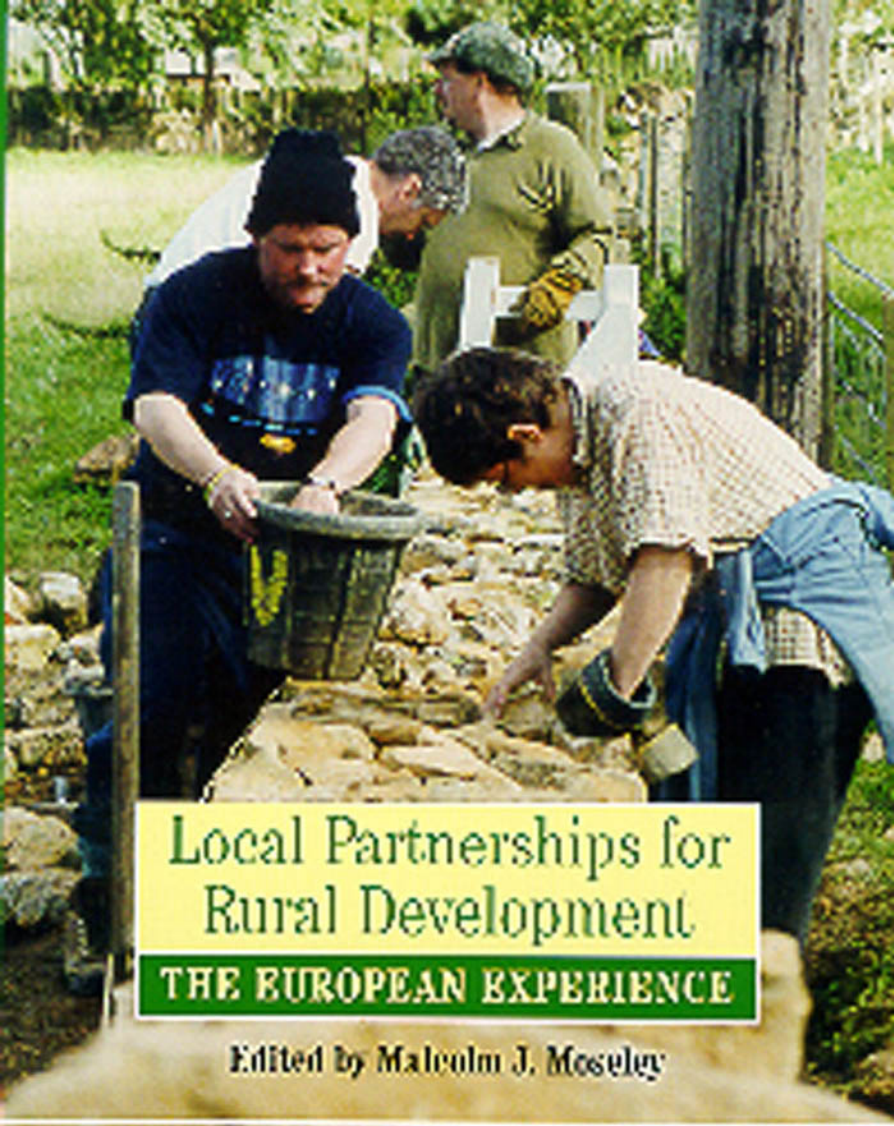

Local Partnerships for Rural Development

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Edited by Malcolm J. Moseley

CABI Publishing

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Local Partnerships for Rural Development
The European Experience

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Editor's note

The above 27 co-authors of this book were all engaged as researchers on the PRIDE research project for some or all of the period February 1999 to January 2001. In that regard, all were involved in drafting and/or amending material that has ultimately come together in this book. Every chapter therefore is the product of a team effort and so individual chapters cannot be attributed to particular authors.

Preface

This book is an edited version of the unpublished final report of the cross-national PRIDE research project, which ran from February 1999 to January 2001 and was concerned with Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe. Four years have passed since the project was first conceived but rural development remains as crucial an issue in Europe today as it was in the mid–late 1990s – as do the hopes and expectations placed upon local partnerships as a tool for its promotion and management. Indeed, that statement is true not just within the borders of the EU but elsewhere in the world, where other governments and local communities struggle with the challenge of transforming essentially agricultural into more broadly based rural economies and of building tools of local governance that can facilitate that process in a way that is sympathetic to local circumstances and to a host of social, political, economic and cultural forces.

The research involved focusing on the rural development experience of six member states of the EU, namely, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK, with some additional contextual analysis of material from Ireland and Luxemburg. The six research teams were drawn from those six countries and, very broadly, the task involved empirical and analytical work being undertaken in parallel by each team in their home countries under the general coordination of the UK team.

The six research teams were:

- the Seinajoki Institute for Rural Training of the University of Helsinki in Finland;

- the Institute of Spatial Planning of the University of Dortmund in Germany;
- the Department of Sociology and Political Science of the University of Calabria in Italy;
- the Department of Geography of the University of Valencia in Spain;
- the Dalarna Research Institute in Falun, Sweden;
- the Countryside and Community Research Unit of the University of Gloucestershire (formerly the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education) in the UK.

The research was funded by the EU under its FAIR Research Programme (contract FAIR6-CT98-4445) – though the contents of this book and the opinions expressed are solely the responsibility of its editor and his co-authors.

What was the purpose of the research? At one level its objective was quite simple: to explore how and how far the local partnership approach actually promotes rural development and to establish what might be done to improve the effectiveness of partnership in that respect. More specifically, the task was to survey both EU-funded and non-EU-funded local rural partnerships with regard to their context, initiation, organization, operation and effects; to assess the value added to local rural development by such partnerships; to seek causal relationships between the characteristics of local partnerships and rural development; to make proposals regarding the effectiveness of local partnerships; and to identify and communicate elements of good practice. The key questions were, in effect: Do local partnerships *per se* stimulate rural development? Do they really add value compared with other rural development delivery mechanisms and, if so, what is it about partnerships that generates that added value?

Five empirical exercises lay at the heart of the research. In sequence, they were:

- an extensive literature review (managed by the Dalarna team);
- the extensive survey – a postal questionnaire survey of 330 local rural partnerships located in the eight countries cited above (managed by the Valencia team);
- the study of practice – a detailed field study of 24 of those partnerships, four in each of six countries, to better understand the practice of partnership (managed by the Calabria team);
- the study of impact – a repeat field study of the same 24 partnerships to better understand the impact of partnership and the links between practice and impact (managed by the Dortmund team);
- the feedback survey – a repeat postal survey of the same partnerships studied in the extensive survey about 15 months earlier (managed by the Seinajoki team).

The first three of those five exercises have already been written up separately and at some length (Westholm *et al.*, 1999; Esparcia *et al.*, 2000; Cavazzani and Moseley, 2001). In addition, six *Good Practice Guides* have been published or are in preparation to distil guidance for practitioners on the effective operation of rural development partnerships, based on the research in each of the six countries. They have been/are being written mainly for national readerships and are therefore in the appropriate national languages only – English, German, Finnish, Spanish, Italian and Swedish.

The present book provides an extended summary of and reflection upon all of the work undertaken and in particular it publishes for the first time the innovative impact analysis (and the associated cross-national feedback survey, which in large measure validated its findings), which was developed primarily by the Dortmund team and carried out simultaneously in all six countries. We contend that that impact analysis successfully teased out the true value added by rural development partnerships, as distinct from the developmental consequences flowing simply from the funds that the partnerships were able to deploy – funds which could, of course, have been equally deployed by non-partnership means. That analysis, building on the earlier phases of the research, provided the main basis of the recommendations that were distilled for policy makers and practitioners and with which the book concludes.

Looking back, it is clear that great value was derived from two key features of the research. First, there was the decision to sandwich a phase of detailed qualitative work relating to just 24 case-study partnerships chronologically between two largely quantitative postal surveys of several hundred partnerships. Each approach complemented the other. Secondly there was the simultaneous execution by the six research teams of a common programme of research viewing local partnerships alongside the differing national histories of local governance and development. This enabled the filtering out of particular national or contextual features, the distillation of an underlying Europe-wide picture and the generation of conclusions and recommendations that would have wide validity.

This book is the collective work of six research teams over more than 2 years; their membership is indicated under ‘Contributors’. My thanks, as editor, to all of them. In the UK case, I would also like to thank Karen Wu, Jill Harper and Emmanuel Fitte, who have helped in the final stages. Thanks are due also to Mary Cawley and Jean-Pierre Dichter for help with our research in Ireland and Luxemburg respectively, and, of course, to the 600 or so people across the eight countries who filled in questionnaires or consented to be interviewed as the research progressed. Finally, I must not forget Muriel Huybrechts, Veronica Sabbag and Sjur Bardssen at the European Commission, who did at least try to untangle that institution’s bureaucracy.

As coordinator of the research and editor of the final report and of this subsequent book, I am grateful to them all.

Malcolm Moseley
University of Gloucestershire
July 2002

Summary

Objectives

The PRIDE research project was concerned with Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe. It explored how and how far the local partnership approach actually promotes rural development and what might be done to improve the effectiveness of partnerships in that respect. At the heart of the research was a concern to establish the genuine value added by rural development partnerships and the key sources of that added value. Clarification of this point would help policy makers decide whether partnerships *per se* help to generate development rather than simply the resources at their disposal and, if so, what elements of partnership operation are important.

More specifically the objectives of the research were:

- to survey both EU- and non-EU-funded rural partnerships and analyse variables affecting their performance;
- to characterize the practice of such partnerships in detail, i.e. their contexts, initiation, development, structure, links and operation;
- to assess the impact of rural partnerships on the partners themselves and on the economic, social, cultural, political and environmental development of their local areas;
- to identify those elements of local partnerships that induce or constrain rural development;
- to explain the causal relations between context, practice and impact of local partnerships;

- to propose measures to improve the performance of local partnerships in rural integrated development and related local, regional, national and EU policy;
- to identify and communicate lessons and examples of good practice.

All of these objectives were in large measure achieved. For present purposes, four concise questions were distilled from them, with considered responses, drawing on evidence from each phase of the research, set out in Chapter 7 and in summary form below. These questions, which encapsulate the essence of the research, are as follows:

1. What are the key characteristics of rural development partnerships in the countries examined?
2. What impact have they had on rural development?
3. What factors have significantly influenced their effectiveness in this respect?
4. What measures would improve their effectiveness in this respect?

Description of Work

The working definition of a rural development partnership used in the research was:

> a voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two societal sectors (state or public-sector organizations, private companies, civil associations) with a clear organizational structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and which show an integrated approach to the promotion of the development of rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants.

More specifically, the research focused on the experience of six EU countries, namely, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK (with some contextual work also undertaken on Ireland and Luxemburg). The six research teams were drawn from the same six countries and, very broadly, the research involved similar empirical and analytical work being undertaken by each team in their home country.

Five empirical exercises lay at the heart of the research. In sequence, they were:

- an extensive literature review;
- the extensive survey – a postal questionnaire survey of several hundred local rural partnerships in the eight countries cited above;
- the study of practice, involving the detailed field study of 24 of those partnerships (four in each of six countries) to better understand the practice of partnership;

- the study of impact – i.e. a repeat field study of the same 24 partnerships to better understand the impact of partnership and the links between practice and impact;
- a feedback survey – an exploration of the general validity of the emerging conclusions, mainly by means of a repeat postal survey of the 300+ partnerships surveyed at the outset.

Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 indicates how the various tasks fitted together over the 2-year period of the research. Working step by step down that diagram, we have the following.

Research preparation

The research preparation involved some technical preparatory work, namely, the preparation of an organization manual and a methodology manual to guide the subsequent work, but most of the effort went into a literature review, with the Dalarna Research Institute leading on this work. This review was designed to establish and appraise existing knowledge regarding the theory and practice of local partnerships and to clarify the conceptual framework and the key questions and hypotheses for the subsequent research. The experience of nine countries was examined (the six referred to above plus Ireland, Luxemburg and the USA), as was the EU's 15-nation LEADER I and II programme for local rural development. In addition, relevant aspects of theory relating to rural and local development, to organization, management and social networks and to planning were appraised. In all, a substantial body of literature was considered and this is appraised in Chapter 2, with the references listed at the end of the text.

The literature review revealed the wide range of partnership experience across the EU and served to raise a number of concerns about the partnership phenomenon. These relate, *inter alia*, to the funding-driven nature of many partnerships, the fact that few of them are 'locally grown', the difficult questions of legitimacy and accountability, the limited experience of the partnerships in delivering integrated programmes rather than discrete projects, and the danger of their widening rather than narrowing social and economic disparities. It also revealed that little rigorous study had been undertaken of the value added by partnership operation *per se*, as distinct from the outputs arising from the expenditure of funds managed by the various partnerships.

Extensive postal survey

The extensive postal survey, coordinated by the University of Valencia, embraced a large number of rural partnerships located in eight EU

countries. Its main object was to better understand the characteristics, objectives, membership, organization, operation and achievements of a large sample of local rural development partnerships, some of them funded substantially from EU sources, some drawing mainly on more local sources of funding. A second object was to provide a sampling frame for the later case-study work.

Over 1000 partnerships apparently meeting our partnership definition were identified from an eclectic range of sources and surveyed. Eventually, 330 valid responses to a long questionnaire containing both closed and open questions were received and analysed. There were at least 40 responses in each of the six main countries. Most of the subsequent analysis (see Chapter 4) comprised the careful study of simple frequency distributions and cross tabulations, but a cluster analysis was also performed to see if particular groupings of similar partnerships emerged.

Various Europe-wide conclusions emerged, though of course national differences were also apparent and are discussed briefly in the main text. Briefly, these were as follows:

- Initiation and objectives: most of the surveyed partnerships saw their prime function as delivering projects in pursuit of local development and most had come into existence to take advantage of funding possibilities, though both local government and key individuals had often played an important role in their creation and subsequent development.
- Partnership operation: as well as funding discrete local projects, most partnerships attached high importance to disseminating information locally and to mobilizing the local community in various ways.
- Achievements: the partnerships claimed a wide range of achievements – the initiation of development projects, the reinforcement of cooperation links, community involvement and mobilization, the creation and consolidation of employment and businesses, etc.
- Strengths and weaknesses: the most commonly reported strength of partnership working was the mobilization of local human capital – skilled local actors willing to cooperate and work for the common good. As for problems, one was mentioned above all the others – the availability and continuity of funding and the bureaucracy often surrounding its distribution and management. 'Less bureaucracy, more autonomy' was the main cry of the respondents in almost all of the countries.

Study of the practice of partnership

The study of the practice of partnership began with the selection of 24 partnerships, four in each country, for detailed field study. While not

intended to be a statistically representative sample, the chosen partnerships all met minimum criteria, which required an explicit focus on integrated rural development, a population of less than 100,000 in the area served, at least 3 years of operation and a broad mix of partners. Collectively, they also presented a range of experience with regard to such factors as their initiation, funding, legal status, location and policy focus.

This stage of the research, coordinated by the University of Calabria, involved several days' fieldwork in each of the 24 case-study areas, with a dozen or more interviews in each case, the assembly and analysis of documentation and participant observation, all designed to elucidate the origin, objectives, constitution, operation, activities and performance of the partnerships.

As Chapter 5 makes clear, certain national differences understandably emerged from this analysis, with, for example, active local communities playing an important role in the UK and Sweden, local government being important in Finland, Germany, Spain and the UK and collective associations being more dominant in Italy. The main text of the report presents the six national pictures in some depth, but here we can simply present the European picture that emerged with regard to three key issues.

First, it is clear that the degree of participation of the various partners in the partnership varied considerably. The following factors tended to increase partner involvement and commitment: the existence of coherent and relevant aims based on the recognition of common needs, strong but not overdominant leadership, good administrative and technical support, good user-friendly communication, the early achievement of visible benefits and direct experience of local development in other areas.

Secondly, the efficient and successful operation of the partnerships was fostered by the following factors: a well-defined and coherent organization and structure, efficient staff and management, the more or less equal participation in decision making of the various partners, an atmosphere of mutual trust, well-developed informal networking, and good contact with rural development programmes elsewhere.

Thirdly, the following tended to constrain the efficient working of partnerships: absent or ineffective management, role conflicts, the centralization of decision making, the dominance of a small group of partners, the excessive bureaucracy of some funding programmes, especially the EU and national ones, limited financial resources, the short time perspective of many programmes and poor evaluation procedures.

In addition, a generally positive picture emerged concerning the adding of value to rural development by partnership operation. But it was also clear, however, that many local partnerships operated tactically rather than strategically – even if the preparation of a strategy had

marked the launch of their programme – and also that they paid little explicit attention to reducing social exclusion.

Study of the impact of partnerships

The study of the impact of partnerships, led by the University of Dortmund, built directly upon the practice study and involved a return visit and further fieldwork in each of the 24 case-study areas, this time focusing on the impact of the partnership approach. In particular, we sought at this stage to establish what have been the actual impacts of the partnerships upon the development of their local areas and what particular characteristics of the partnerships had proved most important in generating that impact. This involved our seeking partnership outcomes and partnership determinants and trying to establish causal connections between the two.

The method used to undertake this task was an innovation – no previous study that we could find having successfully isolated the true partnership effect in adding value to the local rural development process. The method involved tracing a number of cause–effect chains in the recent history of each of the 24 case-study partnerships. These linked partnership-specific features or determinants to particular partnership effects in the local area. In all, nearly 200 cause–effect chains were identified, described and checked, linking a total of 33 determinants to 12 different kinds of effects. These chains were distilled into about 1100 entries of a 33-by-12 cause–effect matrix and all this evidence was subjected to a variety of quasi-quantitative and qualitative analyses.

In Chapter 6, we set out emerging findings relating to each of the 12 effects (for example, endogenous development, social inclusion and capacity building) and each of the 33 determinants (such as decision making at the local level and joint planning).

A significant conclusion is that the following characteristics of the 24 partnerships studied had a particularly pronounced effect on several of the partnership effects: the competence and commitment of the partnerships' staff, the local knowledge of the partners, the fact that decisions were taken locally, the sectoral heterogeneity of the partners and the presence of at least one key actor. As for the effects, it is clear that the following were significantly and positively influenced by such partnership characteristics: the effectiveness of the operation of the partnership, endogenous development in the local area, capacity building in the partnership and the wider local community, integrated development in which distinct projects related to one another, innovation and community involvement in development. All of these (and other) aspects of development were unequivocally helped by partnerships *per se* – not just by the money they were able to spend.

Feedback survey and final synthesis

The feedback survey and final synthesis, largely coordinated by the Seinajoki Institute with assistance from Valencia, attempted to draw general and widely valid results from the research. It involved the following:

1. The validation of the main provisional conclusions arising from the earlier work, in order to establish how generally applicable our conclusions and hence our subsequent recommendations might be.
2. The drawing of general conclusions in relation to the research questions posed at the outset.

As for its method, this stage of the research involved two exercises. First, the feedback survey involved sending a short questionnaire to all of the 330 partnerships in eight countries which had been surveyed over a year earlier in the extensive survey. This time they were asked to reflect on their own experience and to say how far they agreed with the research team's provisional conclusions on the operation and impact of local partnerships emerging from the case studies. Some questions related specifically to the relevant national experience, others to the emerging pan-European findings. Happily, the feedback survey, which enjoyed a good response (225 respondents plus 57 in a small control group), served to validate to a considerable degree the provisional lessons emerging from the 24 case studies. In other words, what this large group of rural development practitioners said about the operation and impact of local partnerships – and about causes and effects – closely matched what had emerged from the 24 case studies.

A second part of this final phase involved a careful desk exercise undertaken by the six research teams. This involved writing 11 reflective position papers, in which the authors addressed the fundamental questions of the whole research project for each of the five tasks and six countries. This enabled the distillation of our key conclusions for subsequent critical examination.

Some Conclusions

It remains to summarize some of the responses that are given in Chapter 7 to the four fundamental questions set out above.

1. What are the key characteristics of rural development partnerships in the countries examined?

Regarding their initiation, an important, but not universal, role was played by the local authorities or municipalities. But in many areas the

efforts of key individual people with energy, local contacts and a talent for making things happen were crucial. We also found that, while many partnerships were created as a tactical response to funding opportunities and therefore had in effect been externally promoted, most moved quite quickly to exercise local control. But often this control rested in the hands of the local authorities and other key local agencies – more a case of local top-down than of truly bottom-up.

Regarding their structure, the number of partners in the various partnerships ranged from four to over 200, though most had fewer than 25. Nearly all partnerships had some sort of two-tier structure, usually an assembly and a board, with many also finding it valuable to use small subgroups for particular tasks. Public sector dominance was often apparent with the private (as distinct from the non-governmental organization (NGO)) sector often under-represented and unsure of its role.

Regarding their operation, nearly all of the partnerships rested heavily on a very small team of committed professional staff. Most struggled with onerous bureaucracies higher up the system and most were concerned about the long-term sustainability of their work in a context of fixed-term funding. The strong focus of most partnerships on funding discrete projects raised doubts about their ability or readiness to be proactive within a previously agreed strategy.

2. What impact have they had on rural development?

To some extent this question has already been answered above. Their impact has been considerable in most cases: there has been genuine value added in the process of local endogenous development. While not belittling tangible impact in terms of jobs created, businesses supported, services provided, etc. (outputs not principally the focus of this research), we would stress the significant effect that most partnerships have had upon such things as capacity building in the community, community involvement, innovation and the better integration of development initiatives. In short, they have helped to prepare the ground for long-term sustainable development.

3. What factors have significantly influenced their effectiveness in that respect?

Two fundamental characteristics of local partnerships have been vital – their success in 'bringing together' and their at least 'quasi-independence' from the state and the big bureaucracies that have traditionally dominated development programmes. These two fundamental charac-

teristics have made possible several key activities that were crucial to sustainable endogenous development – such as the coordination of diverse actors, the pooling of resources, the integration of top-down and bottom-up interests, experimentation and innovation, and the timely adaptation of action to changing circumstances. The research revealed, however, that these activities or capabilities are only released or 'unlocked' if a host of other things are in place, such as shared vision, adequate funding, competent staff and adequate delegation. Figure 7.1 in the concluding chapter sets out this simple, empirically validated, model of how, in practice, partnerships add value to rural development.

4. What measures would improve their effectiveness in this respect?

Posing this question is in effect to ask: 'What are our recommendations arising from the research?' These are set out in Chapter 7 and are explicitly aimed at two audiences – the sponsors of partnerships, and the partnerships or potential partnerships themselves.

Briefly, based on this research, the sponsors of rural development partnerships are advised to pay close attention to the following: various aspects of the membership of partnerships, the preparatory work that partnerships should undertake, including capacity building and strategy formulation, the potential artificiality of some partnerships, the size of the area they serve, the funding they receive (including its duration, stability and ease of access), the degree of independence of the partnerships, their staffing and management and their need for sufficient time to do their work. In addition, and overarching all of this, is a message that local partnerships are essentially a good thing – we found virtually no evidence of partnerships doing actual harm to the local development process (as distinct from evidence of their frequent underachievement in that respect).

As for the partnerships (and potential partnerships) themselves, various recommendations are made regarding getting started, operating the partnership, and linking with the local community and with other agencies. These relate particularly to strategic, rather than merely tactical or opportunistic, planning and operation, to getting the best out of the partners, to involving the private sector more effectively, to delegation and the use of subgroups, to the use of key actors, without allowing them to dominate, to the need for periodic self-evaluation and reflection, to innovation and flexibility, to operational transparency, to networking and to community development and capacity building in the community.

Reflecting on the research as a whole, we were persuaded that the following each contributed significantly to its success.

- The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods and of both extensive surveys and intensive case-study work. These approaches proved to be complementary and served to provide a degree of validation of the various findings emerging from any one exercise. In particular, the sandwiching of a long period of intensive case-study work between two large questionnaire surveys proved to be valuable and appropriate to the research objective.
- The simultaneous and closely coordinated execution of a common research programme in six countries with differing histories of local governance and development. Again, this provided a sort of validation of the main conclusions, with broadly similar findings emerging from the mass of national and local detail.

Given all of this, it was possible to reassure the European Commission – and other interested parties – that local rural development partnerships really do add value. Accordingly, the emphasis now frequently placed upon the local partnership approach as a tool of endogenous, integrated and sustainable rural development is both well founded and capable of extension to other regions. But various matters do need attention, by the sponsors of local partnerships and/or by the partnerships themselves, if local rural development partnerships are fully to realize their potential in the years to come.

1 Introduction

1.1 Partnerships and Local Rural Development

Since at least the late 1980s, both the EU (Commision of the European Communities, 1988) and its constituent member states have expressed a number of concerns regarding the future of their more rural regions. (On the national situation, the relevant literature is vast. See, for example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1990) and two national reviews: one on Ireland (National Economic and Social Council, 1994), the other on Finland (*Finnish Journal of Rural Research and Policy*, 1999).)

These concerns have had several dimensions: economic concerns, arising particularly from the inability of agriculture and other primary activities to provide long-term secure employment and adequate incomes for all but a fraction of those then engaged in them; social and cultural concerns, captured increasingly in the concept of rural deprivation, with its connotation of unemployment/under-employment, poverty, social exclusion, the erosion of local service provision, the breakup of caring communities and a growing sense of powerlessness in the face of change; environmental concerns, linked particularly to the intensification of agricultural practices and the pressures of an urban population intent on exploiting the attractions of the countryside to its own advantage; and political concerns, regarding the frequent inadequacy of existing political and administrative machinery to resolve such issues in a way that reflects their interrelatedness and the need to involve all relevant actors and agencies.

Many of these issues are, of course, simply localized expressions of problems of national or indeed international provenance. But many also have a genuinely rural dimension, arising not just from the areas' fre-

quently land-based economies but also from the low population density that is an intrinsic part of rurality, from geographical remoteness from the main centres of employment and population, from a certain cultural conservatism found in many traditional rural societies and, ironically, from the very attractiveness of many rural landscapes that can bring its own unwelcome pressures and, following selective in-migration, a vigorous resistance to further development.

However, neither these issues and concerns nor the elements of rurality with which they are linked are uniform across the rural regions of all 15 member states. This very diversity adds a further problem: how to put in place machinery for their resolution that truly reflects the mosaic of circumstances that characterizes rural Europe.

As is by now well known, the growing acceptance of that complex scenario found expression through the 1990s in a new conception of rural development that was very different from the reliance on agricultural intensification plus rural industrialization that generally preceded it. That new model of rural development – and 'new' is hardly an appropriate adjective any more – was characterized by such definitions as the following:

> a broad notion encompassing all important issues pertinent to the collective vitality of rural people and places … [including] education, health, housing, public services and facilities, capacity for leadership and governance, and cultural heritage as well as sectoral and general economic issues.
>
> (OECD, 1990: 23)

> a multi-dimensional process that seeks to integrate, in a sustainable manner, economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives.
>
> (Kearney *et al*., 1994: 128)

> a sustained and sustainable process of economic, social, cultural and environmental change designed to enhance the long-term well-being of the whole community.
>
> (Moseley, 2003)

The third of these definitions includes 12 words that came to be central to the new understanding of rural development and to its promotion:

- sustained … not short-lived;
- sustainable … respecting our inherited capital;
- process … a continuing and interrelated set of actions;
- economic … relating to the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services;
- social … relating to human relationships;
- cultural … relating to ways of life and sources of identity;
- environmental … relating to our physical and biotic surroundings;

- designed … deliberately induced, not naturally evolving;
- long-term … relating to decades, not years;
- well-being … not just material prosperity;
- whole … inclusive of all ages, both genders, all social groups;
- community … here meaning people living or working in the relevant area.

Indeed, a further concept became of central importance – that of locality, a realization that rural development programmes and plans and the projects that they contain need to relate not to rural areas in general but to this or that specific area. In short, rural development became synonymous with development pursued within specific, largely rural, territories or localities, their extent being defined so as to capture some degree of internal cohesion, if not homogeneity. There were several reasons for an insistence on this local or territorial dimension – in particular:

1. Local diversity. As argued above, rural areas are diverse physically, economically and socioculturally. Their circumstances, problems, needs and development potential all vary from place to place and the programmes that address them need to be locally sensitive.
2. Rural issues are interlocking and so, in consequence, must be the measures to address them. This integration is best attempted, it is contended, at an intermediate geographical scale, somewhere between the nation or region on the one hand, and the individual settlement or commune on the other.
3. Local identification. Local people, both as individuals and collectively in groups and organizations, are a key resource in rural development – as sources of information, ideas, energy and enterprise. Such people are more likely to get involved, however, if they feel that the venture is clearly relevant to their concerns and that any contribution they make is likely to have some effect; this is more likely to be the case if the area covered by the development programme is reasonably confined and coherent.
4. Adding value to local resources. It became increasingly recognized that economic development is likely to be more secure and sustainable and to generate greater spin-off benefits if it relies on local resources rather than imported material and capital. This implies a local-area approach to development, with local people and institutions identifying and supporting locally based business opportunities.
5. A defence against globalization. The argument has been that the cold blast of world competition, accentuated by trade liberalization and the information and communication revolution, is best resisted by accentuating local diversity in production and thereby creating a market niche at least in the minds of the consumer. Thus this too is an argument for fashioning and implementing development initiatives at the local level.

