* In other words, good endogenous evaluation feeds good canonical evaluation. Building in more 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 canonical evaluation and to the endogenous institutional capacity that underpins the development processes itself can be demonstrated. Given LEADER's progressive profile, there is every chance that success in developing an evaluation system that systemically integrates endogenous and exogenous learning would be an international model for others to follow.

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