And so we must agree with Walsh (1995: 1) that local development is:

> more than a scaling down of interventions previously organised from the top by centralised policy making units … it is a radical response that seeks to achieve new objectives in relation to the development process by focussing on such concepts as multi-dimensionality, integration, coordination, subsidiarity and sustainability.

Inevitably this brings us to the argument for local development partnerships.

1.1.1 The promotion of rural development partnerships

Much the same sentiment had been expressed in the mid-1990s in a declaration issued jointly by several hundred rural leaders drawn from across Europe and meeting in Cork under the aegis of the EU. The Cork declaration of November 1996 (LEADER Observatory, 1996) marked a significant step on the road from narrow agricultural and other sectoral policies applied to rural Europe in general towards specifically rural policies and programmes respecting the needs and resources of local areas. Its ten-point plan made explicit the need for integrated rural development policy with a clear territorial dimension, the diversification of economic activity, respect for the tenets of sustainability and of subsidiarity (i.e. the decentralization of decision making), and improved mechanisms for planning, managing and financing rural development at the local level. At the heart of those 'improved mechanisms' has been the promotion of 'local development partnerships' – an initiative that had already begun in Britain and Ireland in the 1980s and was becoming commonplace on the continent by the early to mid-1990s.

What are these partnerships? A definition at this stage may be useful, though the whole of this book is devoted to exploring the essence of partnership in a rural development context. An early review of the subject defined partnerships as 'systems of formalised co-operation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or in formal undertakings, co-operative working relationships and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions' (OECD, 1990: 18). More recently, James's (2002: 19) review of the subject concluded that a:

> partnership is generally depicted as a process involving an inter-organisational arrangement that mobilises a coalition of interests around shared objectives and a common agenda as a means to respond to a shared issue or to realise specific outcomes.

Note here the emphasis on partnerships being as much a process as a structure or organization.

Gray and Wood (1991: 148) stress that the focus of partnerships in public policy and service delivery can be as 'narrow and specific as a local rush hour traffic snarl, or as broad and unwieldy as balancing economic and environmental interests in national public policy'. But, as far as partnerships as a tool of rural or urban regeneration are concerned, their rise to prominence in recent years seems to stem from a host of related contextual changes. Following James's recent review (2002), these include the increasing globalization of economy and society, the growing importance of networks, facilitated by the revolution in information and communication technology, the expansion of the stakeholder society, the decreasing authority of national (as distinct from supranational and subnational) governments and the general erosion of confidence in state bureaucracies to deliver public services efficiently and effectively.

Partnerships, as they have tended to emerge in the world of locally focused rural development, typically embrace at least some of the various levels and sectors of central government, relevant quasi-independent government agencies, the local authorities, private business, professional associations and a range of local voluntary and community organizations. Thus local partnerships can be said to have a vertical dimension (both up to central government and down to actors at the very local level), a diagonal dimension, across to the agencies that typically deliver government services in a sectoral manner, and a horizontal dimension, bringing together a range of public, private and voluntary organizations whose operations are broadly confined to the area in question.

The next chapter draws on a considerable literature to summarize how and why locally based partnerships along such lines have now become commonplace in the promotion of rural development. Most of this literature relates to the European context, but it is worth noting that the local partnership phenomenon has not been confined to Europe, or indeed to the 1990s and early 21st century. The OECD (1990) review of *Partnerships for Rural Development* revealed that, by the late 1980s, different forms of local development partnerships were to be found in New Zealand, Canada, the USA and Turkey – though frequently these were one-off isolated occurrences created to address specific issues, for example structural unemployment in the rural areas of the American state of Georgia or the plight of the aboriginal communities of the province of Quebec.

In Europe, as we shall see, local partnerships serving rural areas have been vigorously promoted both by national governments and as transnational initiatives. By far the most significant of the latter has been the Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (LEADER) programme – an EU initiative which, for more than 10 years and in an evolving guise (LEADER I, LEADER II and now LEADER Plus), has insisted upon the creation and nurturing of local action groups to manage the rural development process at a local level. In LEADER II alone (1995–2001), there were over 900 of these local action groups at work across the EU, all of them incorporating (with varying

degrees of enthusiasm and success, it must be said) a mix of public-, private- and voluntary/community-sector representatives, collectively devising and implementing a development strategy that reflected locally expressed priorities across a defined geographical area. Over half of the partnerships explored later in this book – whether the 330 surveyed by post or the 24 subjected to detailed case-study – were LEADER II partnerships either wholly or in part.

1.1.2 Hopes and expectations attached to local partnership working

All of this reflects a range of interrelated expectations regarding the perceived advantages of partnership working. Thus local development partnerships have been variously expected to facilitate the following.

1. Addressing multidimensional problems that are too complex and unmanageable for one organization acting alone.
2. Building consensus among otherwise divergent actors and its expression in mutually agreed integrated policies, plans and programmes of action.
3. Sharing resources – financial, human, physical – from a variety of sources, thereby increasing access to different skills and experiences and ensuring a generally more efficient and targeted use of resources.
4. Achievement of more coordinated action and programme delivery by a range of institutional and individual actors.
5. Generation of synergy or added value such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
6. Mobilization of greater community involvement, thereby ensuring an enhanced role for the voluntary and community sector and some measure of capacity building.
7. Strengthening local identity and competitiveness, thereby producing a local dynamic.
8. Encouragement of innovation, with new perspectives opening up on familiar problems.

All in all, the hope has been that partnerships respond more successfully to the diverse and interrelated issues that characterize rural areas today than do agencies and other actors working alone.

Thus there is, underlying all of this, a belief that local partnerships add value to the resources they are endowed with – that they are more than mere tools of collaboration or coordination but generators of a true partnership effect that can spur development and is therefore worth cultivating and exploiting. It is this hypothesis that is at the heart of the research upon which this book is based since, despite the existence of a considerable literature on the subject, this issue seemed both important and, prior to the Partnerships for Rural Integrated Development in Europe (PRIDE) research, not resolved satisfactorily.

1.2 The Research Objectives

Given this core focus, the research sought to achieve the following specific objectives.

1. To survey both LEADER- and non-LEADER-funded rural partnerships and analyse variables affecting their performance.
2. To characterize the practice of such rural partnerships in detail, their contexts, initiation, development, structure, links and operation.
3. To assess the impact of rural partnerships on the partners themselves and on the economic, social, cultural, political and environmental development of their local areas.
4. To identify those elements of local partnerships that induce or constrain rural development.
5. To explain the causal relations between context, practice and impact of local partnerships.
6. To propose measures to improve the performance of local partnerships in rural integrated development and related local, regional, national and EU policy.
7. To identify and communicate lessons and examples of good practice.

To achieve these ends, the PRIDE research project was divided into a series of tasks, each spanning several months and involving all six research partners. Thus the six teams each undertook broadly similar work in their home country and gradually developed new hypotheses and understanding to be drawn upon in the subsequent tasks. The five tasks were as follows:

- Research preparations (literature and methodological refinement).
- The extensive survey.
- Field studies of the practice of partnerships.
- Field studies of the impact of partnerships.
- Synthesis, conclusions and proposals.

These tasks are fully explained in the chapter on methodology (Chapter 3).

Finally, it is important to point out that the following working definition of a rural development partnership was used by the research team so as to ensure that the six national enquiries were as far as possible addressing essentially the same phenomenon:

> a voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two societal sectors (state or public-sector organizations, private companies, civil associations) with a clear organizational structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and which shows an integrated approach to the promotion of the development of rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The PRIDE project began with an extensive literature review. Its aim was to get a general overview of existing knowledge on local partnerships and rural development, to develop a conceptual framework for researching the practice and impact of local partnerships in the context of integrated rural development and to develop some early hypotheses concerning their operation and effectiveness.

That literature review was carried out in early 1999 and addressed the context, practice and impact of local partnerships in eight European countries: the UK, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Ireland and Luxemburg. And, as the increasingly global economy induces similar pressure for social and economic change in all 'advanced economies', we extended the review to embrace experience of the rural partnership phenomenon in the USA.

A second part of the literature review related to some relevant theories of organization, management, networks, planning and local development. This work was carried out to establish the general processes at work and the role that the local partnership approach plays in the globalization era. Hence the aim of the reviews of theory was to locate the emergence of local partnerships within the wider context of planning and development.

In a third component we considered the Europe-wide experience of partnership as revealed in the EU's LEADER I and II programmes.

Several hundred books, journal articles and reports were consulted and this literature demonstrated both the great variety of local partnership contexts and the richness of the partnership approach. All of this work was written up, and fully referenced, in book form and quickly

published (Westholm *et al.*, 1999). The present chapter draws heavily on that report but, given that 3 years have now elapsed, we include a brief postscript (Section 2.4) reviewing some of the more recent literature and touching on some of the developments in rural partnership practice in the main countries under scrutiny in subsequent chapters.

2.2 The Emergence of Partnerships: a 1999 Perspective

The 1999 literature review revealed considerable variation between the different countries in the emergence, operation and impact of partnerships, while confirming that the partnership approach was becoming established in planning and development across rural Europe. Although the different programmes and initiatives supported by the EU were guiding the development process in broadly the same direction in all member states, there was a substantial spatial unevenness, reflecting the various social and economic contexts. And, while the partnership approach had been introduced and established in the 1980s in the UK (Cherrett, 1999) and in Ireland (Moseley, 1999), it was more of a novelty in the nordic countries and in southern Europe. In the nordic countries, though, cooperation between the public sector and the civil society was already well established in their rural areas.

What common features were identified regarding the environments that are supportive of partnerships? The review revealed that the local partnership was part of an attractive solution to a variety of economic and political challenges.

When partnerships were first established in the UK it was partly a consequence of the gradual centralization of the public sector, which was withdrawing economic resources from local authorities (Cherrett, 1999). The latter were thereby forced to look for new institutional arrangements in order to sustain their influence over the local territory. The succeeding Labour administration, coming to power in 1997, was promoting the combination of a market-led economy with a redistributive social policy, involving an approach to the role of the public sector commonly referred to as 'governance' (e.g. Goodwin, 1998). Partnership formation could to some extent be seen as a response to these new ways of linking the sectors together.

In Ireland, a number of rural problems relating to unemployment, depopulation, poverty, etc., had been the driving force behind a rapid growth of rural partnerships. The process had been facilitated by the fact that the public sector, based on a centralized state, was unable to tackle the problems alone. The problems of decline and poverty in rural areas, together with the emergence of new possibilities through the European Structural Funds, have created new local, multi-agency institutions (Moseley, 1999). So, both in Ireland and in the UK, by the late

1990s, local partnerships spanned a whole range of activities, from economic diversification programmes to measures to combat social exclusion and to promote conservation alongside agriculture and other land-based activities. LEADER provided one example of a programme that proved able to build bridges between the private, public and voluntary sectors in such an environment.

In Finland, where local cooperation had strong roots, partnerships were emerging as a way of stimulating joint responsibility in circumstances where centralized and public-sector solutions had failed (Härkönen and Kahila, 1999). According to Katajamäki (1998), the need for local partnership had become obvious when national measures and centralized solutions proved insufficient to grapple with the key problems of Finland: by the 1990s, there was mass unemployment as well as long-term unemployment, and new jobs were often temporary or part-time. The local initiatives were not new, however, the rural areas having a long tradition of cooperation with local community groups working to improve the local society. By the end of the 1990s, there were more than 3000 local community groups in the Finnish countryside. These played a vital role in the implementation of the new rural policy based on programmes for integrated development.

In Sweden, the context of rural partnerships was more directly linked to the decentralization of power and responsibilities from the state to local government. Decentralization and deregulation, in combination with limited financial resources in the public sector during the 1990s, had forced local authorities to look for partners to cooperate with in order to fulfil their tasks. Before that, the traditional dominance of the public sector, emanating from the interventionist era of the welfare state, had for two decades been constraining public–private cooperation. For instance, the LEADER II programme, with its partnership orientation, was experiencing difficulties in Sweden because the traditionally powerful local authorities were unwilling to release their co-financing resources. Evaluations of the LEADER and Objective 5b programmes were indicating that public administrations retained power over financial resources in their own hands. What lay behind this, of course, was a larger question: were these new partnerships a legitimate power base, a new kind of democracy or merely a new way of cooperation in the normal exchange of ideas and experience (Westholm, 1999b)?

Thus the nordic countries emerged as having a quite rich institutional structure in rural areas, traditionally based on the agricultural and forestry sectors. In much of southern Europe, however, there were fewer examples of rural partnerships to be found. With a less-developed institutional structure in rural areas, the partnership approach appeared there to offer an option to counteract the local initiative vacuum created by traditional top-down policies. In conse-

quence, LEADER and similar programmes had perhaps an even more vital role to play in these countries in the 1990s – as a process developing institutions and networks that could in turn give rise to economic development and strength. And so, by the late 1990s, supporting partnerships had become a way of stimulating institutions, local economic operators, banks, trade unions and others to build networks beyond the agricultural sector and thus to enlarge the social base for economic development.

This was clearly the case in Italy, where marked territorial differences had provided a variety of contexts for partnerships in different parts of the country. Major differences could be discerned between, first, the southern regions, where the economy was weaker and more dependent, secondly, the north-west, with its experience of economic and social restructuring following the problems of traditional large-scale industry, and, thirdly, the centre–north-east, with its booming system of small and medium-sized industries (Campennì and Sivini, 1999). But, in all of Italy, the partnership approach had become important only in the latter part of the 1990s, influenced by theories of bottom-up development. The integrated use of the different forms of support and finance for development actions and the introduction of useful forms of partnership were beginning to be seen as necessary preconditions for obtaining positive results. In this regard, three main forms of partnership had developed in Italy: industrial districts, the LEADER programme and territorial pacts. The latter two were firmly based on external funding programmes.

In Spain, the limited existence of partnerships, at least until the mid-1990s, was attributed to two main factors (Esparcia *et al.*, 1999): first, the relatively young democratic tradition and, secondly, the political and administrative structure of central–regional–local authorities, each of them having well-delimited powers. At the local level, local authorities, as democratically elected bodies, were traditionally dominant actors, taking decisions for the whole community that they represented. In Spain, the LEADER programme was the most important rural development scheme in the 1990s and it was more or less replicated by the PRODER – the national government's equivalent programme.

In Germany also, the eastern parts of the country, where communism prevailed until 1989, had had no history of community-based local action and the partnership approach to planning and development had encountered some difficulties. In other parts of Germany, however, local partnerships were able to fit into the traditions of regionalism and cooperation. The decentralized structure of the government proved there to be conducive for bottom-up strategies and for the formation of partnerships (Lückenkötter, 1999a). But, there too, the public-sector institutions tended to dominate the partnerships.

In Luxemburg, rural development policy had been developed in the context of the EU Structural Funds reform of 1989. Thereafter, it followed the cross-sectoral approach to development advocated in the Commission's influential report, on *The Future of Rural Society* (Commission of the European Communities, 1988). In the course of the 1990s, a new development approach was developed which combined an input from the local population in rural areas (the bottom-up approach) with cooperation between municipalities, the central government and non-governmental organizations (Dichter and Lückenkötter, 1999).

The review of experience in the USA revealed that basically the same processes were also at work there. Fekade (1999) described the process of internationalization of production that had 'hollowed out' the state – upwards to supranational organizations, outwards to international networks (e.g. US–Mexico trade organizations) and downwards to local states. The downward shift towards the local state was to:

> facilitate a greater emphasis on economic regeneration and competitiveness [through] new forms of local partnerships … between local unions, local chambers of commerce, local venture capital, local education bodies, local research centres … and local states … to regenerate the local economy.
>
> (Jones, 1998)

In the US case, more emphasis seemed to be laid on economic competitiveness and on private–public partnerships compared with the experience of the European countries.

A general conclusion emerging from this cross-national review of local partnership emergence in the 1990s was that the presence of community organizations had a key influence – together with various forms of government encouragement. With so many partners involved in development initiatives, there was a need and a driving force for the creation of genuine cooperation within partnership structures. Furthermore, well-developed traditions of self-government, both within the public sector and in non-governmental organizations, facilitated the emergence of partnerships. Another key factor in this respect seemed to be the absence of one strong party being dominant in terms of power and responsibilities. Some kind of initiative vacuum, in combination with an institutional thickness, appeared to be a breeding-ground for partnerships. Finally, there was the existence of rural and regional policies which explicitly required partnership operation; the chance of budget enlargement clearly brought the different parties together, often in targeted actions to implement specific programmes.

2.3 The Impact of Partnerships: a 1999 Perspective

What has been the impact, the value added to the local development process, of working in partnerships? What might partnerships have achieved that the agencies working alone or in traditional ways could

not? The literature review helped to clarify what was already known in this respect and what had still to be investigated. It indicated that evaluations and studies of partnerships were primarily focused on organizational and administrative aspects or else they involved a rather crude arithmetic exercise of recording jobs supposedly created or businesses established. Such studies were rarely linked to developmental effects of a more fundamental nature.

The problem of determining causal links in development processes was obviously one reason for this relative lack of knowledge. Observed changes in the environment of a project cannot easily be proved to be caused by the project intervention. This is especially true as the formation of partnerships is just one phenomenon in a broader process of change affecting the social and economic context of rural areas. The globalization of the economy, the internationalization of politics and the information technology (IT) revolution are examples of parallel processes affecting rural change in Europe. Thus, although there are plenty of data on, for instance, the number of new jobs created and local people starting firms, there are obvious difficulties in linking these data with specific programmes or organizational models. A partial solution to this problem was to undertake more qualitative analysis based on in-depth case studies (which, in due course, was what the PRIDE project attempted – see below).

Another reason for the relative lack of knowledge in the late 1990s of the impact of partnership-based programmes was that that kind of locally integrated planning and development was still at an early stage. The UK was partly an exception since the partnership approach had been launched there at the beginning of the 1980s in urban areas. Within the field of integrated rural development, however, the experience was still in its infancy and, taking into account the long-term nature of the process of establishing a new rural economy, it was only to be expected that successes and failures would be recognized only after a few years had elapsed. Despite these reservations, however, at least some impact-related experiences were presented in each of the country-specific literature reviews.

In the case of Ireland, some conclusions on the impact of partnerships could be drawn from evaluations of LEADER I (Kearney *et al.*, 1994) and LEADER II (Kearney and Associates, 1997), of the PESP programme (Craig and McKeown, 1994; OECD, 1996) and of the Local Partnership Programme (Goodbody Economic Consultants, 1998). These various reports generally contained plenty of data on the numbers of jobs created, small firms started, unemployed people placed on training courses and local people starting their own businesses. But these output figures seemed of questionable value because it was rarely clear what would have happened anyway without the programme; thus, for example, were the various jobs genuinely created by the work of the partnership or just accommodated (Moseley, 1999)?

With that in mind, the main achievements in Ireland attributed by the various commentators whose work was reviewed included: building up the capacity of voluntary and community organizations, securing 'co-finance' or matching funding for local projects, levering into the development process a good deal of voluntary input and creating a learning process such that the various agencies and individuals involved became more aware of and more skilled in local development.

In Germany, knowledge of the experience of rural partnerships came mainly from the evaluations of LEADER I and, according to them, measures had been successfully implemented in all kind of activities (Geissendörfer *et al.*, 1998) – tourism, start-up companies by local people, improvement of the physical or environmental infrastructure, etc. The literature (Lückenkötter, 1999a) suggested that socio-economic changes were often seen as the most important partnership effects. These effects generally related to bringing sector-oriented public agencies and funding programmes together, to increased communication between various local actors and to creating a learning process across the sectors. Generally, public-sector dominance seemed to be strong in all kinds of public–private–voluntary partnerships in Germany. However, concerning the true value added by rural development partnerships in Germany, little was known before the launch of the PRIDE research programme.

In Spain, there were and are two main types of programmes for rural integrated development based on local partnerships – LEADER and PRODER. The introduction of this kind of integrated programme in the 1990s, built on broad alliances, was mainly a consequence of EU membership. In addition, there were the 'mancommunidades', comprising neighbouring local authorities coming together to benefit from economies of scale in public service provision. The overall conclusion in the literature review (Esparcia *et al.*, 1999) was that there were really no studies in the Spanish context of the actual impact that such partnerships might be having on local development, institutional structures, social change, etc. However, one important issue could be identified: the introduction of LEADER in Spain had been the starting point of a process stimulating formal organizations of local actors to start thinking strategically about the development of their areas. With LEADER, the leading (and exclusive) role of the local authorities in the development process was questioned and other social and economic actors felt that they also had something to say. Another relevant consequence of the existence of LEADER partnerships was the high level of mobilization of the population in the areas, this being expressed in financial commitments and also in terms of community involvement.

The Italian literature review revealed the importance of a well-functioning local society for successful partnership-based development (Campennì and Sivini, 1999). This capacity for cooperation and the

presence of a network of trust represented crucial resources and were generally influenced by local identities. The embedding of a district in a local community seemed to be a key characteristic, as it made the circulation of information and the monitoring of behaviour easier – strengthening trust and isolating those who failed to respect the common goals (Becattini, 1989). The experiences documented in the literature confirmed that rural development programmes were successful only when there was a guarantee of participation and therefore the acceptance of common goals. The greater the involvement of local institutions and economic and social operators in identifying the needs, the less was the risk of a false diagnosis (Gaudio and Pesce, 1997).

Again, drawing on Italy's experience of LEADER, some difficulties were identified. The lack of solid experience in integrating the management of rural territory caused delays in the phases of planning, implementation and management. The problems recorded were mainly of a financial/administrative and organizational nature but they limited the possible benefits accruing to the territories concerned. One frequently suggested way of overcoming these problems involved the public administration offering to local operators the instruments to govern and to put the projects into practice.

In the UK there was a large amount of literature on the impact or evaluation of partnerships (Cherrett, 1999). Although most partnership studies related to a regional or urban context, they were clearly relevant to governance and partnership issues in rural areas too. Thus Peck and Tickell (1994) issued a set of warnings based on a study of regional economic partnerships in the north-west. These included:

- partnerships are more to do with qualifying for funding than any new spirit of cooperation or effectiveness of policy delivery;
- partnerships are unlikely to resolve major local conflicts or disputes;
- partnerships are unlikely to provide a long-term strategic framework;
- partnerships are insulated from local democratic accountability; and
- partnerships sometimes exacerbate problems of poor coordination and proliferation.

Based on their study, Peck and Tickell (1994) draw the conclusion that such shortcomings were the result of a 'mass produced kind of partnership'.

In the second half of the 1990s, there were a number of other studies and commissioned evaluations of specific projects or programmes involving partnerships in the UK. Shortall and Shucksmith (1998), for example, reviewed the LEADER I rural partnerships in Scotland and questioned their legitimacy and their sustainability in the absence of clear formal links with local and national government. They argued that integrated rural development partnerships were likely to be ephemeral and to disappear with the EU funding responsible for their creation.

They also raised specific questions concerning the following:

- Whether social and community development is viewed as a means to economic development, or as an end in itself.
- Confusion over LEADER roles and relations with other bodies, including other 'local rural partnerships'.
- The need for an appropriate time-scale for capacity building.
- The need for better-trained animators and facilitators.

Evaluations of the LEADER II experiences in the UK had tended to concentrate on financial and operational matters. But some policy and implementation issues were also raised (summarized by Cherrett, 1999). These included: concern about the long-term sustainability of the community development process; the importance of effective and structured communication with other partners across all sectors; the limited evidence of ideas and best practice being transferred; the necessary capacity building being constrained by lack of co-finance; and the need for improved measures for monitoring and evaluation. With regard to the evaluation of partnerships, Cherrett (1999) highlighted several problems: the lack of data, the difficulties of linking input with outcomes and the long-term nature of many initiatives.

In Finland, partnerships focused on integrated rural development had only been operating since 1996, following the Finnish membership of the EU. Two programmes were in the forefront – LEADER II and POMO, the latter being a national scheme for areas not included in the LEADER process. The most important achievements reported by 1999 were process-oriented, particularly the idea of a new way of working in which local parties were attempting together to reduce unemployment in their own area. Partnership initiatives showed that this mode of activity was indeed possible and was opening the way to a new culture of joint responsibility (Härkönen and Kahila, 1999: 134). Unemployment was a key issue for Finnish partnerships in rural areas. Employment opportunities offered by the third sector had been discussed for several years and there were some partnership initiatives to facilitate the job-creating options of the social economy.

One problem reported by Katajamäki (1998) was that the local partnerships had to face a demand for practical results too early, with the threat that their funding might be jeopardized if there were no results during the first year. According to Katajamäki (1998), local partnerships had first to become an 'ideology' before they could start to bring about genuine results.

In Sweden also, late entry into the EU had meant that there was less experience of partnership-based EU programmes. But cooperation between the sectors, especially between the public and the third sector, had a long tradition in rural Sweden and such 'partnerships' had been operating for many years, some of them 'spontaneously', outside all

national programmes. These partnerships, surviving without funding, may have important lessons to offer about the long-term sustainability of partnerships. There has also been a rapid expansion of the social economy in Sweden and by the late 1990s cooperatives and local community groups had taken over many public services – for example, much of child care and health care (Lorendahl, 1998).

Evaluations and studies of the operation of the EU Structural Funds in Sweden in the 1990s had focused more on the implementation processes than on the results. They merely analysed the organization of decision making and the flow of money at a national and regional level and compared the national aims with the overall EU aims for the programmes (e.g. Bull Consulting, 1997; IM-gruppen, 1997a,b). They also discussed organizational changes and the money flow in the projects (e.g. Aalbu, 1998). A rather slow start to the delivery of projects was reported (Bull Consulting, 1997) with suggested explanations being a lack of information at the local level and insufficient resources for project administration. One problem with partnerships in Sweden had been the difficulty of executing decisions: when a partnership reached a conclusion, it often had no executive power to give it effect (Westholm, 1999a). Also, Elander (1998) pointed to the problem that no institution had the main responsibility for partnership decisions.

The experience of rural partnerships in Luxemburg was limited but nevertheless, as a result of the partnerships, various projects and measures had been implemented. National parks had been set up and the LEADER programmes had developed projects dealing with agriculture, tourism, local heritage and economic development. The most important experiences so far, though, involved qualitative change in the developmental processes in rural areas. Rural partnerships, which stretched over several municipalities and included a wide range of different public and private actors, had strengthened the social ties between these organizations and led to new subregional identities. In the case of LEADER, this had resulted in extended regional cooperation, even across national government levels and agencies. Another qualitative improvement had been the increased coordination between governmental levels and agencies. Rural partnerships had served as focal points and testing grounds for institutionalizing cooperation between public organizations and local representatives of the private and voluntary organizations (Geissendörfer and Seibert, unpublished report).

In the USA, the most prominent partnerships were recent and government promoted. The federal government was supporting this through significant competitive grants upon which the partnerships could draw if their applications were successful. The process of competition among the applicant local communities provided them with a valuable learning process on how to organize themselves, how to network with public, private and non-profit organizations, how to prepare

strategic plans, how to master the intricate processes of applying for funds and how to understand the details of how government functions (Fekade, 1999). Some key features of a successful partnership were reported to be a committed political leadership, the existence of formal and informal public structures involving the stakeholders and a politically neutral entity in which stakeholders were able to work together.

2.4 A 2002 Postscript to the Literature Review

In the 3 years since the PRIDE literature review was undertaken, the rural development circumstances of each country have moved on – and so has the related literature. Here we shall very briefly and selectively bring the review more up to date. Each national section below has been drafted by the appropriate national researcher of the former PRIDE research team.

2.4.1 Finland

Since around 1999, Finnish rural policy may be construed as a mixture of 'broad rural policy' and 'narrow rural policy'. Broad rural policy is that which seeks to influence action implemented within and through the different administrative sectors, while narrow rural policy relates specifically to the measures and tools targeted at rural development.

The most important actor in Finnish rural policy is the National Rural Policy Committee; it is responsible for the implementation of various projects and it puts into practice both the 'LEADER Plus' initiative and various nationally funded partnerships. However, until now broad rural policy has been rather ineffectual and it is still 'invisible' for most actors at the local level. Katajamäki *et al.* (2001) and Valtakari (1999) have both been critical of broad rural policy and emphasize a need to reconstruct rural policy to be more all-inclusive in its nature. In that regard, we should note the new national programme *The Rural Policy Programme: Countryside for the People – Rural Policy Based on Will* (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2001), which will be put into effect between now and the end of 2003. It is intended to bring together various sectors and actors in the first comprehensive and homogeneous promotion of vitality of countryside.

Finland's rural policy is mainly based on the development work of partnerships, local and regional authorities and other actors at the local level. LEADER II partnerships are generally considered to have been successful in their development work. But, despite this, many of the activities of the various LEADER partnerships were quite scattered; there were too many detached development projects, too little coopera-

tion between separate actors and the desired total view of development work in the countryside remained defective (Kahila *et al.*, 2002). However, the LEADER II initiative did strengthen local involvement in development work. The local partnerships worked up some new types of action and promoted local identity and social relationships within the local communities (Hyyryläinen and Rannikko, 2000). Now, after launching 25 new LEADER Plus partnerships, national rural policy in Finland has emphasized the importance of comprehensive development work in rural areas. These LEADER Plus partnerships have been complemented by seven nationally and 24 regionally funded local partnerships. Thus the importance of the National Rural Policy Committee is even greater than before. There is now a good chance of crystallizing and confirming partnership working as a major approach to development work at both the regional and the local level.

One English-language review of local development partnerships in Finland is that undertaken by O'Cinneide (2000) for the OECD. His concern was with the ability of local partnerships to attack long-term unemployment. By means of three case studies (two of them in essentially rural areas), O'Cinneide concluded that such partnerships have usefully lowered intersectoral barriers, promoted community participation and delivered many valuable and often innovative job-creating projects on the ground. But he identified various weaknesses – relating to a lack of clarity in the function and role of such partnerships, some exclusion in their composition, inadequate and often short-term funding and weak national steering of the partnership programme.

2.4.2 Germany

In Germany, LEADER II and the preparations for LEADER Plus functioned as important catalysts for institutional learning processes. In many rural areas that received or prepared for LEADER funding, local actors engaged for the first time in cross-sectoral, area-based and planning-oriented organizations like the Local Action Groups. This resulted in closer cooperation and joint projects among local actors, but also changed the participating organizations' views and operations (Lückenkötter, 2001). The partnership coordinators played a crucial role in this regard and, with time, gained experience in how to integrate institution building, project management and the handling of funds. For this they benefited from the numerous training courses, conferences and the practice-oriented journal provided by the very active national LEADER coordinating unit (Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle LEADER II, 1998).

In addition, the respective national and regional agencies learned over time how to reconcile their sometimes overdetailed bureaucratic regulations with the more flexible working style of the partnerships.

The preparations for LEADER Plus have also shown (besides the usual delays due to the EU notification procedures) that the regional governments have learned and improved their methodologies and operations with regard to the systematic selection of partnerships (Pfeifer, 2002). Thus, besides its economic, social and environmental outputs, LEADER II has set into motion learning processes that have substantially spurred the cooperation and professionalization of local organizations, partnership coordinators and the national and regional agencies supporting rural development partnerships.

The partnership approach is now also spilling over into other funding programmes. In the mid-1990s, the federal government launched the high-profile contest 'Regions of the Future' and in the late 1990s the technology-oriented funding programme 'InnoRegio'. In 2001, the regional/agricultural development-oriented 'RegionenAktiv' programme was launched (BMVEL, 2001). All these federal programmes and similar regional government programmes (e.g. Hessisches Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Verkehr und Landesentwicklung, 2002) follow an area-based, public–private partnership approach to regional development. Even the GAK, perhaps the most important mainstream funding programme for rural development, now also makes provision for the funding of regional management. It thus appears that in Germany the partnership approach is not confined to the LEADER programme any more but is becoming more generally accepted and is on its way into the mainstream programmes.

2.4.3 Italy

In Italy in recent years, there has been a concerted attempt by economists and sociologists to adapt and adopt the notion of endogenous development (Cersosimo, 2000) as a tool of rural development (Iacoponi, 1998).

Economic success is increasingly viewed as dependent not only on the local entrepreneurial capacity, but also on the quality of the socio-institutional context. In particular, attention is increasingly being focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of local institutions and on the existence of formal and informal networking at the local level (Cersosimo, 2000). The idea is that key local actors share relations not only within one specific network, but also with members belonging to other networks (Bagnasco, 1999). As a consequence, great importance is placed on the role of social capital, particularly in its collective dimension (Bianco and Eve, 1999; Piselli, 1999).

In a globalized world, accumulated and embedded knowledge, so-called tacit knowledge, represents a major plus for the development of a given area (Trigilia, 1999). In this framework, relationships with external

experiences also become relevant. The existence of intermediate structures, capable of transferring and adapting external knowledge, produces a competitive advantage for the territory concerned. In operational terms, this brings us to the creation of partnerships, defined in general as 'agreements between public institutions and/or between public and private institutions'. If partnerships are really representative of the local diversified interests, they can successfully operate to break the traditional top-down regulation system (Saraceno, 1999). The focus is therefore increasingly on the role of local public institutions, which have different patterns of action in different contexts, integrating particularistic and personal relations with formalized and standard rules in what may be termed the 'neo-institutionalist' approach to development (Lanzalaco, 1999).

In Italy, such perspectives have been adopted by local public institutions only recently. Producing a change in the orientation of local administrators remains a long and difficult process. In particular, local institutions often do not afford equal dignity to other local actors and they still tend to exhibit a desire to dominate (Mirabelli, 2001).

2.4.4 Spain

There has been little or no recent literature on rural development partnerships in Spain. What follows, therefore, is based on informal evidence acquired by the former PRIDE team in Valencia.

They note that local partnerships for rural development in Spain continue to be based principally upon the LEADER Plus and PRODER II structures. These partnerships are very dependent on external funding and most of them are project-oriented. Partnerships having diversified sources of funding or being productive in a non-project sense are rare.

However, two new processes are worthy of mention: first, the adoption of the partnership principle in other EU local development programmes, extending it to medium-size and large towns (the EQUAL and URBAN programmes) but also to other rural areas (the INTERREG programme); secondly, the implementation of Agenda 21 is accelerating. The latter is a process that promotes a strategic planning process to define a sustainable development model at the local level. It is participatory and, in this sense, it too promotes the establishment of local partnerships at the county and subcounty level. However, these Agenda 21 partnerships are almost always promoted by the regional authorities; the local partnerships exist primarily to meet the participation requirement of the programme and generally lack objectives beyond the end of the process.

As for LEADER and PRODER partnerships, although many have been active for more than a decade now, the majority have not crossed the line to produce sustainable local cooperation. In other words, most

are still dependent on a single programme, are project-oriented and lack a real sense of strategic planning. Worse, there does not seem to be a direct relationship between the age of a partnership and its understanding of the strategic nature of local cooperation.

In this regard, local elected representatives and the regional authorities are not playing the leading strategic role that they should. In some cases, they are the ones inhibiting the process – through a lack of political interest, a lack of skill, etc. Regional differences are marked in this respect. Note, for example, Andalucia, where consolidated Centres for Rural Development are getting involved in the implementation of public initiatives beyond LEADER or PRODER, and, conversely, the Comunidad Valenciana, where the regional government is illegally restricting the role of social actors in local partnerships.

2.4.5 Sweden

In Sweden too, there has been little new literature on the role of rural partnerships in local development – often the partnership phenomenon is treated as part of a wider consideration of governance. But Larsson (2000) carried out a study of Swedish rural partnerships based on interviews with representatives of the 12 Swedish LEADER II partnerships. He identified a set of guiding principles – a LEADER ideology – that seem to govern the local action groups in their work. These include trust, engagement, consensus, process orientation, informal networks and the importance of a key person. Another conclusion was that the public sector had dominated the agenda and direction of the LEADER II partnerships. In LEADER Plus, however, the limited number of representatives indicates that the influence of the public sector will diminish.

In another paper, Elander (1999) stresses the problem of representativeness and the democratic structure of partnerships. He emphasizes the fragmentation of politics resulting from these more diffuse forms of decision making. For Elander (1999) these changes go alongside internationalization and can be seen as elements of the deconstruction of the welfare state. The main problem with decision making based on partnerships, he argues, is the unclear mandates and powers of the participants. Olsson (2000) extends this discussion to the regional level, discussing the democratic implications of partnership working at the regional level.

2.4.6 UK

Several evaluations and critiques of rural development partnerships in different parts of the UK have emerged in the last 2–3 years.

Most notable is a study of some 150 rural partnerships in rural Wales and a neighbouring English county (Edwards *et al.*, 2000). It concludes that neither the local communities nor the private sector has been sufficiently involved in rural development, with the public sector tending to dominate the agendas and operation of the partnerships. The study suggests a list of key issues that rural policy needs to address if area-based partnerships are to continue as the preferred mode of delivery of socio-economic development programmes.

- Top-down agendas – the need to allow room for local initiatives.
- Partnership-poor areas – an uneven spread of regeneration initiatives.
- Sustainability – the need for longer lead times and capacity building to help continue regeneration beyond the funding period.
- Training – especially for those in the voluntary and community sectors.
- Social inclusion – tackling the inequalities within each local community: who is being empowered?
- Legitimacy and accountability – overcoming the barriers of distance, compliance and deference that exist in many small communities.
- Long-term commitment – the need for a strong ministerial lead, regional coordination and visionary local leadership to ensure a long-term commitment to sustainable regeneration at all levels of government.

As for Scotland, the University of Aberdeen Arkleton Centre (2001) has provided an overview of the 'mushrooming of local rural partnerships' occurring in that country. More specifically, the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2000) has evaluated just one of these partnership programmes – the Local Rural Partnership Scheme – which was established in 1996 as a way of drawing more local people into the rural development process and, by 2000, embraced 37 local partnerships. The authors found in many cases the partnerships to be rather weak in both strategic planning and systematic community involvement.

Looking ahead, a number of LEADER Plus programmes, promoting the LEADER philosophy of rural development in defined areas within each of the four constituent parts of the UK, are now (2002) getting under way (DEFRA, 2001). But a potentially more significant new development is the launch of a Community Planning process in each local authority area of the UK. This involves the creation of local strategic partnerships centred on the local authorities but incorporating other public-sector actors as well as representatives of the private, community and voluntary sectors. Their task is to ensure that the key issues affecting local people – such as crime, jobs, education, health and housing – are tackled in a more integrated way than hitherto, based on genuine local consultation. In time, this could amount to a major spur to local partnership working, though not necessarily with an explicitly rural focus.

2.4.7 Ireland

In the case of Ireland, area-based, partnership-managed rural development programmes are continuing (McDonagh, 2001), albeit now in a national context of rapid economic growth and very low unemployment – a picture that conceals, however, some continuing social and economic problems away from the main urban growth centres and especially in the rural west. Two reviews of the LEADER II programme each point to a mixture of clear success in supporting the creation of jobs – around 4220 according to the interim *ex post* evaluation by Kearney and Associates (2001) – with a need for continuing vigilance and vigour as regards the genuine involvement of the local community and partnership working. Thus Storey (1999) suggests that LEADER II has been less an example of bottom-up development than an example of the 'top-down incorporation of local activism'.

Another relevant item of post-1999 literature is an article by the PRIDE team (Moseley *et al.*, 2001), which, in addition to reporting some of the results of the Irish component of the survey of partnerships to be reported in Chapter 4 below, places this evidence in the context of the Irish government's continuing and multifaceted attempts to foster a partnership approach to rural development across the republic.

2.4.8 Some cross-national studies

In addition to the various single-nation studies of the partnership experience referred to above (and they are only a sample of a now burgeoning literature), we should mention some other, cross-national, reviews of the local partnership experience, which were undertaken more or less simultaneously with the PRIDE project and therefore unable to influence the direction of our own work.

Two substantial and relevant reports have been produced by OECD. The first (OECD, 1999) is a product of its LEED (Local Economic and Development) Programme and is designed to crystallize good practice in local development – with partnership obviously being a key consideration in that respect. It is based on various case studies in essentially rural regions notably in Ireland, Spain and Portugal. The second, entitled *Local Partnerships for Better Governance* (OECD, 2001), has much the same focus, though it is based on the experience of six EU member states plus the USA. Together they review a wide range of institutional arrangements, all with some sort of partnership element, for delivering local development and a general emerging theme is the importance of tailoring such arrangements carefully to respect local contexts. That said, the two reports cover and reinforce some familiar ground relating to community involvement, capacity building and the dangers of too

top-down an approach, and enthusiastically endorse the local partnership approach to development.

As for LEADER, it is too soon to assess its third phase, the so-called LEADER Plus programme (2001–2006), but 2000 and 2001 saw a flurry of evaluative papers emerging from the Brussels-based LEADER Observatory, distilling the major lessons learned from the LEADER II programme as it drew to its conclusion. Some of this material is summarized in issues of *LEADER Magazine* (e.g. no. 23 relating to 'the added value of LEADER' and no. 25 on 'the European rural model'). For a fuller listing of the Observatory's output on such themes, see, for example, the bibliography and brief critique in Moseley (2003).

Certainly local partnerships lie at the heart of the LEADER Plus programme. A Commission statement at the time of its launch (included as a supplement in the LEADER Observatory's *Info LEADER* no. 78 (2000)) made clear that 'the beneficiaries will (again) be Local Action Groups … [which] must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the territory concerned', adding revealingly that 'not more than 50 percent of a local partnership may be made up of government officials and elected office holders'. And by far the greatest share of the €2 billion earmarked by the Commission for LEADER Plus (with at least matching funding from national and local sources) will be aimed at 'support for integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature based on the bottom-up approach and horizontal partnerships'.

Thus this brief postscript to the 1999 literature review confirms that the local partnership approach remains as central to rural development thinking as it was at the start of the PRIDE research project 3 years ago.

2.5 A Theoretical Perspective

The 1999 literature survey also provided a starting point for the subsequent research by introducing theoretical contexts for the study of partnership. In this respect the aim was not to overcome the problems of eclecticism or to produce a final theory of partnerships. Rather, illuminating the partnership approach from different theoretical perspectives was a way of getting a better understanding of the general social and economic and political changes of which the partnership approach is one consequence. The various bodies of theory, produced by different researchers in various European countries, made it evident that fundamental changes in modern society are altering the way that social and economic change is conceptualized.

Thus, taken together, literature concerning theories of organization, management, networks, planning and rural development might help explain the nature and behaviour of each of the three basic parts of the

society that make up our partnerships – the private sector, the public sector and the voluntary/community sector – and the ways they interact. All these theories have developed in a similar direction and might be able to explain why participation in partnerships appears to be some sort of imperative for the different actors. Such was the rationale of this part of the work. It is written up in greater detail in Westholm *et al.* (1999).

2.5.1 Organization theory

Theories of organization have been almost exclusively developed with the private sector in mind. Early organization theory saw organizations as rational systems (Scott, 1981). Their behaviour could be seen as actions performed by purposeful and coordinated agents in organizations that were construed as isolated entities, separated from the environment (Stenlås, 1998). Later theories recognized that there was also an informal structure and that their actions were the result of negotiations between interest groups and persons. A more open approach to organizations was developed and the surrounding milieu came into focus. It was recognized that organizations are open systems that must adapt to their environment in order to survive or prosper. In the next phase, organization theory highlighted the ability of organizations to influence the decisions of other organizations. So, for the private sector, there was a development of theories moving forward from an understanding of the organization as a rational, top-down and closed unit to an open-systems view, in which negotiations and interplay with the surrounding world are key elements. In this context, the partnership may be seen as a new mode of coordination between organizations (Stenlås, 1998).

2.5.2 Planning theory

Planning theory has essentially comprised a corresponding set of theories for the public sector. Planning theory also started by seeing planning as a rational foundation for the political decision-making process. In its purest sense planning was viewed as a scientific-technical process without any interference from outside. Later, the importance of the surrounding society became more clearly recognized and planning came to be conceived as a process of exchange with local actors, including citizens and users. In the next phase, a constant dialogue was built into planning theory as an ideal, and planning became a continuing and integrated learning process (Lückenkötter, 1999b). Thus planners today are seen as organizing processes whose final destination they do not know at the outset (Ganser and Sieverts, 1993; Ganser *et al.*, 1993; Häusserman and Siebel, 1993). Obviously the partnership approach fits naturally into modern planning theory.

2.5.3 Rural development theory

The early theories of rural development underlying rural policies were developed during the agricultural productivist era up to the 1970s and were therefore largely oriented towards the developmental effects of the changing agricultural structures. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the theoretical considerations of rural development became increasingly concerned with broader perspectives encompassing all important issues of relevance for the individual and collective vitality of rural people and places. An increasing concern with educational matters, with the environment, with individual and public health, housing, public services and facilities, capacity for leadership and governance and the importance of local culture followed. In effect, this view has reflected a spatial or territorial as opposed to a sectoral approach to rural development (OECD, 1990).

Another trend within rural development theories has been a gradual shift from emphasizing the macro-economy and globalization processes to a focus on the significance of the endogenous potential of regions. As development has come to be understood as relying on local social, economic and cultural resources, the potential of the local community has increasingly moved to the centre of rural development theory. Therefore, the different actors and their roles in the local society have become a key focus of research on developmental processes. Attention is paid to the different governmental actors and the private sector but also increasingly to the importance of inviting the voluntary sector to participate in development processes and indeed of seeing local capacity building as a key to long-term success. Not surprisingly, therefore, rural development theory increasingly points to local partnerships as an appropriate tool for rural development.

Indeed, the definition of development as used in the PRIDE project reflects this increasing endogenous and local/territorial emphasis: 'a sustained process of economic, social cultural political and environmental change leading to improved living conditions in a defined geographical area'.

2.5.4 These theories viewed together

Looking at these various developments of theory together elucidates how the transformation of society into an increasingly global, complex and diffuse milieu has influenced the way that we conceptualize our environment. The change from a top-down rationale governing the political and economic systems to an openness to a variety of views, opinions and solutions calls for appropriate learning processes to be established in rural regions. In short, the development of new activities

in rural areas rests on the ability to combine local resources in a way that increases the competitiveness of the region. Thus the knowledge-based economy has entered rural societies.

Applying this realization to the rise of the partnership phenomenon requires a digression to consider the changing role of the state. State authority has traditionally been largely based on its power over resources and expertise; state bodies could claim to know the best way of building, the most efficient way of managing forestry, how to take care of children and elderly people, etc. But the notion that increased knowledge about nature and society leads to better control and greater opportunities for directing the course of events has gradually been replaced by a realization that, instead, greater knowledge results in greater uncertainty. When the context of decision making becomes more and more complex and when decision makers have to pay attention to local as well as global processes, the option of dictating solutions and conditions correspondingly decreases. Political bodies, like their executive ministries, county administrations, municipalities, etc. can no longer base their decisions on expert knowledge. Hence, rational decisions have increasingly been replaced by a more critical attitude, by consultation and by collaboration, leading to consensus among the different actors with a stake in the issues (Beck, 1994).

In this context, government institutions seek new ways of operating. The changes take place progressively, both in political organs and in public administration, and obviously the political bodies themselves seek new solutions. This is confirmed by all the endeavours to deregulate and decentralize as well as by the search for more local forms of planning (Westholm, 1999a). In some political fields, the government may continue to finance and take responsibility but will exercise less control (Salle, 1993). In others, responsibilities are moved to a non-governmental arena by privatization or the withdrawal of public expenditure. But all systems must be more open for cooperation, for negotiation and for the discussion of a wide range of options and approaches for the resolution of problems. Partnerships may be a way of organizing these processes. An awareness of this new perspective is vital to any understanding of the combination of liberal politics and bottom-up perspectives that has established itself in almost all political situations in western economies in the last few years.

2.6 From Theory to a Research Programme

Generally, then, the 1999 literature review provided quite a detailed picture and a tentative explanation of the emergence and operation of local partnerships in rural Europe. The great variety in the natural, social, economic and, not least, the political contexts of the various parts of the

EU had been well researched in the different countries. Encouraged by EU and national policies, partnerships had emerged as a possible response to a range of concerns set in this variety of political and socio-economic contexts. The EU was driving towards an equalization and integration of the various contexts by bringing largely the same aims, rules and support to the whole of the European community. The emergence of partnerships in all the studied countries could partly be seen as a result of such general pressures.

Yet the country-specific reviews also revealed the continuing significance of space and locality in development processes. The territory, that historic sedimentation of culture, experience and practice, was continuing to produce place-specific outcomes, where endogenous processes were at work in the development process. Gaining an appreciation of these differences was clearly important for understanding the role of partnerships in rural integrated development, and territorial differences provided a basis for the comparative analysis that was subsequently carried out in the PRIDE project.

The national literature reviews also made it clear that an initiative vacuum had, in most cases, been one prerequisite for the emergence of local partnerships. The reviews of theory revealed a possible explanation for this. No organization, private or public or voluntary, can maintain a dominant role unless it is open to interplay with the surrounding environment. Political and economic changes make it necessary for organizations to continually reconsider their work and their mission and to adapt to external changes. In order to sustain their importance, they may have to redistribute tasks and missions among other organizations. The presence of well-established traditions and organizations for community development is a key element because it offers many alternative ways of distributing the roles and the tasks. In such an environment, partnerships offer an arena for this accommodation and a possible forum for exercising the redistributed tasks and missions in a way that respects the different social, economic and political contexts. How successfully they achieve this and how effectively they deliver development would require further research; the impact that these partnerships actually have on the development processes in rural areas was, at the beginning of the PRIDE research, still largely unknown.

Although the literature review was carried out as a number of country-specific reviews, some experiences seemed to be more or less independent from the context and were therefore repeated time and again. In particular, the public sector's dominance in the establishment and the operation of partnerships was something that almost all of the national reviews referred to. It seems that the acknowledged legitimacy of government, both central and local, the existence of a cadre of professional planners and managers and, of course, the financial resources that largely stem from the public sector give that sector certain advantages.

This has obvious benefits: public-sector institutions are real assets in partnerships for a number of reasons; they can often guarantee some degree of long-term sustainability in the programme, they can put money and labour into programmes, and they can ensure a fair amount of transparency and democracy.

On the other hand, the literature reviews also showed clearly that public-sector dominance might also be a problem, as neither the local communities nor the private sector was involved in the development process as fully as had generally been hoped. Striking a balance between the need for both a genuine delegation of responsibilities and resources in order actively to involve all the actors in the local community and the often legitimate demand by local politicians to take the final decision on spending public money is a key issue for the discussion on partnerships.

Concerning the impact of partnerships, it may be surprising to conclude that, in most of the reviews, emphasis was laid on the development process that partnerships have been generating rather than the projects that have actually been carried out. Although there is rich evidence that new firms and jobs, for example, have indeed been established, the causal connections were often unclear. Instead, the development processes that have been brought about via the introduction of bottom-up perspectives, the endogenous character of the programmes and the ambition to involve more actors from different sectors to get the local community engaged seemed in the literature consulted to be a more visible and perhaps more significant result and one more unambiguously linked to the introduction of the partnership approach.

What did all this imply for the PRIDE research programme? The following broad themes were later picked up at several points over the subsequent 18 months.

2.6.1 A tactical response – securing new funding

The possibility of getting additional funding is clearly a major driving force and local partnerships are sometimes a tactical response to the need to secure funding from various sources. This is perhaps an indication that many partnerships are ephemeral and may disappear with the EU funding. Thus an important issue for partnerships appeared to be to create strategies for long-term survival.

2.6.2 Public-sector dominance

The literature indicated that partnerships are seldom locally grown, with the initiative normally coming from the public sector. Partnerships are often unclear concerning their executive power. Thus partnerships

may essentially become advisory groups, with individual members constantly reporting to the separate organizations they represent. If partnerships are to actively involve the local community, it appeared that there must be a genuine delegation of responsibilities from the relevant organizations. There are also a number of issues related to public/private power relations. Are partnerships shifting power over public money towards private interests? Are partnerships best suited for creating the necessary learning processes and less suitable for actually allocating resources? Inflexibility by state agencies had sometimes been observed as one hindering factor, not least in matters of co-finance.

2.6.3 Legitimacy and representation

Several authors stressed that questions of legitimacy and representation are important when partnerships enjoy a genuine delegation of responsibilities. Partnerships are to a large degree insulated from local democratic accountability; indeed, they appear increasingly to allow private and non-governmental sectors to take what are really political decisions regarding resource allocation. Furthermore, partnerships can give increased power to local elites, at the expense of disadvantaged and excluded groups, for whom locally accountable, elected authorities have traditionally provided some sort of representation and protection. Therefore issues of transparency and visibility are critical.

2.6.4 Innovation and conservatism

It is clear that partnerships are expected to be innovative in bringing together different skills and experiences. But in reality they may well be conservative and sometimes slow as a result of their consensus-building character. Also they are generally put together by 'the establishment' and therefore organizations that are traditionally strong in the region may get a favoured position within them. Thus, they may tend to support safe rather than adventurous initiatives.

2.6.5 From projects to integrated development

Partnership-based planning and development are learning processes. Partners often lack the experience and skills necessary for strategic planning, creating networks, etc. In practice, most individual partners deliver discrete and isolated projects rather than truly integrated programmes, for which multi-agency partnerships appear to be well suited but, it seems, often fail to deliver.

2.6.6 Social exclusion/inclusion

The review of literature across Europe indicates that the endogenous development process generally involves money being made available for those individuals and organizations that can best express their interests and adapt to the demands built into the various programmes. In consequence, there is a good deal of evidence that the less articulate and more disadvantaged citizens and households have been largely excluded from partnerships.

2.6.7 Spatial differentiation

It seems that successful partnerships tend to be rewarded with further funding and vice versa. To the extent that this is true, local partnerships can be a mechanism for widening rather than narrowing social and economic disparities between individual rural areas when compared with a tradition of central and local government trying to deliver national standards across the whole country.

Going on from these key issues arising from the literature review and recalling the research objectives set out earlier in Chapter 1, we may now state the four fundamental questions that were to underlie the empirical research. These four questions were held constantly in mind as each of the subsequent research tasks were undertaken – the extensive survey, the field studies of the practice of partnership, the field studies of the impact of partnership and the feedback survey – though obviously some of those tasks were to throw more light on particular questions than others.

The four fundamental questions were:

1. What are the key characteristics of rural development partnerships in the countries examined?
2. What impact have they had on rural development?
3. What factors have significantly influenced their effectiveness in this respect?
4. What measures would improve their effectiveness in this respect?

The exploration of those questions – and some tentative answers to them – will provide the substance of this book, but first we must examine the method of exploration used. Hence the next chapter on methodology.

3 Methodology and the Execution of the Research

This chapter explains how the research project focused on specific questions and concepts, identified and adapted appropriate methods, put them into a meaningful sequence, ensured their compatibility and implemented them. (The work of the University of Dortmund team should be noted at this point. They produced an extensive methodology manual to guide the research and coordinated the methodological aspects of all phases of the work as it progressed.)

3.1 The Overall Research Design

At the conclusion of the literature review, it was clear that there remained an imperfect understanding of how local partnerships in different European countries serve as mechanisms for promoting the development of rural areas.

Four fundamental research questions had been crystallized:

1. What are the key characteristics of rural development partnerships in the countries being examined?
2. What impact have they had on rural development?
3. What factors have significantly influenced their effectiveness in this respect?
4. What measures would improve their effectiveness in this respect?

In order to explore these fundamental questions, it was clear that a host of others would need to be addressed, notably:

- How and how well do local partnerships contribute to integrated rural development?

- How and how well do local partnerships emerge from their rural governance contexts and sustain cooperation between their various actors? (institutional aspects)
- How and how well do local partnerships create positive economic effects in their rural areas? (economic aspects)
- How and how well do local partnerships address rural disparities and bring about a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources? (social aspects)
- How and how well do local partnerships foster innovation and entrepreneurship in their local areas? (socio-cultural aspects)
- How and how well do local partnerships in rural areas relate to local democratic institutions, other organizations (state, private and voluntary) and local groups? (political aspects)
- How and how well do local partnerships address environmental degradation and protect and improve the natural habitat of rural areas? (environmental aspects)

In order to consider these questions, the unit of analysis was defined as a local rural development partnership with its various communication and resource allocation processes. The working definition of a local rural development partnership, accepted by each national research team was:

> a voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two different societal sectors (e.g. local councils, cooperatives, etc.) with a clear organization structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project and which show an integrated approach towards the promotion of the development of local rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants.

A simple conceptual framework was developed to make explicit the linkages between the major concepts of the study and to provide a common reference point for the various methods to be employed in the project. This framework involved seven elements strung together in a cyclical fashion. We may conveniently begin with the context of a local partnership, which consists of its economic, social, cultural, ecological and political environment. It is this context into which a partnership is embedded and out of which partners (individuals or organizations) emerge with enough shared concerns, interests and vision to create a new organization (the partnership) with an implicit or explicit mission, defined roles and formal or informal organization structures. These are mobilized to assemble various inputs (human resources, material and financial resources, institutional networks, etc.), which are subjected to various processes (planning, decision making, staffing, resource management, implementation) so as to produce specific outputs (products and services), which directly or indirectly result in wider economic, environmental, social, cultural and political outcomes, thus transforming the initial context of the partnership.

We now go on to explain the overall design of the research project, meaning the structure that links the research questions, hypotheses and concepts outlined above with the methods used for data collection, analysis and presentation. First it was necessary to consider three fundamental methodological issues:

1. An inductive or deductive approach? Research consists of empirical observation (data) and organized concepts that predict data (theory). Whether one should move from theory to data (deduction) or from data to theory (induction) is a matter of convention and practicality *vis-à-vis* the research object. Within the framework of this research project, both approaches were used, as there were some dimensions of the problem under study for which concepts and theories already existed and other aspects for which knowledge had not been systematized or integrated into theory.
2. Qualitative and quantitative data? In social science, which type of data to use generally depends on the phenomenon to be studied, the questions posed, the level of intended abstraction and the nature and amount of data likely to be available. With these considerations in mind, this research project used both quantitative and qualitative data.
3. Large *n* and small *n*? Some research approaches use a large number of cases (*n*) of a phenomenon, while others concentrate on a small sample of cases. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, to take advantage of the strengths and to compensate for the different weaknesses, both approaches were used in this research project.

Based on these methodological considerations, various research strategies were available for the project. Three basic strategies seemed especially appropriate and needed to be carefully assessed:

1. Surveys allow us to collect information in a standardized form. Their advantage is that, so long as certain principles and scientific procedures are respected, it is possible to extend inferences drawn from a small number of cases to the entire population. However, under certain conditions, notably the lack of an unbiased sample drawn at random from a known population, this ability is severely constrained. Furthermore, it is difficult to capture complex processes and contexts in surveys following a rigid standardized format. Statistical analyses run the danger of divorcing themselves from reality – for example, by using means or averages, which are purely fictional constructs that do not relate to real-life occurrences. Finally, inferences made on the basis of quantitative surveys are based on statistical correlations, which may or may not be based on causal linkages between variables. Therefore, the large-survey technique seemed most appropriate for the 'who, what, where, how many and how much?' kind of questions that the project needed to address.

2. In contrast, case studies typically focus on a very small number of cases and employ multiple sources of evidence to investigate a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. They do so in a holistic fashion, focusing on concrete people and events. Case studies entail no influence or control over the subjects under study; rather, they seek to understand and preserve their identity and uniqueness. The case study approach is therefore appropriate to study the 'how?' and 'why?' questions relating to the complex workings of local partnerships – their contexts, processes, outputs, outcomes and the explanations underlying them. However, the unique features of case studies (for example, their use of different sources and methods, purposive sampling, the human instrument, negotiated meanings and interpretations) require rigorous data collection, analysis and reporting procedures. Also, to improve the ability of case studies to generalize findings from individual cases to a larger population of cases, a combination with surveys is advisable. In short, case studies are at their best when used for exploratory investigations.
3. An impact assessment is a systematic analysis of the operation and outcome of a policy, programme or project. They usually involve a comparison with a set of explicit or implicit standards. Like case studies, impact assessments can embrace a wide range of methods of data collection and analysis, including, for example, cost–benefit analysis, utility analysis, questionnaire surveys, qualitative interviews and self-evaluation. Depending on which specific methods are used, an impact assessment may use statistical correlations or causal inferences to identify the strengths or weaknesses of a policy, programme or project. In any event, an impact assessment entails some degree of judgement, which needs to be made transparent. Impact assessments thus have a strong utilitarian focus, making suggestions for practical and/or political change. This makes the approach especially suitable for applied and policy-oriented investigations.

These various research strategies were modified and further elaborated to fit the specific research objectives of this study. The resulting research flow is depicted in Fig. 3.1, which outlines the five main phases of the work, undertaken in sequence over a 2-year period. The first phase, research preparation, took about 4 months and established the organizational, methodological and conceptual groundwork for the entire project. It culminated in three internal reports relating to the way the research team would organize itself and undertake the work, to the methodology to be followed (the subject of the present chapter) and to the literature review (the subject of the previous chapter). The methodologies of the subsequent phases of the project are described below. It was pleasing that the research flow diagram, created right at the outset of the project, did indeed provide an accurate 'route map' for the subsequent 2 years' work.

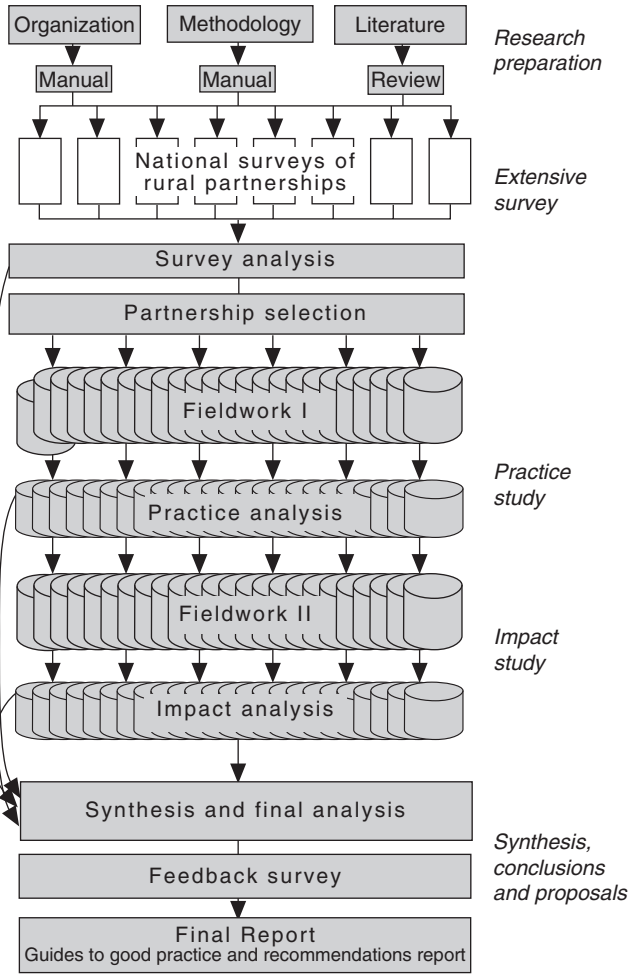


Fig. 3.1. The research process.

3.2 The Method of the Extensive Survey

3.2.1 The objectives and the population to be surveyed

The extensive survey was designed and carried out with the following objectives.

- To assemble a large sample of local partnerships concerned with integrated rural development, through the systematic exploitation of existing contacts with rural development bodies, development experts, regional and national agencies and EU sources.

- To provide the empirical database for a statistical analysis of a wide range of local rural development partnerships, whether or not funded by the EU, in the considered countries.
- To carry out eight national surveys of rural partnerships in an appropriate language, namely, in Finland, Germany, the Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Spain, Sweden and the UK.
- To carry out an analysis of the survey data so as to explore the relations between variables hypothesized to be important determinants of the effectiveness of rural partnerships and their impact on local development. The results of this analysis would provide a basis for all the subsequent research activities.
- To provide a sampling frame for an in-depth study of a smaller number of rural partnerships.

Working from the agreed definition of partnerships (see Section 3.1 above), each research team made the necessary arrangements to identify appropriate local partnerships for survey. They began by contacting a range of key people and institutions likely to have such information, namely, appropriate professional and academic organizations, regional and national government agencies dealing with rural development, private organizations and other individuals. In this way, a large number of apparently relevant partnerships were identified in each country and those turning out not to meet the agreed partnership definition were discarded. On the other hand, it became clear that not all the relevant partnerships in the eight countries had been identified, especially the more informal partnerships.

From the list of identified and validated partnerships, a sample of 40 successfully surveyed partnerships per country (20 in the case of Ireland and ten in the case of Luxemburg) was set as a minimum goal. To this end, some teams preferred to be selective when choosing the sample to which the questionnaire would be sent, while others, concerned with the risk of getting a low return rate, preferred to send out the questionnaire to all identified partnerships that apparently met the criteria.

3.2.2 The questionnaire

Given the large size of the sample and its geographical dispersion, it was necessary to carry out a postal survey, despite the well-known limitations of that approach. A long and intensive discussion took place concerning the design of the questionnaire. Being a postal questionnaire, it should not be too long or too complicated and, therefore, it was agreed to include no more than about 20 questions. The choice of questions reflected the objectives and hypotheses of the research, the findings of the literature review, the data included in some existing partnership databases and the contributions and suggestions made by all the research teams. Each

national team selected its 20 preferred questions from a long list of 54 and, after discussion, a final questionnaire with 24 questions was agreed, including both open-ended and closed questions, addressing all the topics that had first appeared in the longer version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was then translated into the six languages appropriate for the eight-nation sample, Luxemburg respondents receiving the German-language version and Irish respondents the English-language version. The questionnaire was piloted on four partnerships in each country and minor modifications were made. The main sections of the agreed questionnaire were as follows.

- Emergence of the partnership (three questions).
- Partners (two questions).
- Objectives (three questions).
- Organization (six questions).
- Operation (three questions).
- Achievements (three questions).
- Assessments/reflections (four questions).

An abridged form of the questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix 1.

3.2.3 The survey

Having been piloted and modified, the questionnaire was sent out simultaneously in all eight countries and in the appropriate language to 1177 partnerships (Table 3.1). To achieve an acceptable response rate, a common follow-up process was undertaken consisting of periodic telephone calls, e-mailing and faxing.

The return rates varied considerably between the eight countries and the final sample comprised 330 responses. (It will be seen that, in the case of Germany and Spain, a sift of the returned questionnaires

Table 3.1. The extensive survey: sample size and return rate in each country.

Country	Surveyed partnerships	Returned questionnaires	Return rate (%)	Sample size
Sweden	100	52	52	52
Germany	391	178	45	50
Finland	74	65	88	65
UK	153	54	35	54
Ireland	50	19	38	19
Italy	151	40	26	40
Spain	248	60	24	44
Luxemburg	10	6	60	6
Total	1177	474	40	330

was undertaken to exclude partnerships which were, after all, not consistent with the definition.)

3.2.4 Data tabulation and analysis

Tabulation of the data proved to be a laborious task. While coding the closed questions was easy, it took some time to agree a common tabulation sheet to guide the coding by each research team of the data emanating from the open-ended questions. And, of course, this coding of write-in responses left a good deal of detail untouched – but none the less available to the national researchers as they undertook their interpretation of the evidence.

Once the data had been coded in numerical form, the subsequent analysis of the questionnaires was carried out by the University of Valencia using an SPSS statistical package.

As for the type of analysis to be performed, this was determined by the fundamental issues we wished to explore (see earlier) and the requirements of the research contract, which called for a mix of multivariate statistical techniques, despite some reservations by the research team as to their usefulness, given the limitations of the data set.

The absence of a truly random sample drawn from a known population of partnerships and the nominal (zero/one) nature of much of the data substantially reduced the possibilities of statistical analysis and it was decided that there was much to be said for keeping it simple. And so the calculation of simple frequency distributions and cross-tabulations was considered a simple but sufficiently powerful tool for the description of the results in each country and an international comparison of the results. They allowed the research teams to explore the profiles of the partnerships in the sample and to draw important conclusions. Since one of the main objectives of the extensive survey was to gain knowledge about existing rural development partnerships in Europe, this 'keep it simple' approach proved to be sensible.

Therefore, for the various national analyses, the basic tool was the frequency table and cross tabulation. For the international analysis, several exercises were undertaken:

- First, a descriptive analysis of the whole sample based on the production of frequency tables for all 330 surveyed partnerships.
- Secondly, a comparative-descriptive analysis by country based on the existing national frequency tables.
- Thirdly, a statistical analysis of the whole sample based on the identification and transformation of some 40 variables derived from the data set. Factor and cluster analyses were performed in an exploratory fashion to seek the existence of typologies of partnerships involved in integrated rural development in Europe.

3.3 The Method of Selecting the 24 Case-study Partnerships

The purpose of selecting 24 partnerships for the study of the practice and impact of rural partnerships (the next two stages in the research) was to focus in on a small number of rural partnership experiences displaying all the elements considered relevant for the aims of our research and consistent with its conceptual framework. To this end, the aim was not to draw a statistically representative sample; rather, it was to single out a small number of experiences suitable for an in-depth investigation of our research hypotheses. Our general objectives being to provide evidence of exemplar performances of partnerships and to formulate proposals to improve their impact, the selection was directed to identifying partnerships representing innovative, rich and diversified experiences.

In other words, we basically needed to select those partnerships that:

- were characterized by the presence of rich elements to be studied, including the length of their experience, the diversity and innovative character of their actions for development, the number and variety of their members, the complexity and efficiency of their organizational structure, etc.; and
- had pursued a coherent programme for integrated rural development, putting the local context at the centre of their activity and operating by means of concerted decisions and actions.

A principal aim being to identify the critical patterns of performance of the partnerships, it was essential to focus the investigation on partnerships with several years' experience of activity, with a certain variety of actions for development in different sectors and with a relatively high degree of local legitimation. It would be from this very high standard of activity that elements of success or failure could best be highlighted, as well as the reasons underlying such variation in their performance. Basic information on such elements was contained in the findings of the extensive survey. An additional source of information was the rich documentation that many of the partnerships participating in the extensive survey attached to their completed questionnaires.

With all that in mind, the next step was to establish the precise criteria of selection. A decision was taken to have a double level of selection, the first consisting of a filter of minimum elements that had to be shared by all the selected partnerships and the second seeking to achieve the maximum variation on some crucial dimensions.

The minimum criteria that all selected partnerships had to attain were as follows:

1. Duration of partnership. The selected partnership should have been operating for a sufficient time to have undertaken several development actions and to have achieved some results.

2. Mix of membership – public and private. There should be a relatively balanced mix of the two.
3. A focus on integrated rural development. There had to be clear evidence of a real concern for integrated rural development, as revealed by such factors as the number, variety and quality of development actions, the orientation towards different economic sectors, the relevance accorded to local resources – economic, cultural, environmental and so on, the diffusion of information and the efforts made to involve the local population.
4. Size of population served – a maximum of 100,000 to respect our initial definition and to ensure some measure of comparability.
5. Data availability and willingness to cooperate as essential conditions for carrying out the study.

The range criteria were designed to achieve a high level of variation in the types of partnerships, viewing them from a European perspective:

1. Funding. The partnerships selected had collectively to represent the variety of funding programmes/sources available in each country: EU, national, local, private, etc.
2. Status. The partnerships had to comprise a mix of the legally and formally based and the informal.
3. Population size and density. The partnerships should show variation in both the population and the size of area being served.
4. Location. Different elements were considered here, all relating to the territorial peculiarities of the six countries, including the degree of remoteness of the areas. In addition, the research teams' knowledge of their national territories was used to establish broad types of areas (based on economic, social, political and cultural considerations), from which at least one partnership should be selected for the study.
5. Number and composition of partners. The partnerships selected should include some with a small number of partners and others with a large number and should also display some variety in the type of partners involved – local institutions, business associations, enterprises, third-sector associations, private individuals and so on.
6. Policy focus. The partnerships should exhibit a variety of objectives underlying their actions and not be focused on just a few issues or sectors.
7. Initiation. The initiation of the partnerships might have been inspired by a local understanding of local development – 'bottom-up initiation' – or be imposed from above, perhaps just to take advantage of public funding – top-down initiation. The intention was to include a majority of the former type.
8. Elements of success and failure. The partnerships should display some elements of both so as to offer a real possibility of learning lessons on the working and the impact of partnerships.

These criteria were then used by all the research teams to produce a selection of partnerships to be studied in their own countries. These selections were then scrutinized and modified so that, across the whole European sample, the various criteria were best respected. Figure 3.2 maps the final choice of 24 partnerships for detailed study.

3.4 The Method of the Study of the Practice of Partnership

3.4.1 Key questions and issues underlying the fieldwork

The study of the practice of rural development partnerships, as revealed by the experience of the 24 case studies, was based upon the overarching conceptual framework and list of research questions elaborated earlier in this chapter. Going on from that, the first step was to develop a qualitative, semi-structured interview schedule, suitable for use in the six different countries and languages, and designed to explore the full

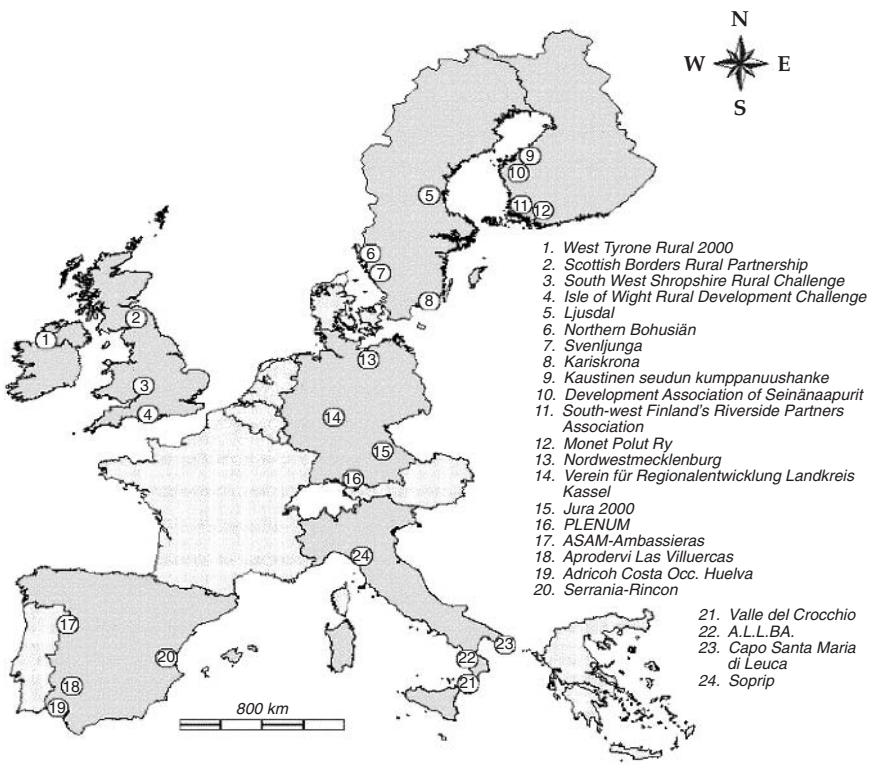


Fig. 3.2. Map of the 24 case-study areas.

range of relevant subjects. To that end, an interview guide was elaborated to provide the field researchers with a basic list of common topics to explore and covering a wide range of relevant issues. This guide related to the following:

- The context and early origins of the partnerships. This reconstruction was considered important so as to establish through which passages and vicissitudes and overcoming what kind of fears and resistance the idea of partnership and a group of promoters had emerged from a specific context, and how the features of that context subsequently influenced events.
- The actual constitution of the partnerships. This would involve the reconstruction of the early public or official steps taken in the constitution of the partnership, the eventual elaboration and approval of a programme for integrated rural development, the identification of objectives and the model of development pursued.
- The workings of the partnerships. Here the task would be to establish the nature of partner participation, the attribution of responsibilities, the decision processes, the means of resolving conflict and so forth. The aim would be to explore the partnership as a complex structure, where different wills and interests intersected in an attempt to reach agreement and to express a common will. We believed that this would be at the very heart of the way partnerships actually work as collective actors.
- The organization of the partnerships. A detailed reconstruction of the internal organization of the partnerships would provide insight into partnership decisions and perhaps suggest what kind of organization is best suited for pursuing specific goals.
- The pursuit of local development. This would involve establishing the actions actually carried out or planned by the partnerships to foster local development.
- The advantages and disadvantages of development programmes. This part was aimed at investigating the partnerships' activities *vis-à-vis* the programmes or policies that were used to deliver development.

Personal interviews were not, however, the only method used to acquire information. In addition there were participant observation and document collection.

Participant observation provided useful insights into the experienced reality of the partnerships and the overall local context in which they operate. Elements that could not be grasped through documentary analysis or interviews could be established by each research team by the mere fact of their being there, by critically observing every element in the field, by carrying out this activity systematically and by keeping records. Participant observation turned out to be an essential tool on all

occasions when the use of a tape recorder was impossible and, more generally, to reconstruct the overall scenario in which the experience of the partnerships took place.

Document collection was carried out systematically. The researchers collected not only any useful documents produced by the partnership (business plans, service reports, administrative documents, financial statements, feasibility reports, progress/evaluation reports, agendas and minutes of meetings, newspaper/magazine articles and so forth), but also any other relevant document issued by other actors in the area, whether they were individual partners, beneficiaries or institutions, as well as any official texts relating, for example, to the laws and regulations pertinent to the partnerships in question. Finally, any relevant statistical data, notably economic and social indicators relating to the local context, were identified and collected.

A series of preliminary tasks had to be carried out before the actual fieldwork could start. Using the preliminary information, the documentation already collected and the early contacts with the partnerships' management and staff, the national researchers proceeded to identify the main people involved in each partnership's experience and also the possible external actors who might add useful information and opinions.

Such people were identified among: the partnerships' promoters; the partners themselves; the management, staff members and other persons knowledgeable about the internal workings of the partnerships; responsible persons in local employers' associations and trade unions; responsible persons in the local administrations; local entrepreneurs involved as beneficiaries of the partnerships' activities; representatives of third-sector associations; other possible privileged witnesses; and responsible persons in the local and regional institutions involved in the definition and implementation of partnership policies. Instructions were given on what parts of the interview guide were appropriate for the different categories of interviewees.

Each team elaborated an operational plan for the interviews after early contacts with the interested parties. In this, the support provided by the responsible persons of the partnerships proved to be invaluable, but other ways of identifying and contacting potential interviewees were also used so as to avoid bias in the final composition of the sample.

It was agreed to conduct at least eight interviews in each case study (preferably six with people internal to the partnership and two with external people), beginning with those who were directly involved in the promotion and the organization of the partnership. The number of interviews eventually achieved reflected operational decisions taken directly by the researchers in the field as the research unfolded.

Work in the field started for all teams in November 1999 and ended in February 2000. The final number of interviews achieved proved to be

well above the established minimum. With a total of over 300 interviews, the average number for each case study was about 13, while 427 documents were collected, giving an average of 18 documents per case study.

3.4.2 The analysis of the evidence

All the teams produced a written record of the interviews in their national language, in order to avoid the risk of losing information. A scheme for the analysis of the interviews was elaborated, with the aim of identifying a group of shared analytical points and a common language among the research teams and of ensuring the possibility of a comparative analysis of the field material. This did not prevent each team from developing further complementary paths of investigation on aspects that were considered relevant in specific national contexts.

Nine thematic areas were collectively and inductively identified by the research teams as the fieldwork progressed and for each a set of analytical questions was elaborated to aid the writing up. They were:

1. Influence of local context.
2. Partnership composition.
3. Partner participation.
4. Objectives pursued and models of rural development.
5. The partnerships' organizational structure.
6. Decision-making processes.
7. Actions.
8. Effects at local level.
9. Implications for local, regional, national and European policies.

The path of analysis that was broadly followed by each team may be graphically illustrated as in Fig. 3.3. Thus the starting point in the analysis of the mass of evidence was provided by the local context. The aim was to understand how the partnership experience originated and what the relevant resources of the local context were. The idea was that the partnership should be considered as a located experience, born in a specific, well-defined social and territorial context. Our focus on the local contexts was essential to avoid a simplistic interpretation of the working of the partnerships based merely on an evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizational structures, on the ability of partners to cooperate and on the quality of the objectives pursued. Such aspects are obviously essential for the success of the partnership, but they can by no means be considered as independent variables.

Beginning with the local context also helped us to understand the reasons for a specific partnership composition, the cooperation and participation exhibited by the local partners and the conception of development as pursued by the partnership.

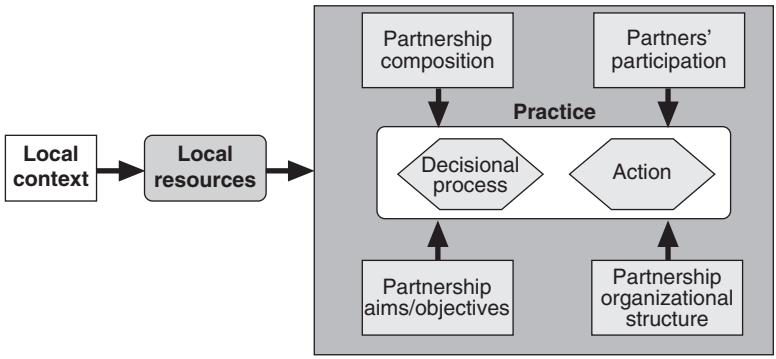


Fig. 3.3. Path of analysis.

The next step comprised the analysis of the characteristics of the partnerships, distinguishing four aspects: composition, participation, aims/objectives and organizational structure. Then we moved on to analyse the partnerships' processes, concentrating attention on their decision-making processes in relation to the actions actually implemented.

The analysis concluded by considering some questions about the validity of partnerships as tools aimed at triggering development opportunities. This involved evaluating the forms of cooperation developed within both the local and wider external contexts, the efficacy and reproducibility of partnerships as instruments for development and the coherence of the policies implemented at the local level. All this involved keeping in mind the fact that the local context cannot be considered a closed system.

The final step of the analysis was the elaboration of a synopsis of all the results. Reports on each of the 24 case studies were written, respecting the structure set out above. Then a national synthesis was written by each research team and, finally, a European overview of the whole body of evidence. All of this has been published in a substantial report (Cavazzani and Moseley, 2001) and the main findings are summarized in Chapter 5.

3.5 The Method of the Study of the Impact of Partnership

The methodology of the impact study – in particular, the focused assessment through cause–effect tracing (FACT) method described below – was developed by Gunter Kroes and Johannes Lückenkötter. It has recently been published as Lückenkötter *et al.* (2002). This paper can be downloaded from the Institut für Raumplanung an der Universität Dortmund (IRPUD) home page (irpud.raumplanung.uni-dortmund.de/irpud/).

3.5.1 Some guiding principles

Deriving from the overall objectives of the PRIDE project, the impact study basically had a threefold objective. On the basis of the 24 case study partnerships, we wished to establish: (i) whether rural development through partnerships (the partnership approach) is more efficient and effective in value-added terms than is such promotion in the conventional way; (ii) how and by what specific characteristics of the partnership approach integrated rural development is promoted; and (iii) what types of impact the partnerships are delivering in the various economic, environmental, political and sociocultural contexts.

In choosing the appropriate methodology for this impact study, it had to be established what these objectives demanded in practical terms and the following points were important in this respect.

1. The impact study is not about evaluating or judging the performance of the 24 partnerships as such, but about assessing a new approach or strategy of undertaking rural development (the partnership approach).
2. Therefore the impact study is not concerned with all the outputs or outcomes of these partnerships, but only with the unique effects or added value of the partnership approach.
3. The impact study is interested less in measuring the specific extent of any outputs or effects (although, where available, these were used to quantify findings) than in the responsible causal processes and the types and directions of the effects.
4. The impact study has to analyse a range of partnership variables (partners, resources, organization, processes) of diverse partnerships (with different objectives, sectoral orientations, types of outputs, etc.) working in diverse contexts (spatial, cultural, economic, political). Almost the only thing the various partnerships had in common was a similar overarching strategy, i.e. the partnership approach to rural development

These special features, which were derived from the research objectives and from reflecting on the nature of the 24 partnerships as revealed in the practice study, make it difficult or inappropriate to use standard evaluation methods. In one way or another, the latter are all based on comparing outputs/outcomes with the goals of the studied projects/organizations or with an externally developed comprehensive goal system (for example, using utility analysis). But only a small part of the outputs or outcomes of a partnership may be due to the partnership approach that was followed in producing these effects. The crucial methodological challenge is, therefore, to discern what portion of the overall outputs is genuinely attributable to the partnership approach.

This methodological challenge finally led us to develop a new, tailor-made, methodology for conducting the impact study. We called this the FACT method. It concentrates on identifying and investigating so-called

cause–effect chains, which lead from the partnership-approach-specific features of a partnership to their effects. By so doing, the analysis focuses on the causal mechanisms underlying the added value of the partnership approach. The idea of this tracing technique came from what in the evaluation literature is commonly called a causal model, i.e. a graphic depiction of a causal theory. But, instead of being used simply to communicate a theory or the results of a study, the FACT method uses graphic cause–effect chains as a tool to identify the partnership effect, as will be explained below.

3.5.2 The FACT method – a conceptual overview

The conceptual model underlying the FACT method is depicted in Fig. 3.4. Reading the diagram from left to right, six major phases can be identified. A unique constellation of physical, social, societal, economic and political circumstances make up the context of a partnership (phase

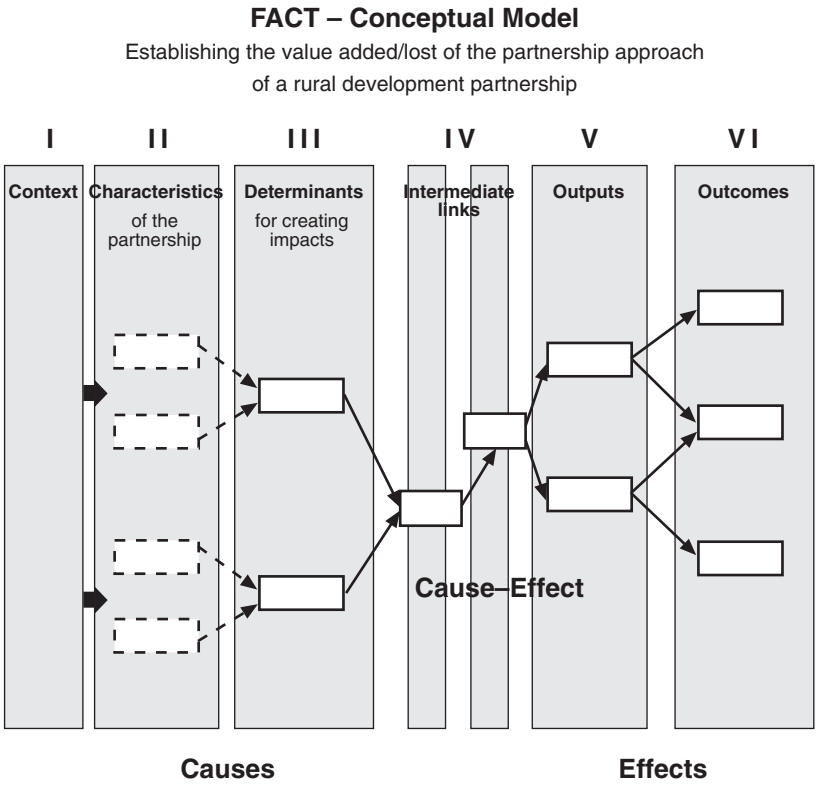


Fig. 3.4. The FACT – conceptual model.

1). This context – encompassing the local, regional, national and international level – shapes the initiation and operation of a partnership and leads to particular partnership characteristics (phase 2). But not all of these are characteristics of the partnership approach nor are all characteristics relevant for creating development impacts. Therefore the partnership characteristics need to be filtered to identify impact determinants (phase 3). These determinants are the starting point for cause–effect chains, which pass through a number of intermediate links (phase 4), which can be finally related to certain outputs or features of the outputs of a partnership (phase 5). Outputs are here understood as concrete material products or services directly created by a partnership (e.g. a new tourist information centre built or six persons trained to use computers). These direct outputs of a partnership have further, more general, effects on the different aspects of rural development (environmental, economic, social, sociocultural, political, administrative) and on the partnership itself, which may be termed outcomes (phase 6).

As shown in the diagram, instead of immediately homing in on the outputs and outcomes of a partnership as such, the FACT methodology puts emphasis first on establishing the links among the causes (phases 1–3) and the effects (phases 5–6). This can be done in various ways. One could start: (i) from a hypothesized or observed impact determinant; (ii) from a hypothesized or known intermediate link; or (iii) from a hypothesized or observed output or outcome. Through the backward and/or forward tracing of causes and effects, a complete cause–effect chain can then be established. These cause–effect chains have to be cross checked and very carefully tested, using partnership documents, minutes and interviews, examining rival explanations, etc. In the following sections, the sequential steps of the FACT method are outlined, working from hypothesizing, identifying and analysing cause–effect chains to comparing them on a national and international level with the help of a cause–effect matrix.

3.5.3 The FACT method step by step

Step 1: hypothesis generation

In order to make maximum use of the already existing knowledge about partnership(s) and to guide the fieldwork of the impact study, hypothetical cause–effect (or impact) chains were first developed.

Drawing on the various research outputs of the previous tasks, especially the practice study, each research team generated visual depictions of plausible cause–effect chains, using a blank flow-chart diagram (see Appendix 3). The starting point for such a hypothetical chain could be either a possible impact determinant (which feature could have possibly influenced the outputs/outcomes of the partnership?), a relevant output or outcome (which output/outcome might have been affected by the

partnership approach?), a relevant intermediate link (which everyday or extraordinary event, related to the partnership approach, could have had an effect?) or the programme logic of the partnership (how did the partnership plan or ideally expect to produce outputs and outcomes?).

Each team developed such hypothetical cause–effect chains for their case study partnerships and more general ones that they expected to be relevant on an international level. The task leader (the University of Dortmund) compiled the general hypothetical cause–effect chains and sent the composite list to the national teams. This step was successful in getting every field researcher to think about where to start looking for cause–effect chains and as a backup list during fieldwork or even during interviews, making sure that important issues were not left out.

Step 2: identifying resource persons and secondary data sources

Since the same 24 partnerships were visited as for the practice study, each research team already had contacts, interview material and secondary data for each partnership. The teams were encouraged to use the hypothetical impact chains to identify who else they needed to interview and what data to collect. The teams were also advised to interview people from inside and from outside the partnerships so as to ensure that wide-ranging and potentially critical perspectives would be captured. In this respect the teams also used the second field visit to fill any knowledge gaps that might have remained concerning the practice study. Thus the two research tasks benefited from each other.

Step 3: building cause–effect chains

Building a cause–effect chain meant, first of all, collecting and bringing together the necessary data to back up factually a cause–effect chain. This involved a series of complex, detective-like research activities, in which data collection and data analysis were closely connected. For building a chain, different types and sources of data had to be used – a validation procedure akin to triangulation. In the end, a short summary text was written and a flow chart drawn to portray the causal connections and overall flow of the chain. For this documentation a standard format was used (see the standard FACT sheet in Appendix 3). This FACT sheet was also used for reporting the results of all the subsequent analytical steps. It thus served as the main tool for guiding the investigation of each impact chain. A standard interview guide was not developed because the puzzle-like nature of the investigation of each impact chain necessitated interviewing strategies that varied depending on the type of chain, the stage of the chain building and the position of the interviewee in the chain. Allowing for flexibility in the execution of the fieldwork and having a standard reporting format as the guiding light at the end of the analysis proved to be a good combination.

Step 4: testing the cause–effect chains

In order to check the logical and empirical soundness of an impact chain, three tests were conducted. These were important in order to prevent jumping to conclusions too quickly and building a cause–effect chain on rather shaky evidence. Therefore, to safeguard against hasty chain building, each researcher was asked: (i) to deliberately look for negative/rival evidence, which would completely contradict or invalidate the chain; in a further step, each researcher was asked: (ii) to go even further and actively generate and check rival explanations which would contradict or invalidate the existing impact chain. This meant playing devil's advocate and trying to challenge analytically the existing impact chain. Finally, based on both of these exercises and the amount and reliability of the data used to back up the impact chain, each researcher was asked: (iii) to rate the degree of confidence she/he had in the validity of the chain. The FACT sheet provided subsections for reporting the results of these tests (see Appendix 3). In retrospect, the exercises were very helpful in identifying logical blind spots, empirical gaps and unfounded confidence in the data and explanations. However, since this step was often conducted when already back from the field, it was a demanding and sometimes very time-consuming operation to make follow-up phone calls if any of these tests brought up serious information gaps.

Step 5: qualifying the cause–effect chains

In order to assess the scope of an impact chain, two key characteristics were assessed.

1. The first regarded the degree of context-relatedness of a cause–effect chain. Here the researchers were asked to assess whether in their own judgement the chain: (i) depended highly on the very specific local circumstances and could thus not be generalized at all; (ii) related mainly to contexts or processes that are often or typically found in the respective country, so that the chain could be generalized to the national level; or (iii) was based on contexts or processes of a more universal nature, so that the chain could possibly be generalized to a European level. This analytical exercise could be performed relatively quickly, but it later turned out that the assessments were not very useful for further steps of the impact study. This was because the researchers tended to be very guarded concerning how far a chain could be generalized to other contexts, whereas, after all the findings had been pulled together from all countries, it became apparent that many chains did indeed resemble each other.

2. The second analytical exercise consisted of assessing the degree of the 'partnership approach' effect. The researchers were to rate on a three-point scale how much influence the identified determinants (the

starting points of an impact chain) had on the identified outputs and outcomes of the chain – in other words, to what degree the partnership approach influenced the identified outputs or outcomes in relation to all other influences. We were aware that such a truly rigorous assessment along these lines would be almost impossible, as it would have required much more information on all other influences. The exercise was nevertheless retained because it proved to be a worthwhile mental activity to look at an impact chain from this angle and at least think through the assessment. For the reasons pointed out above, we did not use the results of this assessment for any subsequent analytical steps (but they were nevertheless reported in the FACT sheet). It has to be emphasized once again that the central question to be answered by this research concerned which characteristics of the partnership approach were determining which kinds of impacts (positive or negative) on integrated development, and *not* to what degree (in comparison with other factors) they were responsible for bringing about these impacts. Thus it was ultimately not necessary to deal with the multi-causality problem.

Step 6: describing and specifying the impacts

After testing and qualifying the cause–effect chains, the focus of the next steps was the impacts themselves. In step 6 the researchers were to provide as much empirical evidence for the existence of the impacts as possible. Thus they documented in the appropriate section of the FACT sheet all qualitative and quantitative information for: (i) each output; and (ii) each outcome of a cause–effect chain. Note again that we did not try to measure or assess how much of that output or outcome was due to the cause–effect chain and how much was caused by other, non-partnership-approach-related factors (e.g. additional funding). In this step we only documented that the outputs or outcomes identified by the cause–effect chain did indeed exist and were not a fictional construct of the researcher or interviewees.

Step 7: qualifying the impacts

In the next step, we finally qualified what impact the outcomes of an impact chain had on rural development. Three straightforward assessment exercises were used: (i) for each outcome, the mainly affected spatial area was assessed – for example, whether only one particular part of the partnership area, only a few villages, only the main town or the entire partnership area was positively or negatively influenced by the outcome; (ii) likewise, the mainly affected population was assessed – for example, only farmers, only elderly people or the entire population; and (iii) finally it had to be assessed which context was affected (built environment, natural environment, economic context, social context,

sociocultural context, administrative/institutional context or political context) and/or which partnership element was affected (the functioning and organization or the members of the partnership). All three assessments were deliberately kept very simple, thus requiring only an informed estimation by the researcher who had investigated the chain (see the FACT sheet in Appendix 3).

Step 8: validating the cause–effect chain findings

In order to increase the validity of the documented cause–effect chains, at least two persons (preferably one from inside, one from outside) had to validate the findings of each cause–effect chain. Researchers were given a relatively free hand as to how they conducted the validation exercise (mostly by telephone). It was important only that the validators were asked whether or not they confirmed the chain, what (if any) qualifications they made and how important they thought the chain was. The names of the validators and the responses of the validators had to be documented in the FACT sheets. Overall, the validation was a time-consuming exercise, but it was very useful for polishing up and filling in gaps – or for correcting false assessments due to prior misunderstandings.

The validation exercise ended the identification and detailed analysis of each chain. A filled-out FACT sheet, including the corresponding flowchart, was 10–11 pages long. All in all, 182 cause–effect chains were identified and documented, an average of about 30 per country or seven to eight per partnership. This database of about 1800 pages of data constituted the basis for all the subsequent research activities of the impact study.

Step 9: designing the cause–effect matrix

In order to move from the individual cause–effect chain to national and international findings, the chain data had to be aggregated. To this end, a so-called cause–effect matrix was developed, juxtaposing the causes/determinants (rows) with the effects (columns) (see Chapter 6 regarding the subsequently completed matrix). On the basis of the already conducted fieldwork and an almost complete analysis of the individual cause–effect chains, the six research teams were brought together in a workshop with the aim of identifying the key determinants and effects to serve as the basis of the cause–effect matrix. In the end, 33 determinants (each with a high and low value, e.g. a high number of partners, a low number of partners) and 12 effects (each with a positive and negative value, e.g. a positive impact on sustainable development, a negative impact on sustainable development) were agreed (again, see the cause–effect matrix in Chapter 6).

The 33 determinants were structured into four categories (i.e. relating to partners, inputs/resources, organization, processes) and then carefully defined so that we had a common understanding of what they really meant (see the listing in Appendix 4). Likewise, the 12 effects, which fell into two major groups (impacts on the development of the area and impacts on the partnerships themselves) were defined (again, see Appendix 4). Regarding the effects, it was decided to define effects that describe certain qualities of development (e.g. integrated development, endogenous development), rather than sectoral effects (e.g. economic effects, sociocultural effects), because otherwise the results of the impact analysis would have merely reflected the sectoral orientation of the partnerships – for example, that a particular partnership conducted mainly environmental projects. We found it more important, though, to find out whether the partnership approach brought a special quality to these projects – for example, whether they were more connected with each other as a result of partnership action.

Step 10: filling in the cause–effect matrix

Each national team then filled in a cause–effect matrix for their respective country. This was more than just a manual operation and turned out to be another important analytical exercise in its own right. Each team had first to decide which of the 33 determinants and 12 effects were most appropriate for each impact chain. Then, since an impact chain often included several determinants, which in combination led to several outcomes, each impact chain had to be disentangled into the most important two-point-links, which could then be entered into the two-dimensional matrix. This turned out to be a laborious exercise. The 182 cause–effect chains finally yielded 1121 entries or two-point links in the cause–effect matrices.

Step 11: national impact analysis

The aim of the next step was to analyse and compare the national impact results on a case-by-case and cross-case basis. A common outline for the national impact report to be written by each national team was agreed. The teams were asked first to refer back to the findings of the practice study and to reflect on the national and regional context within which their case study partnerships were based. On this basis, they reviewed the history and special features of each partnership before going into the cause–effect analysis as such. For each partnership, summaries of the cause–effect chains were produced, followed by an analysis of the pertinent determinants and effects. A similar procedure was followed at the national level: first a rough comparison of the four case-study partnerships, then analyses relating to the determinants and finally analyses relating to the effects of the partnership approach.

Methodologically, the national impact analysis used the national cause–effect matrices to determine frequencies and clusters, followed by a more qualitative analysis of those FACT sheets relating to a certain cluster in the matrix. These analyses were quite complex, as it meant going back and forth between different partnerships, chains and the matrix. However, having collected and analysed the chain data, the researchers were very close to the data and thus able to handle the analysis with a high level of accuracy. Nevertheless, conducting the national impact analysis was a very labour-intensive task and the resultant national reports averaged about 50 pages of text each.

Step 12: international impact analysis

The international impact analysis was conducted by the task leader (the University of Dortmund) in a very similar fashion. It had three components. First, all entries of the national cause–effect matrices were entered into a composite international matrix. Since each entry was referenced to the particular country, partnership and chain that it referred to, the aggregation yielded quite specific new data: for each cell of the matrix the number of partnerships, of countries and chains for which this particular cause–effect link was reported could be determined. This made possible a similar cluster and frequency analysis to that conducted at the national level and the production of a simple ranking (using both frequencies and clusters).

The second part of the international analysis – the qualitative analysis of chain data relating to a cluster in the matrix – was more difficult than at the national level, because of the sheer bulk of data and because the researcher conducting the analysis was not as familiar with the entire international data set (the 182 FACT sheets). It was therefore necessary to go back and forth and read the respective FACT sheets frequently. Expecting this necessity, a web-based cause–effect matrix was created in which each matrix entry was represented as a little dot. Using hyperlinks and FACT sheets that had been converted into HTML files, it was possible to access the FACT sheets instantaneously by clicking on the dots. In that way the comparison between the cause–effect chains of a cluster (i.e. dots in one cell) was greatly simplified. The analysis itself was not different from the one performed on the national level.

A third part of the international impact analysis consisted of comparing the national findings. Using both the national and international cause–effect matrices and the national and international results, a rough qualitative comparison was conducted.

3.5.4 Subsequent reflection on the impact methodology

The methodology for the impact study was a core element, perhaps the core element, of the overall PRIDE research project. It was closely related to the previous tasks of the literature review, the extensive survey and the practice study, which provided important information about the context and the functioning of the partnerships. This allowed the impact methodology to concentrate right away on an in-depth analysis of cause–effect relations underlying the value-added effects of the partnership approach. The impact study was also closely linked to the subsequent feedback survey, which was to check the general validity of findings emanating from the impact study. These backward and forward links were crucial for increasing the internal and external validity of the overall results.

Concerning the methods employed in the impact study, it proved to be the right decision not to apply well-known, standard methods as originally planned (multi-criteria analysis, utility analysis), but to develop the tailor-made FACT method. Only this would allow a careful and systematic analysis of the real cause–effect relations linking relevant elements/characteristics of the partnership approach and the impacts each of them had on integrated rural development. This method allowed us to check and validate the cause–effect links and – in combination with the subsequent feedback survey – provided a solid base for policy conclusions and recommendations. It was recognized that the FACT analysis was more time- and labour-intensive than originally expected, but the solid results justified this extra work in the end.

It was one of the most important features (and strengths) of the FACT methodology that it successfully combined different approaches and techniques. This combination involved both quantitative and qualitative data (triangulation), deductive and inductive approaches (hypothetical cause–effect chains, chain building), a common understanding of major concepts (definitions), allowing for flexibility and ensuring scientific rigour (detective-like fieldwork, FACT sheets) and the in-depth analysis of single cases with a highly aggregated international comparison (cause–effect chain investigations, cause–effect matrix).

3.6 The Method of the Feedback Survey

3.6.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the research was to increase knowledge relating to the functioning, effectiveness and shortcomings of local partnerships as a tool of rural development. It was therefore necessary to find a way to

validate the results of the research, at least partially. In particular, we wished to establish whether the main findings of the field studies of the 24 partnerships, relating to both the practice and the impact of those partnerships, were held to be valid by people involved in a much larger sample of rural development partnerships across Europe.

Thus the starting point of this validation exercise was the sample of 330 local partnerships surveyed during the extensive survey, and the qualitative evidence and knowledge gained during the subsequent year of in-depth research of just 24 of them.

The validation sample was therefore defined as the partnerships that had already contributed to the research by participating in the extensive survey. The responses to this survey were somewhat unevenly distributed nationally, but at least 20 responses were received in each of the six countries subject to detailed study – i.e. excluding Luxemburg and Ireland (Table 3.2).

Each research team was permitted, if it had the time and resources, to send the feedback questionnaire to organizations and other actors in rural development outside the extensive survey sample of 330. The German and Spanish teams chose to do so.

3.6.2 The feedback questionnaire and survey

In fact, the feedback questionnaire comprised two questionnaires, which were each kept as short as possible, bearing in mind that the chosen respondents (330 partnerships) had already completed a very detailed questionnaire a year earlier (i.e. in the extensive survey). Also, we were

Table 3.2. Responses in the feedback survey.

Country	Initial sample (extensive survey sample)	Partnerships returning questionnaires in the feedback survey	Response rate (%)	% of total feedback responses (partnerships only)	Additional responses (not from the sample of 330 partnerships)
Finland	65	51	78.5	22.7	
Sweden	52	37	71.2	16.4	
Italy	40	29	72.5	12.9	
UK	54	27	50.0	12.0	
Spain	44	23	52.3	10.2	14
Ireland	19	9	47.4	4.0	
Germany	50	44	88.0	19.6	43
Luxemburg	6	5	83.3	2.2	
Total	330	225	60.3	100	57

anxious not to accumulate a vast amount of information, late in the research programme, which would exceed our capacity for useful analysis.

The two questionnaires were:

1. A common European questionnaire, in the six languages, which would go to all respondents and present them with provisional conclusions from the research across all six countries.
2. Unique national questionnaires, focusing on specific issues and provisional conclusions pertinent to the particular country, which had emerged from the four national case studies.

The European questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 5. (The national questionnaires, compiled only in the national language, are not reproduced here.) The European questionnaire effectively presented the respondents with a list of many of the key impacts that were coming out of the impact studies of the 24 partnerships (e.g. relating to innovation and endogenous development) and a list of the 16 factors or determinants that were also emerging as of key importance (e.g. bottom-up initiation and key individuals).

Respondents were also asked to relate the latter to the former, drawing on their local experience. The essential idea was to see if their linkage of determinants and impacts would resemble that emerging from the 24 case studies.

The national questionnaires were much more heterogeneous – most involved presenting respondents with a list of statements based on the case study work, with an invitation to agree or disagree, using as semantic scale.

The agreed European questionnaire was delivered to the PRIDE teams in English for translation and despatch to the sample of 330 partnerships already defined. A telephone follow-up ensured a good response rate (60.3% – see Table 3.2).

3.6.3 The tabulation procedure and the analysis of the data

The tabulation of the European survey data was standardized for all teams by the production of an SPSS tabulation sheet and a complementary document, with notes and guidelines for its completion. Following this procedure, all six tabulation sheets (one per country) were assembled into a European statistical matrix ready for analysis.

The subsequent data analysis was performed by the University of Valencia team. This largely comprised the generation of simple percentages and frequencies – e.g. the proportion of respondents who voted for certain types of impact or for particular determinants as being important. This was a very simple approach but proved to be a powerful tool in establishing how far over 200 rural development practitioners across eight European countries agreed or disagreed with our emerging findings.

As for the analysis of the data from the six national feedback questionnaires, this was done manually by the appropriate national research team. In each case, a short national report was written as an internal working paper, and these proved to be very valuable subsequently when it came to writing good practice guides for a national readership.

3.7 The Method of the Final Synthesis

After all the various empirical pieces of work had been undertaken and written up in interim reports and working papers at both the national and European levels and then duly discussed at transnational team meetings, it was necessary to find a way of reflecting on all this so that any underlying fundamental messages might emerge. In turn, these fundamental messages would then inform both our conclusions and recommendations, and also the guides to good practice that were to be prepared at national level.

To do this final synthesis, it was decided to do the following:

- Write a series of short position papers, each of which would be structured around three fundamental questions derived from the key issues and research questions underlying the whole research project.
- Approach these position papers from two different directions: (i) that of the five individual research tasks, cutting across all six countries; and (ii) that of the six countries, cutting across all five research tasks.
- Share the task of researching and writing the resulting 11 position papers among the six research teams, with one team, Seinajoki, given the task of synthesizing these 11 syntheses into two, short, overarching résumés. These were then discussed around the table at a final transnational meeting and agreement reached on our main conclusions.

The three questions that in effect were set up as 'magnets' to attract the key conclusions, task by task and country by country, were:

1. What key conclusions do we draw about the emergence, operation and performance of local partnerships?
2. How and how well do local partnerships add value to the economic, social, cultural, political and environmental development of the areas that they serve?
3. In what ways and to what extent do local partnerships have negative effects on the development of the areas they serve?

This proved to be an effective way of concentrating the mind on the key issues after a long period of submersion in the detail.

3.8 Subsequent Chapters

Having explained our methodology, we shall now move on to present the main results of the empirical work, which was undertaken from May 1999 to November 2000. This comprised the following:

- The extensive survey of 330 partnerships in eight EU countries (Chapter 4).
- The study of the practice of partnership in 24 case-study areas (Chapter 5).
- The study of the impact of partnership in the same case-study areas, incorporating the validation provided by the feedback survey (Chapter 6).

4 The Findings of the Extensive Survey

4.1 Introduction

The reader is invited to read the relevant section of the preceding chapter on methodology and to examine an abridged version of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) before reading this chapter, which is a summary of a lengthy published report (Esparcia *et al*., 2000).

The extensive survey was carried out in eight countries during the summer of 1999 (the six represented by the research partners, plus Luxemburg and Ireland). The geographical distribution of the survey responses is shown in Table 4.1. The present chapter relates to evidence assembled for 330 partnerships – probably the largest sample of such partnerships ever surveyed in Europe. The partnerships are listed in Appendix 2.

Table 4.1. The extensive survey: geographical distribution of the sample.

Country	Identified partnerships	Surveyed partnerships	Valid returned questionnaires	Sample size
Sweden	100	100	52	52
Germany	391	391	178	50
Finland	74	74	65	65
UK	153	153	54	54
Ireland	100	50	19	19
Italy	228	151	40	40
Spain	248	248	60	44
Luxemburg	10	10	6	6
Total	1304	1177	474	330

It is important to bear Table 4.1 in mind in interpreting the results presented below. In particular, the different sizes of the national samples need to be appreciated because, for example, the sample of Spanish partnerships constitutes only a small part of the total number of existing partnerships, while in the case of Finland the number of completed questionnaires was very close to the total number of identified partnerships.

Almost half of the total sample comprises partnerships that emerged as a result of a European initiative, particularly LEADER I and LEADER II. A similar proportion of the partnerships were the result of national (e.g. PRODER in Spain and POMO in Finland) and local community initiatives. The latter are more important in the UK and the Scandinavian countries, while the southern countries (Italy and Spain) and Ireland show a significant absence of partnerships arising from such local community initiatives. It is, none the less, important to note the institutional change that has occurred in these countries in terms of supporting this type of initiative, which was very new for them. The high proportion of EU and nationally promoted partnerships may be partly explained by the fact that it is easier to identify such partnerships than others locally promoted or with an informal status. We now proceed to summarize the main findings, country by country and then for the whole European sample. See Esparcia *et al.* (2000) for a full report.

4.2 Republic of Ireland

Ireland is endowed – *pro rata* to its population size more than any other European state – with a plethora of local partnerships devoted to the cause of local socio-economic development. Irish partnerships to a large extent fill the vacuum left by a weak local government system, and they also respond to a formula largely predetermined from above. None the less, three main types of rural development partnerships can be identified in the Irish context: county enterprise boards, local partnership companies and LEADER local action groups.

Three main reasons underline the emergence of partnerships in Ireland: a willingness to address common needs and initiate common projects; a desire to involve local communities in the process of development; and a desire to secure the availability of money from sources such as the EU. In fact, the existence of funding and programmes launched by the Commission is said in the survey to be a key influence in the creation and development of partnerships, apart from other influences, such as key individuals and national policies.

The number of partners in the partnerships varies between the types of partnerships, although they all enjoy a similar legal status, being companies limited by guarantee. In terms of their objectives, the different types of partnerships also present significant differences (Table 4.2). But

Table 4.2. Objectives of the three types of Irish local rural development partnerships (from the extensive survey).

County enterprise boards	LEADER partnerships	Local partnership companies
• Developing an enterprise culture • Business advice and information • Management development • Business start-ups • Supporting small businesses	• Community development and empowerment • Economic development • Human resource development • Integrated development • Creating employment	• Targeting disadvantaged groups • Combating social exclusion • Helping the unemployed and other specific groups • Providing second-chance education and training • Empowering communities

the Irish partnerships are very similar in the types of activities that they implement. The most significant activity is funding projects, but they are also commonly involved in the dissemination of information and the production of an action plan. Lobbying is a less important activity.

The Irish partnerships have brought about some main broad achievements: (i) the provision of infrastructure and facilities (e.g. business support, training, etc.); (ii) an improvement in the quality of life of local residents; (iii) the reinforcement of cooperation links; and (iv) community involvement and mobilization.

When asked about the main strengths contributing to the partnership success, a significant number of the Irish respondents mention two: a cooperative atmosphere and the presence of key people (leaders, managers, etc.). On the other hand, they also note some particular challenges or difficulties: a lack of motivation to get involved on the part of some local people, problems relating to funding, weak coordination among different levels and different bodies, an insufficiency of time and an insufficiency of skilled human resources.

For a fuller appraisal of the Irish extensive survey evidence, see Moseley *et al.* (2001).

4.3 Germany

Formal rural development partnerships are a fairly recent phenomenon in Germany (most of those surveyed had emerged in the 1990s). Many issues worked simultaneously to influence the emergence and further development of partnerships. However, it is possible to note local government, key individuals and EU policies and programmes as key influences in this respect. The influence of the local community and of the private and voluntary sectors seems to have been very weak in the emergence of German partnerships, although these factors grow in importance when we consider the influencing of their subsequent development.

The main reasons why partnerships emerge relate to the partnerships' strong action orientation, i.e. to implement projects jointly or to pool resources. A less frequently mentioned reason is to strengthen existing cooperation/networking and the reason for this may be the fact that partnerships are newly constituted rather than a continuation or reshaped form of old coalitions. Most partnerships surveyed include between ten and 29 members. A high percentage are informal, while associations are the most common legal structure.

The policy areas that the partnerships consider most important are: integrated sustainable development, economic regeneration, recreation/tourism and agricultural change. Physical regeneration is considered a less important policy area for the partnerships. In relation to this point, the most important activities to which partnerships devote their efforts are: the implementation of projects, exchange and coordination between partners and the dissemination of information. The least important activity undertaken by the surveyed partnerships is lobbying.

In terms of the most successfully achieved objectives, outputs and broader changes brought about by the partnership, respondents concentrated their answers in four main areas:

1. Economic achievements: marketing local products, promoting rural tourism and creating and supporting jobs in their areas.
2. Environmental achievements: the use of environmentally friendly processes for producing local products and the protection of the landscape, linked to the promotion of tourism.
3. Sociocultural achievements: many partnerships have helped to strengthen local or regional identity.
4. Procedural achievements: the creation of the partnership as an important achievement itself (i.e. the successful achievement of improved cooperation, exchange, joint planning, communication, etc.).

Respondents highlighted some particular strengths that enhanced the German partnerships' development and functioning:

- Procedures: a good working atmosphere, innovation, trust, flexibility, limited bureaucracy.
- Management/organization: partnerships being independent bodies with a clear organizational structure; the presence of full-time staff working for the partnership; the importance of unpaid volunteers, etc.
- Context: political and administrative backing by local/subregional governments and administrations.
- Finance: the financial support provided by EU or regional government programmes was considered as very important, if not crucial, for the establishment and continuation of the partnerships.

At the same time that funding was mentioned as a strength of the partnerships, respondents also acknowledged that some problems related to funding could also become a real difficulty – for example, insufficient funding, the end of funding, the bureaucracy associated with the management of funding, difficulties of match-funding the EU contribution, etc. Other difficulties related to: (i) management, planning, implementing the projects and organizing the working groups, as very time-consuming functions; (ii) some partners' unwillingness to lose power in relation to the rest of the partners, and very individual or organization interests; and (iii) low community involvement.

To conclude, the surveyed partnerships also pointed out some changes or assistance that would be necessary to improve their functioning.

- Finances and inputs more generally: continued and even increased financial support; less bureaucratic and more flexible financial arrangements; and a greater devolution of financial decision-making power to the partnerships/regions.
- Management: many respondents said that having at least one full-time member of staff represented a kind of quantum leap in the development of the partnership. It was also suggested that the various groups and decision-making bodies of the partnership should work more independently and not rely so much on the organizing and input of paid staff, who should concentrate more on the implementation of decisions.

4.4 Spain

The Spanish sample of partnerships is composed mostly of LEADER and PRODER groups (the latter being a LEADER-like national initiative). Formal partnerships for rural development are quite a new phenomenon in the Spanish context. The fact that most partnerships are linked to a LEADER or PRODER programme determines to a large extent many of their characteristics – for example, the size of the areas served, the mix of partners, the range of objectives and so on.

The most important reasons given for the partnerships' initiation relate to the project-oriented nature of most surveyed organizations. To secure access to funding, to implement projects jointly and to pool resources were the most important reasons given for the partnerships' existence. Few partnerships mentioned reasons specifically relating to the needs of their area (for example, to address common needs or to involve the local community). Partnerships do not attach much importance to the issues of networking and strengthening existing cooperation networks, probably because previous cooperation links were almost non-existent in these areas.

The presence of a key individual, the role played by local authorities and the existence of an EU policy/programme were stated as major factors influencing the emergence of partnerships. In considering the subsequent development of the partnerships, the existence of regional policies or programmes, the role played by the local community and also the role played by the local authorities were the most important elements cited.

To promote rural integrated development, which is one of the main objectives underlining the LEADER and PRODER philosophy, is the most mentioned objective of the surveyed partnerships. To initiate and implement development strategies is the second most important objective and it is also related to the nature (LEADER- and PRODER-based) of these partnerships, since the elaboration and implementation of a development strategy is a requirement for obtaining funding. Other important objectives relate to the dependence or relationship of the partnerships with regard to these programmes, i.e. to promote economic diversification, to promote community involvement and cooperation.

Given the situation of a high degree of deprivation suffered by many lagging rural areas in Spain, economic regeneration seems to be the most important policy area that the partnerships try to address. Being aware of the potential of the physical heritage of these areas to promote economic development, physical regeneration is not surprisingly another important policy area for the partnerships, and the same is true of the cultural heritage.

Going on from these issues, partnerships say that they devote their time to the implementation of projects and the allocation of funding for activities/projects, mobilizing local communities and producing an action plan (this being a condition of LEADER and PRODER funding).

Partnerships highlight very concrete and quantifiable achievements (such as the initiation of development projects, the development of rural tourism and business creation or modernization) because the recency of their creation prevents them from demonstrating other types of outputs (relating more to the process of development), which may be difficult to identify at this early stage.

In terms of their strengths and opportunities, the surveyed partnerships identified the composition and characteristics of the management team and the presence of key individuals within the partnership as their most important strengths. A cooperative atmosphere within the group, but also with other actors and organizations outside the partnership, and the facility to reach consensus among all the partners were also pointed out as significant.

The uncertainty about whether or not the partnership will keep receiving funding is the main concern of the partnerships. Also some partnerships have pointed out the existing difficulties for matching the funding coming from the EU, since some organizations do not honour

their initial commitments. The limited motivation of local communities for getting involved is also seen by the partnerships as an important difficulty, and this is related to the importance that the local contexts, with all their characteristics and circumstances, have in the whole operation and development of the partnerships.

To conclude, securing more community involvement and greater continuity of funding are the two major improvements that the partnerships cite for improving their operation. Also, more human resources are sometimes needed in order to fulfil all the demands that a development strategy implies.

4.5 Italy

Over half of the identified Italian partnerships are situated in the south of the country and the islands, and 76% of the whole potential sample are LEADER partnerships, these being the most relevant form of rural development partnership in Italy. Italian partnerships are quite young; they emerged in a formal way only in the 1990s. However, in some cases, the actual birth can be traced back to the 1980s, when they existed informally.

The main reasons for the initiation of the partnerships include: to involve local communities, to jointly implement projects and to secure access to funding. On the other hand, key individuals, local authorities and private organizations played a key role in the emergence of partnerships. The presence of key individuals keeps being the most influential factor, as it is for the development of the partnerships. Private-sector organizations, local communities and local authorities are also very important in this respect.

Initiating and implementing development initiatives and promoting rural integrated development are considered the most important objectives of the Italian partnerships. However, given the general character of these issues, it is difficult to know whether they are mere principles or genuine criteria orienting the activity of the partnerships. A second type of response relates more to economic objectives – for example, the marketing of local products and the promotion of rural tourism and local businesses. A third category includes social/economic objectives, such as creating and maintaining employment.

The most important activities of the partnerships are the mobilization of local communities and the implementation of projects, these being two interrelated elements because the implementation of projects motivates local communities to get involved. Dissemination of information to local communities is also an important activity of the partnerships, as is the production of an action plan, because it is a requirement for obtaining funding.

Many Italian partnerships are in the early stages of their development and this may help to explain the quantitative profile of most of the outputs mentioned. The initiation of development projects and the creation and modernization of businesses were the most common answers. The promotion of rural tourism has been a key area for many LEADER partnerships and this is often reflected in this survey. As a consequence of the previous achievements, partnerships have also managed to create new jobs and to consolidate others. The issue of community mobilization is also mentioned, but its degree of achievement does not seem to correspond to the importance that has been attributed to it by the partnerships all through the questionnaire.

The greatest element of strength that the partnerships perceive relates to the characteristics and composition of the management team. The partnerships also perceive as important their external source of funding and the cooperative atmosphere existing within the partnership. Cultural and social aspects of the local context are also considered as important strengths for the partnership.

Conversely, the challenges and difficulties that the partnerships acknowledge are, first of all, the lack of motivation among local people to become involved. The availability or continuity of external funding does not seem to be one of the most important concerns of the partnerships, but other issues, such as the excessive bureaucracy that affects the programmes' implementation and insufficient coordination among different levels and bodies involved in implementing LEADER, appear to be more important.

To sum up, there seems to be a high awareness among the Italian partnerships of what the real obstacles to local development are and a clear acknowledgement of the centrality of the local context for a correct understanding and practice of bottom-up development.

4.6 United Kingdom

In the UK case, partnerships have come of age – they are becoming the norm rather than the exception for delivering social, economic and environmental goals in rural communities.

Most of the surveyed partnerships were founded in the 1990s, although a significant number (15%) predate this, reflecting in particular the English Rural Development Programme initiatives of the 1980s. In fact, there are a variety of partnerships that cannot be found in other countries (e.g. relating to the Rural Development Programmes, national parks and the Rural Challenge initiative). The main reason why partnerships were initiated was to secure access to funding. However, the desires to address common needs and involve the local community were also important motivations.

The role that different actors play in the partnerships varies depending on whether we are speaking of the emergence or development stages. Local authorities and key individuals are said to be major influences in the emergence of the partnerships, while regional policy programmes and the local communities are mentioned as the most influential for their subsequent development.

Very general objectives, such as to promote rural integrated and sustainable development, were those most mentioned by the partnerships. The need to preserve and enhance the environment, the cultural heritage and local territorial identity also features strongly. Creating or maintaining employment was also considered a key objective. When asked about the key policy areas that the partnerships are addressing, respondents mostly mentioned economic regeneration and community involvement.

When asked about their main activities, the partnerships said that they mainly devote their time to providing funding for activities/projects and implementing projects on the ground. If we relate the answers given to this question to those referring to the key policy areas, it can be appreciated that partnerships constantly raise the issues of funding, action plans and project implementation. However, there appears to be a relationship between the type of partnership and the types of activities that they seek to implement. Therefore, for example, mobilizing the local community scores highly for physical-regeneration partnerships.

Community involvement is the most mentioned output achieved by the UK partnerships, backed up by the consolidation of the cultural and territorial identity and the reinforcement of cooperation links. It is remarkable that, despite the longer and broader experience of many UK partnerships, they are quite cautious about speaking of achieved outputs, and many of them affirm that it is too early to say.

The strengths that the partnerships identify are: the support of the local community; the cooperative atmosphere within the partnerships; the availability of highly qualified and skilled staff and key individuals; the economic potential of the areas; and the availability of funding. In terms of challenges and difficulties, the partnerships highlight the lack of local involvement, poor coordination between organizations, inadequate strategic planning by the partnership, funding problems and time constraints.

To conclude, the partnerships would greatly value more autonomy of decision making and funding; well-defined planning of objectives and strategy; more training; and the availability and continuity of funding.

4.7 Finland

The idea of local initiative as such is not new in Finland. Village action has long been a principal form of local initiative in Finland and has

become an essential part of development work in rural areas. However, the way that partnerships operate today is new.

Partnerships in Finland are rather small, in terms of area and inhabitants. The great majority of the partnerships in Finland were established in 1996–1997 as part of the LEADER II and POMO programmes (the latter being a Finnish LEADER-like national initiative). Since 1997, an important number of local community partnerships have also been constituted. The partnerships were established principally to pool resources and to secure access to funding. The partnerships also emphasize new ways of action, new networks and new people being involved in local development. Typically, the partnerships have large numbers of partners; over half of those surveyed have more than thirty.

LEADER and POMO partnerships have similar objectives, i.e. (in very broad terms) to develop a more vital countryside. On the other hand, local community partnerships are more closely linked to the issue of unemployment. None the less, the three types of partnerships highlight the creation of employment and the promotion of cooperation links, community participation and local businesses as the main objectives. In terms of the key areas that the partnerships address, the main priorities are said to be community involvement and social welfare. Economic regeneration and the promotion of rural tourism are also key policy areas for the partnerships.

Mobilizing the local community, disseminating information about the partnership's programme, providing input for the elaboration of an action plan and coordinating action between partners were considered very important activities by the partnerships. As was the case in the other countries, lobbying was considered only slightly important among respondents.

In spite of the short period of their existence, it seems that partnerships have achieved some key outputs and objectives already. Three different categories of answers can be identified: (i) reinforcement of cooperation links, community involvement and the initiation of development projects; (ii) employment and business creation and consolidation and the promotion of local areas and products; and (iii) partnerships as a new mode of action itself.

Community involvement and an existing cooperative atmosphere were the strengths most mentioned by the partnerships. Also, the available local knowledge, local know-how, traditions and identity, as well as the presence of key people, were highlighted by the partnerships. On the other hand, there are many challenges and difficulties that partnerships in Finland face; being a new experience, old conservative attitudes, a lack of credibility and a lack of local commitment were the main concerns expressed in several responses. Issues related to funding, especially the difficulty of mobilizing private funding, were an important concern.

Finally, the respondents pointed out some necessary changes that would improve the functioning of the partnerships. Some of these changes are: more human resources, more autonomy and responsibility, less bureaucracy and clearer objectives.

4.8 Sweden

Three main issues underline the results gathered by the extensive survey in Sweden: (i) the partnerships' general focus on the 'process' when describing what they have achieved; (ii) public-sector dominance; and (iii) the lack of time and money.

In general terms, partnerships seem to be a new phenomenon in Sweden. The oldest partnerships date from 1985, but most partnerships surveyed were constituted in the 1990s, in particular in 1995–1996, coinciding with the launch of the LEADER II programme in Sweden.

To involve the local community and to address common needs and projects were the most frequently mentioned reasons for the initiation of the partnerships. In comparison with other issues and in contrast to the experience of other countries, funding does not appear to be very relevant for the partnerships; in fact, 23% of the respondents consider it not important at all.

Local government seems to have been a major driving force in both the emergence and the development of the surveyed partnerships, followed in significance by the role of key individuals. Regional and European policies, which are very important for the emergence, become less important for the development of the partnerships, where elements of the local level (community, private sector, associations) become more crucial.

Apart from some partnerships dealing with very particular objectives (e.g. health), the other partnerships highlight their role in promoting rural development, developing local businesses and creating and maintaining employment as their main objectives.

The most important activities to which the partnerships devote their time are: mobilizing the local community, disseminating information and organizing the coordination among partners. The delivery of services is the activity considered least important by the partnerships.

When asked about their achievements and the changes introduced, some partnerships claimed that it was too early to say. However, if we consider the rest, it is possible to see that political change is the most common category of answers (i.e. more cooperation between different local actors, cooperation across old borders, a better exchange of information, more community involvement). Following this, new initiatives, attitudinal changes, economic improvement and the enhancement of local resources are other achievements mentioned.

Respondents attribute most of the success of the partnerships to the people involved and to certain forms of cooperation/organization. Local features, such as local history and the particular environment, are mentioned less frequently.

Finally, according to the informants, time, money, organization and restraining structures are the most common problems for the partnerships and the things that need to be changed in order to improve their good functioning.

4.9 The Extensive Survey Results Viewed from a European Perspective: a Descriptive Overview

It is clear from the national analyses reported above that the 1990s have witnessed a true spread of local partnerships involved in integrated rural development, including in the UK, which has a longer tradition of the use of partnerships in this respect.

4.9.1 Initiation and objectives

The most frequently mentioned reasons explaining why the partnerships were initiated show that their essential function relates to the management of development projects (i.e. to address common needs and projects, to involve local community and to jointly implement projects). This also explains the high funding dependency of most partnerships. To strengthen existing cooperation networks was a much less important reason, perhaps because of the weak previous community action existing in most cases.

Local government and key individuals are the most influential actors involved in the emergence and development of the partnerships. European and regional policies have been crucial in the emergence of partnerships in some countries (notably Spain, Italy and Finland), while local communities and the voluntary and private sectors are generally very important in the subsequent development stage of the partnerships.

To create or maintain employment opportunities, to promote rural integrated and sustainable development and to initiate and implement development strategies are, by far, the objectives most mentioned by the partnerships. Less frequently mentioned objectives are to participate in rural development networks and to tackle common problems, but it is remarkable that differences among countries are not significant for this question.

How are these mentioned objectives put into practice? Community involvement is the most important policy area for the partnerships, showing that, despite not being a key objective in itself, it is considered as

a fundamental element of partnership action for the promotion of integrated development. Economic regeneration and integrated sustainable development follow in terms of importance. Rather than being understood as a broad and vague issue, integrated sustainable development has become a new and specific philosophy and way of doing things.

Half of our surveyed partnerships operate in territories that involve several municipalities; a less common case is that of partnerships operating at the regional level. In terms of population, more than half of the partnerships work in territories with between 5000 and 50,000 inhabitants.

4.9.2 The organization of the partnership

Some 70% of the partnerships in the sample are formally constituted organizations and have a legal status, while the rest have an informal character. It must be acknowledged that, for some countries (e.g. Spain or Italy), to be formally constituted is compulsory, at least for the LEADER and similar programmes. In Germany, there are more informal partnerships.

The partnerships are not usually big employers; rather, the work involved in the partnership is generally carried out by a small number of contracted persons and some volunteers coming from the various partner organizations.

The partnerships are highly dependent on the availability of public funding and we found no partnerships that manage to fund themselves from their own products and services.

According to the respondents, the most important activities that the partnerships undertake are: to disseminate information among the community, to mobilize the local community and to implement projects. These comprise the logical sequence that partnerships implementing a programme must accomplish. Lobbying is, with the exception of Sweden, the activity given least importance by the partnerships (of the options we presented in the questionnaire), perhaps because this would need the presence of more mature structures.

4.9.3 The operation of the partnership

The main activities of the partnerships show important variations between the countries surveyed. The dissemination of information is considered the most important activity in Sweden and Germany; mobilizing the local community is the most important activity for the Finnish partnerships; the provision of funding for projects and initiatives in the area is the major activity in the UK and Ireland; and the implementation of development projects is the main activity in Italy and Spain.

The involvement of the local community is considered to be an essential element in the partnership approach. The most common way that partnerships involve the local community in the development process is directly through the implementation of projects and other measures. Working groups and involving key individuals and representatives comprise other means of involving local communities.

About two-thirds of the surveyed partnerships undertake some kind of internal/self-evaluation and, of this group, about one-third had also had an external evaluation at the time of survey. This latter form of evaluation is most common among EU-funded partnerships.

4.9.4 Achievements of the partnerships

The partnerships state quite concrete objectives, rather than broad aims that might include everything (e.g. improving the quality of life in the area). The initiation of development projects is the most frequently mentioned output; at a second level, the reinforcement of cooperation links and community involvement and mobilization; and, at a third level, the creation and consolidation of employment, business creation and modernization, the development of rural tourism, and the promotion of the local area and products are the most mentioned objectives.

In terms of the broader changes brought about by the partnerships, it could be said that they see themselves primarily as developers of local community networks and promoters of common action in the area. Only after that do they acknowledge their ability to bring economic dynamism to the area.

The partnerships offer a variety of opinions relating to the main strengths that underline their functioning and development. One strength peculiar to the Finnish context is the availability of specific funding for the creation jobs in the third sector. However, there is one issue that, in the opinion of most of the partnerships, can be highlighted as the main strength: the existence of local human capital, both in terms of an existing skilled management team at the local level and in terms of local actors willing to cooperate (in this regard, see Table 4.3, which uses a simple scoring device to reflect the frequency of relevant responses).

The same variation of results applies in relation to the difficulties and challenges that the partnerships face (Table 4.4). However, one issue can be highlighted above all the rest, namely, funding problems – and this links back to an issue that recurred in answers throughout the questionnaire and which reflects the high dependency that partnerships have on the availability of external funding. It is remarkable, though, that the Italian partnerships seem little concerned by this issue. External constraints and contextual difficulties are also mentioned as important in Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

Table 4.3. The main strengths of the partnerships, by country.

	Sweden	Germany	Finland	UK	Ireland	Italy	Spain
Cooperative atmosphere			XX	XX	XXX	XX	XX
Community involvement and commitment	X		XXX				
Valuable local resources					X		XX
Local know-how, tradition, identity	XX		X	XXX		X	
Existing associative structures							
Other favourable contextual aspects		XX					
Presence of key people (leaders, managers)				X	XX		
Availability of funding sources		XXX					
Other favourable input aspects							
Public/private initiative willing to invest							
Characteristics of management team	XXX	X				XXX	XXX

X, mentioned by 25%; XX, mentioned by 50%; XXX, mentioned by 75% of the partnerships.

Running through the answers extracted from the questionnaires, a few issues of special concern for the partnerships can be highlighted.

- The availability and continuity of funding is a key issue for the partnerships, since they are not able to finance themselves from their own operations.
- There is a need for a reduction in time-consuming bureaucracy.
- More autonomy delegated to the local level is required.
- More human resources actively working for the partnerships would be valued.

4.10 A Typology of Local Partnerships for Integrated Rural Development in Europe

The purpose of this final section is to seek out reasonably homogeneous groups of partnerships among the sampled cases. This is because there are some research questions that can only be answered on the basis of a multivariate statistical analysis: for example, are the partnerships from one country similar to each other and different in relation to the partnerships of other countries? Are there some regional specificities?

Table 4.4. The main difficulties of the partnerships, by country.

	Sweden	Germany	Finland	UK	Ireland	Italy	Spain
Lack of motivation among local people for becoming involved					X	XXX	XX
Local political conflicts							
Lack of skilled human resources							
Excessive bureaucracy						XX	
External constraints	XXX		XX				
Other contextual difficulties		XX	XXX				X
Funding problems	XX	XXX	X	X	XXX		XXX
Time constraints							
Other input difficulties		X					
Lack of agreement							
Other difficulties relating to partners							
Insufficient coordination	X			XXX	XX	X	
Inadequate planning/ strategies				XX			

X, mentioned by 25%; XX, mentioned by 50%; XXX, mentioned by 75% of the partnerships.

Two statistical techniques have been used in order to attempt such an aggregative typology: factor analysis and cluster analysis. The elements for analysis are the 330 partnerships surveyed in the extensive survey. The main objective of the analysis is to identify groups of relatively homogeneous partnerships from a range of variables selected from the questionnaire. The main difficulty of this analysis arises from the fact that most of the data generated by the questionnaire have a nominal (zero/one) nature. This implies serious difficulties for statistical analysis.

The procedure follows two main steps. The first is the factor analysis (principal component analysis). This technique integrates all the information contained in the 17 variables considered into a reduced number of new variables (factors) that contain most of the information of the original variables. (The 17 variables related to the age, size and composition and objectives of the partnerships.) Factor analysis is used to identify underlying factors that capture the correlations between a set of variables.

Nevertheless, the process of integration of the information into factors is only a first step towards the later classification of the cases (the 330 partnerships in the sample) into relatively homogeneous groups. This task is performed by a cluster analysis, which groups cases with

similar characteristics on the parameters considered. In this case, the aim is to identify types of partnerships working in integrated rural development. In the cluster analysis, cases are grouped according to their similarity and distance with regard to each other.

In this analysis, a solution of five clusters was considered to be the optimal, taking into account the size of distances among them. To characterize each cluster properly, it is necessary to know the average scores of the cases of the cluster on each factor. According to their average factor scores, the five clusters considered have been characterized as follows:

- Cluster 1: large partnerships with a high percentage of private, productive partners; working in areas with a slightly larger population than average; their activity is mainly focused on the economic aspects of development; they tend to reflect the average age of the whole sample of partnerships.
- Cluster 2: very large partnerships with a balanced distribution of public/private partners but with a dominance of non-productive private organizations; working in relatively populated areas; their activity is mainly focused on the management of development projects; slightly younger than average.
- Cluster 3: partnerships with an average number of partners and a strong dominance of public-sector institutions; working in average populated areas; their activity is mainly focused on the economic aspects of development; they tend to reflect the average age of the whole sample.
- Cluster 4: partnerships with an average number of partners; strong dominance of private non-productive organizations; working in average populated areas; relatively old partnerships whose activity is mainly focused on the economic side of development.
- Cluster 5: partnerships with a relatively small number of partners and a balanced distribution of public/private organizations; working in relatively sparsely populated areas; partnerships younger than average; their activity is mainly focused on the development of local networks and the promotion of the quality of life in their areas.

The distribution by country

One of our research questions concerned whether there are significant geographical variations according to the types of partnerships identified. A cross-national comparison has been carried out on the basis of the percentage of partnerships of each type to be found in each country. This is presented in Fig. 4.1.

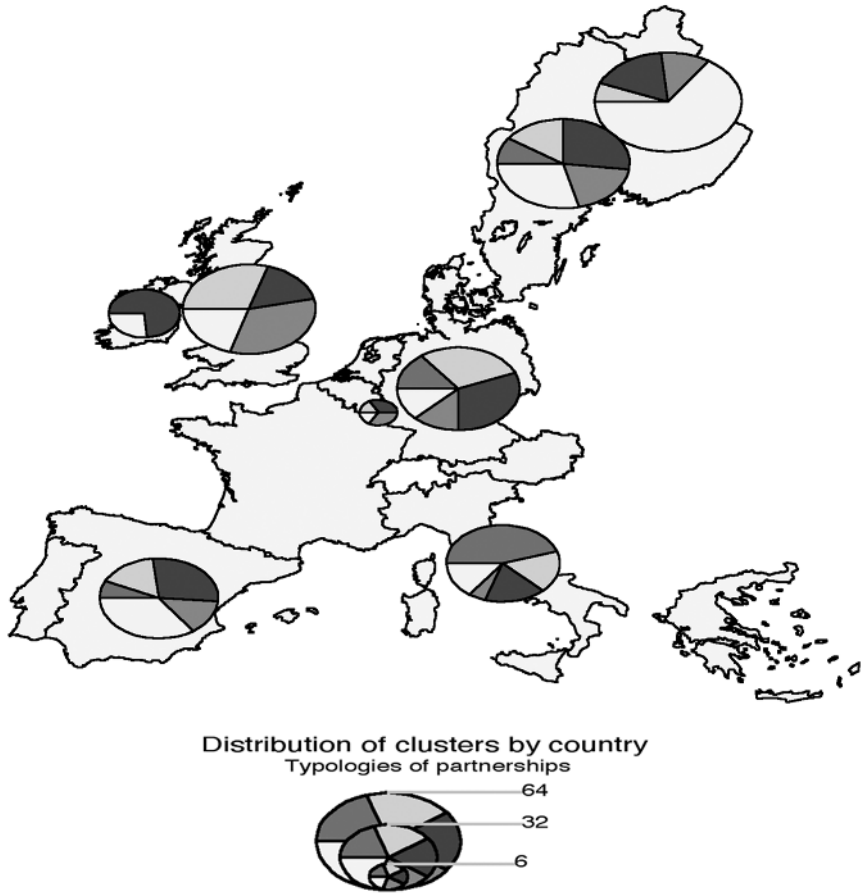


Fig. 4.1. The 330 partnerships surveyed in the extensive survey – distribution of clusters by country. See text (pp. 78–80) for an explanation of the five clusters.

- Cluster 1 is the smallest group, accounting for 10% of the sample. This is the most spatially concentrated group. It is not present in Finland, Ireland or the UK and has a low representation in Sweden and Spain. Only in Germany (14.6% of its sample) and especially in Italy (45%) is this cluster significant.
- Cluster 2 embraces 17% of the sample. This cluster is especially important in Germany and the UK (30% in both cases), but is also significant in Italy, Spain and Sweden (about 16%). It is, however, not important in Finland and Ireland.
- Cluster 3 covers over 26% of the sample. These partnerships are present in a significant number in all countries. However, differences are important between Finland, UK and Italy, the countries with less representation in this group (about 17% of the partnerships in each

country), and Ireland, with 74% of its sample in this cluster. In between are Sweden, Germany and Spain, where these partnerships account for about 30% in each country.

- Cluster 4 accounts for 15% of the sample. The national distribution of this cluster shows important variations between total absence in Ireland and a reduced presence in Italy (5%), on the one hand, and an important presence in the UK (33%). In the other countries, the percentages range from 11–13% in Finland, Germany and Spain to 20% in Sweden.
- Cluster 5 is the most numerous group covering some 31% of the sample. This cluster is very well represented in Finland, where more than 65% of the sample belongs to this type of partnership. Also in Spain (36%) and Sweden (29%) the cluster is important. The remaining countries have lower percentages, ranging from 26% in Ireland and 20% in the UK to 15% in Italy and 12% in Germany.

4.11 Conclusion

This survey of 330 local rural development partnerships, almost certainly the largest such survey ever undertaken, has produced an enormous amount of information on the characteristics and operation of such partnerships and the reader should consult the lengthy published monograph on the survey for more detail.

The overall conclusion is that national differences do exist, but that an underlying European picture is also apparent. Key messages are picked up in this book's Chapter 7, but first we must consider the complementary 24 detailed case studies, which explored in detail many of the key issues highlighted in the extensive survey.

5 The Findings of the Study of Practice

The case studies of practice proved to be a rich source of information on the functioning of the partnerships in the six countries, which was analysed at the national and then the European level. Below we present, first, the main features of the 24 partnerships, secondly, a country-by-country analysis of the main findings and, thirdly, a European-level appraisal.

5.1 The Main Features of the Partnerships Studied

The main features of the 24 partnerships are summarized in Table 5.1 and briefly considered below. See also the map included earlier as Fig. 3.2.

5.1.1 Population and area

The 24 partnerships are located in areas with different characteristics as regards population size and demographic density.

As for population size, within a range from a minimum of some 10,000 inhabitants to a maximum of 138,000 (i.e. three of the 24 exceeded the criterion of 100,000 people maximum), the partnership areas can be divided into three groups:

- Three small areas, with a maximum resident population of 12,000.
- Eight medium areas, with a resident population of between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants.
- Thirteen large areas, with a resident population of over 50,000 inhabitants.

Table 5.1. Main features of the 24 partnerships in the six European countries.

Name of partnership	Country	Region	Size (resident pop.)	Density (pop. km^{-2})	Year of constitution	No. of partners	Main sources of funding
West Tyrone Rural 2000	UK	Northern Ireland	81,650	41	1996	11	European (LEADER), regional
Scottish Borders Rural Partnership	UK	Scotland	106,000	22	1997	15	National, local
South-west Shropshire Rural Challenge	UK	West Midlands	9,965	29	1995	18	National, local
Isle of Wight Rural Development Programme	UK	South-east England	67,000	174	1984	11	National, local
Ljusdal	Sweden	Gävleborgs Län	20,167	4	1996	19	European, regional, local
Northern Bohuslän	Sweden	Västra Götalandsregionen	33,661	17	1987	30	European, regional, local
Svenljunga	Sweden	Västra Götalandsregionen	10,818	12	1995	12	Local
Karlskrona	Sweden	Blekinge Län	60,429	58	1993	4	Local
Kaustinen Seudun Kumppanuushanke	Finland	Central Ostrobothnia	19,400	6	1997	10	European, national, local
Development Association of Seinänaapurit	Finland	South Ostrobothnia	81,901	25	1997	8	European (LEADER), regional
South-west Finland's Riverside Partners Association	Finland	South-west Finland	30,398	15	1996	11	European (LEADER), regional
Monet Polut Ry	Finland	South-west Finland	36,350	56	1997	5	National (POMO), local
Nordwestmecklenburg	Germany	Nordwestmecklenburg	118,400	57	1995	24	European (LEADER), national
Verein für Regionalentwicklung Landkreis Kassel	Germany	Hessen	138,942	128	1993	44	Regional, local

Jura 2000	Germany	Bavaria	27,600	66	1994	200	European (LEADER), regional, local
PLENUM	Germany	Baden-Wurttemberg	36,229	293	1995	21	Regional, local
ASAM-Ambasierras	Spain	Castilla y Leon	64,469	26	1991	61	European (LEADER), regional, local
Aprodervi Las Villuercas	Spain	Extremadura	10,354	7	1996	30	National (PRODER), regional, local
Adricoh Costa Occidental Huelva	Spain	Andalucia	96,387	77	1996	56	National (PRODER), regional, local
Serranìa–Rincon	Spain	Comunidad Valenciana	21,562	11	1996	40	European (LEADER), regional
Valle del Crocchio	Italy	Calabria	55,353	70	1997	10	European (LEADER), national
A.L.L.BA.	Italy	Basilicata	82,269	51	1991	37	European (LEADER), national
Capo Santa Maria di Leuca	Italy	Puglia	86,330	284	1991	40	European (LEADER), national
Soprip	Italy	Emilia-Romagna	59,709	23	1994	29	European (LEADER), national

Thus the majority of the partnerships are operating in medium and large areas, with only three cases (in the UK, Sweden and Spain) serving small areas. The medium areas comprise eight cases from four countries: three in Finland, two in Germany, two in Sweden and one in Spain. The large areas include 13 cases spread across all six countries: four in Italy, three in the UK, two in Germany, two in Spain, one in Finland and one in Sweden.

Also the density variation covers a wide range, from a minimum of four inhabitants km^{-2} to a maximum of 284. The distribution of the cases is mainly concentrated in two groups:

- Low density, between 10 and 30 inhabitants km^{-2} for nine cases in five countries (Finland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK).
- Medium density, between 40 and 90 inhabitants km^{-2} for nine cases in all six countries.

The other cases are at the extremes: a very low density (fewer than 9 inhabitants km^{-2}) for three cases (in Finland, Sweden and Spain) and a high density (over 150 inhabitants km^{-2}) for three cases (in Italy, Germany and the UK).

5.1.2 Age of the partnership

Of the 24 partnerships, 22 were created in connection with programmes promoted in the 1990s, both by the EU and by the national or regional governments.

Most (15) were formally constituted during or after 1995. They are found in all six countries (four in Finland, three in Spain and in the UK, two in Germany and in Sweden, one in Italy). Seven partnerships were formed between 1990 and 1994 (three in Italy, two in Germany, one in Spain and one in Sweden). Only two partnerships were constituted in the 1980s, one in Sweden and one in the UK.

These elements confirm that rural partnerships are a relatively young experience across Europe and that the processes connected with their promotion of rural change can be measured only on a short-term perspective.

5.1.3 Size of the partnership

The formal composition of the partnership varies from a minimum of four partners (Sweden, the Archipelago of Karlskrona) to a maximum of 200 (Germany, Jura 2000). However, the Jura 2000 partnership must be considered an exception, as it includes many small work circles, together with an association, a corporation and a local action group.

The majority of the partnerships are distributed in three groups:

- Small size (ten to 12 partners), for a total of six cases (two in the UK, two in Finland, one in Sweden and one in Italy).
- Medium size (15–24 partners), for a total of five cases (two in Germany, two in the UK and one in Sweden).
- Large size (29–44 partners), for a total of seven cases (three in Italy, two in Spain, one in Germany and one in Sweden).

The other six cases are distributed in a group of very small size (four to eight partners), located in Finland (two cases) and in Sweden (one case), and a group of very large size (56–200 partners), located in Spain (two cases) and in Germany (one case).

The high variation of this variable confirms that the partnerships for rural development are organized along different patterns in Europe. While the southern and central countries (Italy, Germany and Spain) tend to promote larger partnerships, in the northern countries (Finland, Sweden and the UK) the rural partnerships are organized on a smaller size and tend to have more of a local community dimension.

We now look at the practice of partnership in each of the six countries in turn – before giving a European overview.

5.2 The Practice of Rural Partnership in the UK

The four partnerships studied in the UK are as follows:

- West Tyrone Rural 2000 LEADER II programme, located in Northern Ireland.
- The Scottish Borders Rural Partnership, located in Scotland.
- South-west Shropshire Rural Challenge Partnership, located in the English West Midlands.
- The Isle of Wight Rural Development Programme, located in south-east England.

The analysis highlights, among other things, some key factors that characterize the functioning of the partnerships with reference to the level of involvement of partners, their management structure and their effects on local development.

5.2.1 Partner involvement

The level of involvement and commitment of partners varies considerably and is one of the key differences between the four partnerships. For example, while the Scottish Borders contained several passive partners, who appeared to be operating a watching brief rather than being

actively engaged in the work of the partnership, West Tyrone enjoyed the enthusiastic involvement of its members and a willingness to subordinate personal and organizational agendas to the concerns of the partnership. The analysis also suggests that, where a partnership has a clear and useful purpose, is seen to be doing a worthwhile job, is well run and is user-friendly, it will attract the support and involvement of partners, and generate high levels of trust and commitment.

5.2.2 Management structure

Generally, the UK partnerships benefited from a coherent and effective organization structure, characterized by a main committee or board of partners serviced by a smaller executive or steering committee. All the partnerships were well supported by administrative and technical staff, in particular a project officer or manager. The latter role is fundamental to the smooth running, coordination and communication of the partnership. In addition, staff from partner organizations also played important parts. The case studies suggest that these management structures and systems worked well, with an appropriate balance between the *formal* decision-making powers of the main board and the *informal* decision-making functions of officers and subcommittees. Similarly, any conflicts that occurred (whether internal conflicts of role, attitudes and culture or external conflicts relating to priorities or substantive decisions on the ground) were generally worked through, and nowhere did they appear to have serious consequences for the performance of the partnerships.

5.2.3 Effects on local development

All the partnerships were committed to the concept of integrated rural development and the pursuit of a living and working countryside. However, in practice, what was being achieved usually fell short of this ideal, for the following reasons:

- The area was too large to make a truly integrated impact (with the exception of South-west Shropshire).
- The funding programme contained built-in priorities or emphases (e.g. an early concentration on work-space premises in the Isle of Wight).
- The partnership deliberately focused on a particular activity in order to make visible achievements (e.g. the Scottish Borders Resource Centre).
- The partnership focused on areas or topics not already covered by other funding schemes and signposted some applicants to the other schemes (e.g. West Tyrone).

- The priority for the partnership was to allocate funds according to prescribed rules and regulations, mainly in reaction to project bids (especially the Isle of Wight).
- Time limitations restricted wider strategic thinking beyond the implementation of funding programmes.

Accordingly, all the partnerships expressed a broad list of aims and objectives, but in practice were generally operating as local vehicles to implement top-down prescribed funding programmes within limited time periods. Although there was some scope for the proactive initiation or promotion and support of targeted schemes (especially in West Tyrone), partnerships were generally reactive to bids coming forward. Thus their outputs were characterized more by a list of worthwhile projects rather than an integrated development strategy.

5.2.4 Strengths and weaknesses

The case studies demonstrated some key strengths and weaknesses in the practice of UK partnerships.

Key strengths

- Responsive, proactive local authorities willing and able to initiate and lead new partnerships in their area.
- Good support from main funding partners.
- Coherently structured organization and management systems, ably supported by administrative and technical staff.
- Successful implementation of funding programmes via specific projects.

Key weaknesses

- Varying degrees of clarity regarding the specific purposes and direction of the partnership (best in West Tyrone, South-west Shropshire).
- Varying degrees of trust and commitment by and between partners (strongest in West Tyrone).
- Limited community involvement in the partnerships themselves (best in South-west Shropshire).
- Excessively bureaucratic funding processes, leading to delays and frustration.
- Limited strategic, integrated planning and development (strongest in South-west Shropshire).
- Difficult or uncertain relationships with other funding programmes and partnerships (strongest in West Tyrone).
- Short-term funding programmes leading to uncertainty over the future of the partnership's work (except for the Isle of Wight).

5.3 The Practice of Rural Partnership in Sweden

The four partnerships studied in Sweden are as follows:

- The Rural Development Project in Ljusdal, a sparsely populated municipality in northern Sweden, with partners from local community groups, local and regional authorities, educational organizations and a foundation for the support of local trade and industry.
- The Rural Counselling Project in northern Bohuslän, operating in three municipalities in south-western Sweden, with partners from local community groups, local and regional authorities and the rural-economy association, a semi-public organization in the county.
- The Agenda 21 Project in Svenljunga, a municipality in the south-western region of Sweden, with partners from local community groups and the local authorities.
- The partnership around Öriket in the archipelago of Karlskrona, a municipality in south-eastern Sweden, with partners from small-scale entrepreneurs in the archipelago and local and regional authorities.

5.3.1 Composition and objectives

The four partnerships are, like most partnerships for rural development in Sweden, organizations for cooperation between the public sector and the voluntary and/or private sector. All four partnerships are based on trust built by individuals or organizations, systematically crossing the borders between the public and non-public sectors.

The development of local democracy is an explicit goal for the partnerships in Svenljunga and Ljusdal. In the Bohuslän case, this objective grew from the experience of the partnership over several years. Economic and social development, i.e. the creation of new firms and jobs as well as the preservation of existing ones, the raising of the rural inhabitants' level of education and competence and the creation of possibilities for people to stay in the rural areas, is an important objective for the partnerships in Ljusdal, Bohuslän and Karlskrona. In Svenljunga, the objectives and models of rural development have been adapted to the changing local situation. After 2 years, the Agenda 21 project in Svenljunga was ended by the local politicians; the group of local officials which had been working with it was dissolved and the municipality withdrew its funds. In this situation, the partnership had to change its objectives and methods of working to be able to survive. It focused on the development of local democracy and improved cooperation between the community groups and local authorities.

5.3.2 Organization structure

The partnerships are all built between formal organizations – local and regional authorities and different associations, mainly local community groups – but the bridge itself, the partnership, is not necessarily formal. The partnerships in Ljusdal and Svenljunga are formal with respect to meetings and the decision-making process. In both cases, the partnerships are formally ruled by the local politicians; they are built into the decision-making structure of the local authorities. The Ljusdal partnership is the only one with funds to distribute. It is also the only partnership with frequent regular meetings with all partners.

The partnerships in Karlskrona and Bohuslän are in many respects much less formal; meetings are often held spontaneously and quite informally and this is a highly valued principle, particularly in Bohuslän. There is no formalized decision-making process in these cases, which no doubt has to do with the fact that these partnerships to a large extent are forums for the exchange of information, discussion and planning, whereas decisions about implementing ideas and plans are made in other forums. The degree of formality does not in itself determine the success or failure of a partnership. An intended informality (Bohuslän) works out as well as an intended formality (Ljusdal). However, a clear structure based on the partnership's objectives seems to be an important element.

5.3.3 Effects on local development

The effects of the partnerships' existence vary between the cases. Socio-economic results seem to have been achieved in Bohuslän and Ljusdal. In Ljusdal, jobs have been created, mainly within the partnership and with the aid of employment policy measures. In Bohuslän, a large number of new small-scale firms have been started with the help of the partnership's rural counselling activities. Both of these partnerships have also contributed to an improved competence among the rural inhabitants by providing education in IT, economics and seminar organization, conferences and study trips to other rural areas. In Karlskrona, the archipelago has become better marketed through the activities of the economic association of entrepreneurs and its partners among the authorities. In Ljusdal and Bohuslän, there are also material effects: the physical environment (community houses, campsites, bathing-beaches, road signs, garbage stations, etc.) has been improved as a result of the partnerships.

5.3.4 Involvement of the local community

In all four areas, contacts and cooperation between civil society (community groups and the association of entrepreneurs) and the authorities have improved and intensified, according to many informants. In all areas, the associations have become included in local planning. The community groups in Ljusdal and Bohuslän have, to some extent, been given the right to be consulted on local issues, i.e. when decisions are to be made regarding their villages. In these areas, as in Svenljunga, the community groups are also involved in making local development plans and thereby influencing the general plans of the municipalities. In Karlskrona, the association of entrepreneurs is involved in similar planning in cooperation with the local and regional authorities. The community groups have generally become stronger and more active because of their involvement in the partnerships; cooperation has given them new and important functions in local politics and administration. In Bohuslän and Svenljunga, new community groups have been started and old ones have been revitalized as part of the partnerships' work for development.

All of this has had two important results. First, the associations have become permanently involved in local politics and administration, meaning that the structure of the local authorities has changed, if not formally, then at least in practice, and has also been extended with a fourth level beneath the municipality level. Secondly, a thorough inventory of local resources and possibilities has been created in all four areas. With the help of unpaid labour, the municipalities involved have now got a bank of development ideas for the rural areas.

5.4 The Practice of Rural Partnership in Finland

The rural partnerships studied in Finland are as follows:

- The Kaustinen Local Community Partnership, located in western Finland and operating in seven municipalities.
- The Development Association of Seinänaapurit, a LEADER II partnership, located in western Finland and operating in seven municipalities.
- The South-west Finland's Riverside Partners Association, a LEADER II partnership, located in southern Finland and operating in ten municipalities.
- The Monet Polut Ry, a POMO partnership, located in southern Finland and operating in three municipalities.

5.4.1 Composition of the partnerships

The composition of all the partnerships is similar, as all the partners are drawn from the public sector. The lack of interest from the private sector is a common concern for all the partnerships in Finland. The number of the formal partners is small, varying between five (Monet Polut Ry) and 11 (Riverside). The partners in all four partnerships are the municipalities of the area and the regional Employment and Economic Development Centre. In addition to the partners mentioned above, the Kaustinen partnership collaborates with two local employment agencies and the Monet Polut Ry partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. These different authorities contribute public funding, as well as expert knowledge and administrative support.

However, the number of participants in the actions of the partnerships is much higher, varying from 30 (Monet Polut) to over 100 (Seinänaapurit). Furthermore, informal collaboration is also achieved with other institutions or individuals not included as partners or participants.

5.4.2 The organization of the partnership

The organizational structure of the partnerships follows the guidelines established both by the Ministry of Labour (Kaustinen) or the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Seinänaapurit, Riverside, Monet Polut) and by the original promoters, organized in an association.

The main features of the organization structures of the Monet Polut, Riverside and Seinänaapurit partnerships are similar. They are all organized as associations and have rather formal organizational structures, whose core is composed of the assembly of members, the board and the staff. The Riverside partnership also has four working groups. The Kaustinen partnership differs from the three other partnerships. It is organized as a subregional project and thus has no legal status. Nevertheless, the partnership has a clear organizational structure with a wide range of parties involved.

The role of committed and competent staff is essential for the successful operation of a partnership. However, there is a danger that a partnership becomes too personified with its coordinator. In the Riverside partnership, the resignation of the coordinator (the original promoter) after 3 years of intensive work caused difficulties both within and outside the partnership.

The number of staff members is directly connected with the budget of the partnership. Unlike the LEADER partnerships (Seinänaapurit and Riverside), which have two full-time employees, administrative costs in the POMO partnership (Monet Polut) are a part of the overall budget. In this case, as the expenses for administration reduce the money available for the actual projects, only one full-time staff member is employed.

5.4.3 Effects on local development

The major outputs of all four partnerships are essentially qualitative. Since all the programmes (LEADER, POMO, local community partnership) were new in Finland, an essential qualitative output was the introduction of the partnership approach as such. The partnerships have created a new way of action, new networks and improved attitudes towards development. All four cases have succeeded in increasing collaboration over the borders that define their areas. The partnerships have unified local authorities, organizations, enterprises and associations in terms of joint discussions of the means of local development. All in all, the bottom-up principle has been widely adopted and people at the grass-roots level have started to take part in the development work of their area.

As to the quantitative effects, some economic effects are already visible, notably the creation of new jobs and new small-scale firms. The Riverside and the Monet Polut partnerships have succeeded, especially in rural tourism. The Seinänaapurit, the Riverside and the Monet Polut partnerships have also provided training for the local inhabitants in their areas. As a result, the level of knowledge and know-how is expected to rise. All three partnerships have also had environmental and cultural outputs. All in all, both LEADER cases have implemented over 100 projects, while the POMO case has carried out fewer projects (around 30).

5.5 The Practice of Rural Partnership in Germany

The four partnerships studied in Germany are as follows:

- The Local Action Group Nordwestmecklenburg, located in the north of Germany.
- The Association for Regional Development in the County of Kassel, located in the central state of Hessen.
- Jura 2000, located in the southern state of Bavaria.
- PLENUM, located in the southern state of Baden-Württemberg.

5.5.1 Origin and composition

All four partnerships represent a new institutional approach to rural development, required by new funding programmes from the EU or state governments. Without these funding programmes, the partnerships would not have been founded or sustained. This external funding did not diminish the central role of key local actors in initiating and shaping the partnerships. These individuals functioned as the crucial link between supralocal ideas and funding opportunities and local organizations and people. Even though these partnerships were top-down initiated, the local members of the partnerships took over the partnerships and a sense of true local ownership developed. Only the PLENUM partnership (being a model project of the state of Baden-Württemberg) somehow remained more closely connected to the state government, while all the other partnerships quickly assumed full local ownership.

The membership size of the four partnerships ranged from 21 (PLENUM) to about 200 (Jura). But the Jura 2000 partnership is rather unusual, as it is composed of autonomous work circles, an association, a corporation and a local action group. The membership composition also differed between the partnerships, but generally all societal sectors were represented. In all cases, however, representatives from the public sector dominated, while the private economic sector was clearly underrepresented. The local community was usually represented by a few selected organizations. All partnerships showed obvious gaps in their membership (an absence of women, youth, environmentalists, entrepreneurs). Even though some partnerships did expand eventually, in practice they all nevertheless pursued a rather restrictive admission policy instead of being open for all.

5.5.2 The organization of the partnerships

The four studied partnerships exemplify different types of organizational set-ups. Two partnerships (Nordwestmecklenburg and PLENUM) must be considered informal as they are not independent legal entities, while the other two partnerships have a formally registered status as an association (Kassel) and a corporation (Jura 2000). The Nordwestmecklenburg partnership has the simplest form of organization: its LEADER Local Action Group is coordinated by a member of the county administration and there are no steering committees or working groups. The PLENUM partnership has a so-called project group, which is coordinated by county staff; there is no local steering committee (only a dead steering committee at the state level), but thematic working groups exist. The Kassel partnership is a registered

association consisting of an assembly of members, a core and an extended steering committee and working groups. All these groups are coordinated by the association's own staff. Finally, the Jura 2000 partnership is the most complex partnership. It is made up of independent work circles, a registered association, a limited regional development corporation and a LEADER local action group. Internally, both the association and the corporation have an assembly of members and a board. The corporation's staff coordinates the entire partnership.

Despite these differences, the partnerships have some features in common. First of all, they all have some sort of assembly of members, which brings together the various actors that belong to the partnerships. This assembly constitutes the heart of the partnership. Secondly, all four partnerships could rely on at least one full-time coordinator, whether he/she is employed by one member or the entire partnership itself. The skills and commitment of these coordinators is of crucial importance for the functioning and success of the partnerships. Thirdly, with the notable exception of Nordwestmecklenburg, the partnerships have working groups, in which project proposals are developed and discussed and their implementation monitored. Lastly, the two formal partnerships both have steering committees, which deal with both day-to-day and fundamental decisions and function as a link between the members and the staff of the partnership.

5.5.3 The operation of the partnerships

The decision-making procedures of the four partnerships are also common: ideas for projects are either developed in working groups or by an individual (member or non-member of the partnership). The coordinator assists the formulation of an application, while the steering group discusses the application and puts it on a priority list of projects. The assembly of members then makes the final decision by ratifying the priority list or making decisions about the individual projects. Usually this decision is arrived at without formal voting, more informal, consensus-based decision making being preferred. The funding agencies (which administer the public funds) are usually involved at an early stage, so that the project also conforms to their requirements or preferences.

The implementation of projects was only coordinated by the partnerships. The actual implementation itself rested with the beneficiaries/recipients of funds, regardless of whether he/she was a member or non-member of the partnership. Therefore, the four studied partnerships can only be described as decision makers, facilitators, advisers and coordinators of rural development in their areas, but not – in a strict sense – as implementers.

5.5.4 Effects on local development

All four projects produced impressive lists of successfully implemented projects, covering a wide range of substantive areas, such as environmental protection, physical rehabilitation, cultural renewal and economic regeneration. In terms of relations between projects, it must be noted that the projects and hence the outputs of the partnerships were seldom truly integrated (in the sense of being linked with each other and producing synergy effects). Apart from these substantive outputs, the four partnerships led to important institutional changes. To name but a few, new local spin-off organizations were founded, cooperation between municipalities was intensified, public funding procedures became more transparent and regionally oriented and relationships between opposing factions (such as farmers and environmentalists) were improved.

5.6 The Practice of Rural Partnership in Spain

The four partnerships studied in Spain are as follows:

- Asociación Salmantina de Agricultura de Montaña (ASAM), located in the central region of Castilla y León.
- Asociación para la Promoción y Desarrollo de la Comarca de Las Villuercas (APRODERVI), located in the western region of Extremadura.
- Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural Integral de la Costa Occidental de Huelva (ADRICOH), located in the southern region of Andalucia.
- Grupo de Acción Comarcal Serranía-Rincón de Ademuz, located in the eastern region of the Comunidad Valenciana.

5.6.1 The origin of the partnerships

The launch of LEADER in 1991 was a turning point in the Spanish context with regard to local action for rural development. This programme (and its national version, PRODER) was, in fact, at the origin of three of the four partnerships analysed and it strongly supported the consolidation of the other. It can therefore be said that the major force encouraging people to come together into a formalized partnership for rural development is their awareness of the existence of a source of funding. However, in two of the four partnerships (ASAM and La Serranía-Rincón), the seeds of the cooperation philosophy can be traced back to an earlier stage in which there were members of the current partnerships already working together in a much more informal and precarious way. The sense of isola-

tion and deprivation generally pushed local people to cooperate, encouraging in them a sense of place and an increased involvement.

The initial process of constituting the partnership was characterized by the presence of leading individuals or institutions that disseminated the partnership idea to other local actors. Depending on the views of the leaders at this stage and the local context, the partnership was originally more or less open to the inclusion of different partners. This leading role came from two different approaches: on the one hand, a bottom-up process with key local actors, either public (local authorities, as in APRODERVI) or private (previous associations, as in ASAM), and, on the other hand, a top-down approach inspired by the regional government. Some of the studied partnerships (Serranía-Rincón de Ademuz, ASAM) offer examples of the negative effects resulting from forcing different territories or partners to come together. One of the main issues to be considered in this respect is the fact that very often LEADER or PRODER has been trying to build a common territorial identity on an artificial territory created by the union of two areas with two different backgrounds.

The partnership composition is varied and it includes a mix of public and private partners. While the representation of public partners within the partnerships' assembly is generally more limited than that of private partners, the public authorities tend to be over-represented in the executive committees.

5.6.2 The organization of the partnerships

All the partnerships are constituted as non-profit associations. According to this status, they must have at least two structures, an assembly and an executive committee. The assembly meets only once a year and the executive committee is the main decision-making body of the partnership. It includes a reduced number of representatives who meet periodically, usually once a month (even twice if an urgent issue arises). The main functions of the executive committee are making decisions on the allocation of funding and defining the strategy and its associated actions. Although the executive committee has the final decision on the main actions of the partnership, it usually relies on the skills and knowledge of the management team, especially the project coordinator.

Apart from the two basic structures, partnerships have promoted the creation of other structures, in order to facilitate the achievement of their objectives, such as sectoral forums and working groups. The management team of a partnership is a crucial element influencing the functioning and the direction of the partnership strategy. Their professional skills and knowledge of the area gained in the everyday management have given the staff the capacity to propose decisions that are easily ratified within the executive committee. The difficulties encountered dur-

ing the early stages (artificial territories, forced partners, location of the management office) were solved through discussion within the partnership decision-making bodies. In this regard, the technicians have played an important consensual role among the partners.

5.6.3 Effects on local development

All four partnerships are good examples of the general trend towards new forms of participation in policy design and management at the local level. The partnerships have succeeded in raising awareness among the institutional local partners of the advantages of working together and cooperating. Also, the sense of belonging to a specific place or territory is growing among all those who are to some degree influenced by the partnership; this is particularly true in the cases of APRODERVI and Serranía-Rincón de Ademuz. An important achievement of the partnerships is the fact that they have raised among local public and private actors the necessity of becoming involved in a longer-term development process and the need for supporting local structures able to provide the areas with the necessary technical support.

Partnerships are also playing a major role in promoting the organization of the different local economic sectors (tourism, agri-food industry, small and medium-sized enterprizes) with the objectives of developing competitive commercial strategies (ASAM and Serranía-Rincón de Ademuz).

More measurable effects relate to job creation and, more particularly, to job consolidation linked to the emergence and consolidation of new businesses. Some localities have been able to initiate projects supported by the partnership to a greater extent than others because of their own social and economic dynamism. The reasons for this can be found in their local characteristics rather than in a selective action on the part of the partnership. In this regard, the role that partners can play in disseminating information about the partnership programmes at the local level is very important.

5.7 The Practice of Rural Partnership in Italy

The four partnerships studied in Italy are:

- Valle del Crocchio, located in the southern region of Calabria.
- A.L.L.BA., located in the southern region of Basilicata.
- Capo Santa Maria di Leuca, located in the south-eastern region of Puglia.
- Soprip, located in the northern central region of Emilia Romagna.

5.7.1 The origin of the partnerships

The LEADER programme underlays the origin of the partnerships in the three cases of the south of Italy, while the other partnership (Soprip), already operating as an agency of services for local development, began involvement in LEADER II in 1994. The initiative for the creation of this partnership came from the local public institutions, banks and trade associations. But the public authorities were not crucial to the creation of the other three partnerships, which were promoted by local actors belonging to pre-existing associations or political networks.

In every case, a crucial role has been played by key persons, who have been capable of pulling together different actors, focusing on the specific advantages of a new common experience. Also the pre-existence of networks linking the promoters of the partnership facilitated their involvement in cooperative action.

The composition of the partnerships varies from a minimum of ten partners in Crocchio, to 29 in Soprip, 37 in A.L.L.BA. and 40 in Santa Maria di Leuca. All the partnerships have a mix of public and private representation, but only in the case of Soprip are the public partners in a majority.

5.7.2 The structure and operation of the partnerships

All four partnerships are formally constituted societies, as required by the national rules for the LEADER programmes. The organizational structure is therefore similar and includes:

- The assembly of members, where all the partners are represented, holding meetings at least once a year to approve the budget and the general programme of activities.
- The board of directors, nominated by the assembly, responsible for the main decisions and meeting every month or even more frequently, if necessary.
- The chairman, who is the legal representative of the society and chairs the board of directors. The role of this subject is crucial for the functioning of the partnership, as he also practically supervises the activities of the technical and administrative staff.
- In some cases (Santa Maria di Leuca and Soprip), special committees to ensure a greater involvement of the partners not represented in the board of directors.

The operational structure is usually composed of one project coordinator, technical and administrative staff, advisers and animators. In three of the cases (Crocchio, Santa Maria di Leuca and Soprip), the operational structure is rather small and the staff appear well motivated

and quite efficient. The tasks are interchangeable and there is a good collaborative attitude. Only in one case (A.L.L.BA.) is there a more complex and hierarchical structure, with a clear division of tasks. Here, also, there is no project manager, as the chairman has directly assumed this function. The efficiency of the partnership appears inversely correlated with the degree of rigidity of the operative structure.

Conflict that occasionally arises concerning the kind of actions to support and the specific approach to implementation is mainly solved by compromise between the different parties. More serious conflicts, however, have generated the passive participation of some partners or even the withdrawal of some of them. The conflicts among the partners tend to arise more in the partnerships that have been active over a longer period. This is probably due to the fact that these partnerships have acquired more visibility as a channel for getting access to funds and as a new power in the area. Some conflicts are also connected with the tendency of the original founders to maintain a leading role *vis-à-vis* the new partners.

5.7.3 Partner involvement

Some common features characterize the level of partner involvement.

- The role of the original founders, who promoted the involvement of the other actors on the basis of personal contacts and common social networks. The leading role of the founders has been recognized by all the partners, some of which are only officially participating.
- The functioning of the partnership, which is having a fundamental effect on the participation of the partners, who tend to be more active if they can obtain some benefits from the partnership. This is evident in the case of the three partnerships of the south, where the associative and private subjects are clearly getting more opportunities, as beneficiaries, than the public authorities.
- Previous experience of activities linked to shared objectives, as in the case of trade associations, cooperatives and local action groups.
- Access to information and communication networks.
- Competence in rural development.

The major differences concern the following elements:

- Involvement of public authorities: this has been rather difficult in the south, because of the weakness of a culture of cooperation for development among the institutions; it is much greater in the case of Soprip, which is well integrated into the local economic and administrative context.
- The contribution of support resources: physical structures in the case of Santa Maria di Leuca and Crocchio, professional competence in the A.L.L.BA. and Soprip cases.

- The type of relationships between the partners: a high level of trust among the partners of a small and equally represented partnership, such as Crocchio; a medium level of trust in Santa Maria di Leuca and Soprip; and a lower level of trust in the case of A.L.L.BA., where the public partners are not included in the decision-making bodies.

In each case, participation in the decision-making bodies significantly affected the level of involvement of the partners.

5.7.4 The effects at local level

The case studies confirm that the bottom-up approach to rural development, introduced by the LEADER programmes, is offering new – and often unexpected – opportunities to local dynamic forces in areas mainly characterized by economic and social disadvantage. Even if all the partnerships officially share the common objective of rural integrated development, in practice its adoption appears rather difficult. Particularly in the cases where the partnership has been built on previous experiences of local, mainly economic, development, the integrated approach appears less visible. On the other hand, in the younger partnerships, an effort is made to achieve a combination of initiatives in different sectors. The most positive aspects of the practice of rural partnerships in Italy concern the diffusion of new ideas and practices in marginal rural areas, as well as the discovery of the value of local resources. A common problem is the low involvement of local institutions not used to cooperation with other actors in local development. In this context the private sector is more capable of participating in joint efforts to achieve common goals and it plays a fundamental role in most of the partnerships.

5.8 The Origin and Composition of the Partnerships and Partner Involvement: a European Perspective

We now move on to give a European perspective on the results.

5.8.1 Context

The field studies confirm that the initiation of rural partnerships is connected with general processes relating to some basic changes in the economic, social and political organization of the European countries in recent years.

- The enhanced role of local autonomy as a consequence of the process of globalization.

- The withdrawal of the state from the responsibilities assumed during the previous stage of the welfare state and a tendency towards decentralization of administrative functions.
- An increasing pressure on local subjects (public bodies, private organizations, associations, groups) to assume responsibility for their own well-being and for local development.
- The new approach to rural development adopted by the EU, with consequent changes of the common social and agricultural policies.
- The adoption of the partnership approach at different policy levels, based on the principle of subsidiarity.
- The diffusion of new notions, such as integrated development, community participation/empowerment, local identity, rural governance and capacity building.

As for the local level, some common features characterize the areas where the 24 case-study partnerships have been promoted.

- Economic disadvantage, in terms of unemployment, declining agriculture, remoteness and isolation, out-migration.
- Potential resources, material and immaterial, available for valorization (natural, human, cultural, historical).
- The existence of social networks at the primary and secondary level.
- A common perception of needs, based on a recognition of the disadvantages and expressed in a differentiation between the local and surrounding areas ('us' and 'them').
- Active groups or leaders.

While these elements were found to be common to the majority of cases, some differences appear to be significant:

- The differing importance of agriculture in the economic structure (from the minimum of the UK to the maximum of Italy and Spain).
- Movement of population from urban to rural areas (UK and the other northern countries).
- Proximity to strong economic areas (some cases in all the countries).
- Proactive local authorities (UK, Finland, Germany, Spain).
- Local community identity, based on traditional community life and activities (UK, Sweden, Germany), in contrast to a recent search for local identity (Finland, Italy, Spain).

Finally, some specific features emerged in the studies that are having a particular influence on the operation of the partnership:

- Active local community (UK, Sweden).
- Strong local government (Finland, Germany, Spain and the UK).
- Strong collective associations (Italy).
- Dynamic private companies and/or individuals (some cases in all the countries).

5.8.2 Initiation and objectives of the partnerships

Within this context, the initiation of the rural partnerships is generally associated with two main factors:

1. The availability of funds from external programmes (European, national, regional). The LEADER programmes are the most evident cases. Only Sweden has a tradition of rural partnerships being promoted at the local level in a bottom-up manner.
2. The existence of key persons, strongly motivated and action-oriented, with a particular tendency towards cooperation and networking.

Public initiative was crucial for the initiation of the majority of partnerships in the UK, Finland, Germany and Spain, while key individuals or associated groups were at the origin of most of the partnerships in Sweden and Italy. Moreover, the initiation of the rural partnerships implies the activation of local resources, both manifest (UK, Sweden, Germany) and latent (Finland, Italy, Spain). These include human resources, such as a high commitment to cooperative action and professional capability; material resources, such as physical structures and monetary assets; immaterial resources, such as social networks between the actors and trust relationships (social capital); and institutional resources, such as responsive local authorities and supporting agencies.

The objectives pursued by the partnerships concern, in general, the amelioration of the social and economic conditions in the rural areas. While the notion of integrated rural development appears to be shared in principle by most of the partnerships, in practice a sector approach still dominates. The major objectives concern the reinforcement of the economic sectors which are locally significant and the valorization of natural and traditional resources (environment, cultural and historical heritage), mainly for tourism. Only in some particular contexts, as in the UK and Sweden, are they enlarged to include social and institutional objectives, connected with the reinforcement of the community or the development of local democracy.

5.8.3 Composition

As previously noted, the formal composition of the partnership varies from a minimum of four partners (Sweden, Archipelago of Karlskrona) to a maximum of over 200 (Germany, Jura 2000). However, it must be considered that the collective partners, such as the mountain communities, trade associations and professional organizations, represent a much larger range of people and interests.

This dimension of the partnership (the number of partners) appears to be relevant as a structural characteristic affecting the operation and the

outputs. The small partnerships were able more easily to obtain effective involvement of the partners, while the large partnerships had to delegate operational functions to the management and the staff. A large majority of the partnerships have a mix of public and private representation.

5.8.4 Partner involvement

The level of involvement of the partners varies considerably among the partnerships and appears to be positively related to these elements:

- Coherent and relevant aims, based on a recognition of common needs.
- Strong leadership.
- Good administrative and technical support.
- Good user-friendly communication between the partners and with the local area.
- Visible benefits resulting from the operation of the partnership.
- Direct contacts with the experience of local development elsewhere.
- Competence in rural development.

Also directly connected with a high level of involvement is the level of trust and commitment, which appears to be reinforced by the operation of the partnership. Particularly relevant are the visible benefits resulting from the success of the different projects promoted by the partnership.

Significant differences in partner involvement are found among those partnerships generally based on some previous experience of community action (UK, Sweden, Finland, Germany) and those which are only just beginning to introduce new practices of cooperation at the local level (Italy and Spain). While the former can rely upon the substantial participation of the associative and voluntary sectors, the latter are mainly based on the initiative of the professional associations and of the public authorities.

5.9 Key Elements in the Organization and Operation of the Partnerships: a European Perspective

The majority of the partnerships have the formal legal status of an association, cooperative, consortium or corporation. Such formal status is normally required by the public programmes that provide financial support for them. Only in Sweden and Germany have we found cases of informal organizations that are supported by public or private structures.

The organizational structure varies from a simple system (board of partners and small executive committee) for the smaller partnerships, to a more complex system (assembly, board of directors and chairman,

executive committee, subcommittees and advisory groups) for the larger ones. The studies have highlighted the fact that in the larger partnerships the board of directors and the executive committee play a crucial role in decision making, while the assembly, where all the partners are represented, has only a formal role (Germany, Italy, Spain). While the small partnerships appear to be more flexible and efficient, the larger ones are hindered by the procedures of operating a heavy structure. A clearly defined organization and a coherent structure are, in any case, crucial factors for the good operation of the partnership. Most of the role conflicts that have been found in the studies in fact originated from an unclear division of tasks between the different levels of the organization.

The decision-making process, concerning the overall strategy and the specific projects to be realized, generally results from direct interaction between the board of partners/directors and the executive committee. The role of the managers is nevertheless crucial for the execution of the projects and often becomes relevant also for influencing the general decision process.

Equal participation in the decision bodies appears to be an important element for counterbalancing the risk of conflicts arising from the tendency of some partners to become dominant in the decision process.

All the partnerships are supported by administrative and technical staff, usually operating under the coordination of a project manager reporting to the executive committee. In some cases (Italy and Spain), the coordination role is actually assumed by the chairman of the board of directors. In cases where the rural partnerships do not have a formal organization (Sweden and Germany), staffing is provided by the public administrative structures that support them.

For all the partnerships, an efficient performance is connected with the quality of the relationships between the various levels of the organizational structure (committee, management, staff). The degree of operational autonomy of the staff appears to be directly proportional to the level of professional competence of the operators. The smallest partnerships seem to be more successful in ensuring a high level of commitment and a cooperative attitude among the staff, based also on informal methods of working.

Among the factors that have a positive influence on the partnership is the existence of contacts and relations with other experiences of rural development elsewhere (true in most of the cases).

On the other hand, the operation of the partnerships is often hampered by some external factors, notably the onerous bureaucracy of many funding programmes (especially LEADER). Other negative factors concern the short time perspective of the programmes, the limited financial resources available for the projects and the weakness of the evaluation procedures linked to the planning strategy.

In conclusion, the studies have highlighted some common features of both good and poor operation of the partnerships.

The most relevant factors of good operation are:

- A well-defined organization and coherent structure, evident in most of the partnerships studied in the UK and only in some of the other cases.
- Efficient staff and competent management, found in some cases in all the countries.
- Equal participation of partners in the various decision-making bodies, generally lacking in most of the cases.
- Personal trust, visible in some cases in all the countries.
- High commitment, limited to some cases in all the countries.
- Informal methods and networking, limited to some cases in all the countries.
- Contacts and relations with other rural development experiences, evident in most of the cases in all the countries.

The most relevant factors of poor operation are:

- Absent or ineffective management, visible in some cases in all the countries.
- Role conflicts, limited to some cases in all the countries.
- The centralization of decision power, found in some cases in all the countries.
- Dominance of some partners over the others, visible in some cases in all the countries.
- The excessive bureaucracy of funding programmes, especially for EU and national programmes.
- Limited financial resources, evident in most of the cases in all the countries.
- The short-term perspective of the programmes, evident in most of the cases in all the countries.
- Weak evaluation procedures, found in almost all the cases.

5.10 The Adding of Value to Local Development: a European Perspective

Our case study analyses confirm that rural partnerships are contributing to local development in different ways. Particular advantages are visible in terms of new processes diffused at local level for the reconstitution of the social fabric, the adoption of a more integrated approach and the development of local democracy. Moreover, the rural partnerships are also producing some direct social and economic benefits, in terms of the protection and valorization of the local resources. These points are now elaborated upon.

5.10.1 Promotion of the preconditions for rural development

In the most critical contexts, characterized by severe social and economic disadvantage, the practice of rural partnership is recognized as an effective instrument for introducing new positive orientations and self-confidence among local actors. This is confirmed by some of the case studies in Italy and Spain. At this level, the effects of the process of development are not yet measurable as visible economic benefits but are certainly apparent in terms of the reconstitution of the social fabric. The key elements of this process are:

- an active outgoing orientation;
- the diffusion of new ideas;
- increased confidence of the local community;
- increased trust towards cooperative methods; and
- the consolidation of social networks.

5.10.2 Introduction of an integrated approach to rural development

In traditional rural contexts, characterized by a poor performance of the economic sectors and by a growing isolation from external processes, rural development partnerships appear to be particularly appropriate for introducing new forms of integration between the existing actors and for supporting the valorization of local resources. The evidence for this is given by some cases in Italy, Spain, Sweden and Finland. The main elements that characterize this process are:

- the implementation of innovative projects in traditional sectors;
- the demonstrative effect of innovations;
- the mobilization of external resources (funds) for local development;
- the valorization of local hidden resources; and
- professional competence in rural development.

5.10.3 Reinforcement of the institutional context

In the more dynamic rural contexts, in which different processes of development have already been introduced, the rural partnerships tend to reinforce the institutional context and may contribute in particular to the development of local democracy. This is confirmed by most of the cases studied in the UK and Germany. It is apparent also in some of the case studies in Finland, Italy, Spain and Sweden. The main elements of this process include:

- the constitution of a new independent base for involving the local community;

- the introduction of new forms of cooperation between public and private actors;
- specific collaboration across borders;
- initiatives for community capacity building; and
- the development of local democracy.

5.10.4 Social and economic benefits

Some effects of the operation of rural partnerships are already visible at the local level in terms of direct social and economic benefits. These benefits are particularly significant, as they confirm the possibility of developing positive trends in marginal areas. The sectors where the positive effects are more visible concern the protection of the environment, often not recognized as a common resource in the less-developed contexts, as well as different forms of social and economic support for the rural population. Evidence on this issue comes from most of the cases in all the studied countries. In particular, the rural partnerships are clearly committed to:

- protecting the natural environment;
- maintaining the rural population;
- improving the services available to the rural population;
- introducing new forms of economic activities;
- increasing local incomes; and
- creating new job opportunities.

5.11 Key Weaknesses in the Practice of Partnerships: a European Perspective

As the practice of rural partnership is a relatively recent experience in most of the European countries, several problems remain to be solved if an appropriate contribution is to be made by local partnerships to sustainable rural development.

The key weaknesses identified in the practice study concern, in particular, four kinds of problems, regarding the type of approach to rural development, the sustainability of the projects, community and institutional involvement and social exclusion.

5.11.1 Type of approach

Even if the studied partnerships have been promoting actions for rural development, most of them have not been able to adopt an integrated

approach and they tend to operate along the traditional patterns of sectoral projects (economic, social, cultural). Integration is often construed as simply the sum of individual projects, covering different areas of intervention. Therefore, our studies have identified the following common weaknesses.

- A lack of an integrated approach – formally acknowledged as desirable but rarely applied in practice.
- A lack of integrated development, because of the dominant sectoral approach in the execution of the projects.

5.11.2 Sustainability

Connected with the lack of an integrated approach is also the issue of sustainability, which is not assured in most of the cases studied. On the one hand, the sectoral and short-term perspective of the projects is reinforced by a limited strategic vision of rural development. On the other hand, almost all of the partnerships, with a few exceptions in Sweden, rely on external funding and have not been able to programme their future on the basis of new and local resources. The main weaknesses identified in the studies are:

- the short-term perspective of the projects;
- limited strategic planning for rural development;
- the dependence on external funds; and
- the low sustainability of the partnerships themselves.

5.11.3 Community and institutional involvement

The studies have revealed that the rural partnerships have generally not succeeded in fully involving in their projects the local community and local institutions. Some notable exceptions have been found in the UK, Finland and Germany. Moreover most of them are still operating with a limited perspective and encounter serious difficulties in integrating their actions with the programmes of the other agencies and institutions of the area. As a result, the new partnerships are only rarely recognized locally as new agents for rural development. The common weaknesses that the studies have found are:

- limited community involvement in many cases;
- limited impact on other agencies;
- limited legitimation of partnerships at the local level; and
- limited formal democratic accountability.

5.11.4 Social exclusion

The studies have confirmed that the issue of social exclusion is a common problem in all the countries. We found that little attention was paid towards reaching some traditionally excluded social groups (e.g. women, youth, the elderly). This is more apparent in the partnerships operating in southern Europe. With some notable exceptions, the main common weaknesses were:

- no strategies for the inclusion of marginal categories; and
- a lack of attention to social exclusion.

5.12 Conclusion

Above we have summarized some of the main conclusions arising from the study of the practice of partnership in the 24 case-study areas. Despite a good deal of local variation, it is clear that some general lessons emerge.

As is clear from the above, some of the lessons relate to the effectiveness of partnerships in adding value to local resources and, more generally, in promoting local development. This subject was afforded much greater weight during the subsequent, second, set of enquiries in the case study areas, and it is to the study of impact in the 24 areas that we now turn.

6 The Findings of the Study of Impact

6.1 Introduction

Building on the findings of the practice study, which explored the functioning of rural development partnerships, the impact study focused on the impacts of the partnership approach, as well as on the causal mechanisms and determinants that lay behind those impacts.

In this chapter, the findings of the impact study are presented and discussed from two perspectives: Section 6.2 provides an overview and a detailed analysis of the effects of the partnership approach, while Section 6.3 concentrates on the main determinants of those effects. Then, Section 6.4 discusses the effects and determinants from a local and national perspective. Some conclusions are then drawn (Section 6.5), and these include a reconceptualization of the most important determinants of the partnership approach. Finally, the findings of the feedback survey are presented (Section 6.6), since that exercise was largely devoted to the validation of the conclusions of the impact analysis.

The empirical database on which the following analysis rests was developed by all six national research teams. The underlying methodology involved a case study approach coupled with a tailor-made impact assessment tool, the FACT method ('focused assessment through cause–effect tracing'), developed by the Dortmund team and explained in Chapter 3. Following the requirements of the FACT method, the six teams researched the 24 case-study partnerships with the aim of identifying and investigating so-called cause–effect chains, which linked partnership-specific features or determinants to special partnership effects. For each identified and systematically checked cause–effect chain a ten-page FACT sheet (see Appendix 3) was filled out, summarizing and assessing the chain. This yielded over 182 chains and therefore

FACT sheets. Each cause–effect chain was then categorized and entered into a composite cause–effect matrix juxtaposing 33 key determinants with 12 key effects. Table 6.1 is an abridged form of that matrix.

Since the cause–effect chains were often complex, involving several causes, which in combination had an impact on a number of effects, the chains needed to be disentangled into a number of two-point links, which could then be entered into the matrix. The final international cause–effect matrix thus had over 1000 entries. The following analysis is based, on the one hand, on a quasi-quantitative analysis of this matrix and, on the other hand, on a qualitative analysis of those cause–effect chains which formed a cluster in the matrix. To this end, the cause–effect matrix was transformed into an interactive web-based matrix, which allowed the researchers to access instantaneously the respective FACT sheets underlying the matrix entries.

The following results are thus based on an extensive and systematically referenced empirical database. The identified cause–effect linkages are based on analytical deductions and observational inferences, which were augmented by quantitative descriptions, namely, frequencies and clusters, and then subjected to further qualitative analysis. The data therefore passed through several rounds of different analytical procedures. None the less, in order to assess the overall external validity of the research findings, a large-scale feedback survey was conducted to complement the impact study (again, this was explained in Chapter 3).

6.2 The Effects of the Partnership Approach: a European Analysis

The effects of the partnership approach were defined as those outputs and outcomes of a partnership that may be considered to be caused by features that are unique to the partnership approach – for example, the fact that a partnership is made up of both public and private actors, who jointly decide about project funding. This contrasts with the traditional approach to rural development, in which a state agency typically makes all funding decisions virtually alone. Staying with this example, it can be seen that both approaches make use of public funding for development projects. Both approaches can therefore be expected to produce some tangible results. The partnership effect is that difference between the two project outputs that is due to the fact that in the former case a range of actors were making the funding decision jointly. For example, the project could be slightly more successful because the economic know-how of the private actors was afforded more attention in the planning process and in the funding decision. In short, the partnership effect is the net difference that the partnership approach makes compared with the conventional development approach or, to use another term, it is the value added (or value lost) by the partnership approach.

Table 6.1. The cause–effect matrix.

	Effects											
Determinants	Integrated development	Sustainable development	Endogenous development	Exogenous development	Social inclusion	Innovation	Effectiveness	Organizational sustainability	Legitimation	Strategic planning	Community involvement	Capacity building
Partners												
1 Number of partners									3			
2 Their sectoral heterogeneity	4	6	4		3		3	4	4			4
3 Diversity of professional backgrounds and skills	3	3				4	4		3			6
4 Intimate local knowledge	5	5	10		3	5	5		6		3	6
5 Shared problems and needs	4		4				4		4			
6 Shared vision/ perceived common benefits	3		4			3	3	5		3	4	3
7 Dominant partner/ key actor	5		5			4	4	4	5*			
8 Partners' innovativeness	3					5						
Inputs												
9 Resource dependency	3						5			3*		4
10 Voluntary work											3	
11 Size of partnership's overall budget			3				3					
12 Continuity of funding		3				3	7	3		3		
13 Bureaucratic funding procedures												
14 Local resource input			4				4				4	
Organization												
15 Legal status								3				
16 Complexity of organization							4*			3*	4*	

17 Working groups with delegated power						4						
18 Equal decision making by partners								3		3		
19 Management competence of leadership						10			3		3	
20 Competence and commitment of staff	13	9	13	4	8	11	4	7		8	9	
21 Clarity of partnership's policies, roles and regulations	5		3			5	3	4	3			
22 Procedural flexibility					5	4	3					
23 Legitimation	3	3			3						3	
24 Power delegation by funders			4					3				
25 Size of partnership area						5				3*		
26 Neutral institutional space	3		4		5	4*		3*		5	5	
Processes												
27 Initiation of the partnership	4	3	4			6		5	3	5*	3*	
28 Community mobilization and participation			7			3	5	6		6	4	
29 Joint planning	5	3	4			5	6	4			3	
30 Decision making at local level	3	5	12		5	11	3			8	5	
31 Strategic planning	4					3			3			
32 Networking			3	3	3	5	6		3	5	4	
33 Capacity building										3		

Notes

1. See Section 3.5 of Chapter 3 (Methodology) and Section 6.1 of this chapter on the derivation and significance of this table. See Appendix 4 for a definition of the terms used.

2. All cell totals indicate the number of partnerships exhibiting the relevant cause–effect relationship in the FACT analysis.

3. Nearly all the relationships indicated in the cell totals are positive (whereby a positive position on the determinant was found to produce a positive effect and/or a negative position to produce a negative effect), but an asterisked cell total indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables. Thus, for example, taking row 16, a high level of complexity of partnership organization tends to have adverse effects on the partnerships' effectiveness, strategic planning and community involvement.

6.2.1 An overall effects analysis

Table 6.1 sets out a summary version of the overall cause–effect matrix, with each column indicating an effect of partnership and each row indicating a partnership cause of those effects. (These 33 effects and 12 determinants or causes are indicated in shorthand form in the table and it is important to consult Appendix 4 for the more formal definition which was respected by each research team.) Thus each cell in Table 6.1 indicates the number of partnerships (out of the 24 studied) in which chains with that particular cause–effect link were reported. Only cell totals of three or more are indicated, so as to concentrate on the more common (three partnerships or more) manifestations of the link.

Note that almost all cell totals indicate a positive effect of determinants upon effects. Thus, to take an example – the top row of the table – the number of partners in the partnership was found to have an impact upon the legitimacy of the partnership in the case of three partnerships. Put simply, this could have been evidenced by either 'having many partners caused more legitimacy' or by 'having few partners reduced legitimacy'. Thus the cell total of three indicates the sum of those two possibilities, as revealed in the FACT analysis. The converse effect is indicated by an asterisked cell total, as explained in the footnote to the table.

The discussion below is based on the more complex analysis of the full cause–effect matrix included in the research programme's final report. That included disaggregations by country, the full number of occurrences (not just cell totals of three or more) and other refinements. But Table 6.1 summarizes the essence of the derived data set.

Thus strong evidence of a positive partnership effect was found regarding the effectiveness of partnerships (the seventh column). Due to their special features, many partnerships were successfully implementing development projects. In so doing, they deliberately involved local people and institutions, which led to more locally oriented projects, resulting in enhanced endogenous development. Because partnerships provided many actors with a chance to be involved in the planning, decision making and implementation of projects, profound personal and institutional learning could take place; thus partnerships enhanced capacity building. Due to a better overview of project proposals and the inclusion of the perspectives of diverse actors, partnerships were often also able to link projects and thereby contribute to a more integrated development. Local decision making, more accessible and committed staff and special community participation efforts led to increased community involvement. Finally, the partnerships' ability to mobilize diverse and highly skilled individuals increased their capacity for innovation.

Less strong but still significant evidence of partnership effects was observed in relation to organizational sustainability, which could be achieved due to partnerships' active support from local communities and institutional flexibility to adapt to changing environments. The evidence concerning legitimation pointed in two directions. On the one hand, partnership features such as the direct involvement of local people and elected politicians as well as an open and transparent decision-making process improved legitimation. On the other hand, the existence of dominant individuals or groups and the lack of democratic accountability tended to undermine a partnership's legitimacy. As for sustainable development, it tended to be fostered by many partnership features, including local knowledge, local-level decision making and staff competence.

Little or no evidence of a partnership effect could be detected in relation to social inclusion, strategic planning and exogenous development.

In sum, the findings of the impact study indicate that the value added by the partnership approach relates mainly to enhancing effectiveness and creating immediate local outputs in a participatory manner and thereby strengthening the local human capital (capacity building, innovation, community involvement, endogenous development, integrated development).

The partnership approach is also found to enhance, but to a lesser extent, the long-term development potential of local areas and of the partnerships themselves as well as securing political support (legitimation, sustainable development, organizational sustainability).

The partnership approach made little or no difference when it came to focusing or extending development efforts into the future, to other areas or to marginalized social groups (strategic planning, exogenous development, social inclusion). These results substantiate shortcomings that were already identified in the practice study and deserve special attention in the future.

6.2.2 A more detailed effects analysis

The general findings reported above emerged from a rather crude frequency and cluster type of analysis. Nevertheless, this provided useful orientation and guidance for the subsequent qualitative analysis, which was better suited to the great variety and complexity of the cause–effect chains. This subsequent analysis was based on a careful reading of the FACT sheets of those cause–effect chains that related to a particular cluster in the cause–effect matrix.

The results of this further work are now presented with regard to each of the 12 effects discussed above, roughly in descending order of the frequency of the effect being observed. So we begin with effectiveness.

Effectiveness

DEFINITION Effectiveness was defined as a partnership's ability to achieve its overall goals and specific objectives.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT In terms of the empirical evidence, occurrence across partnerships and countries and causal plausibility, increased effectiveness ranked as the most important positive effect of the partnership approach. Partnerships seemed best suited for implementing public funding programmes effectively because of their staff and their participatory decision-making procedures, which ensured a high quality of planning and a sustainable implementation of projects.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS The following were the key cause–effect chains responsible for the increased effectiveness of partnerships.

The staff's special commitment and abilities ensured the successful functioning of a partnership and its projects. Abilities like listening to local people, planning projects, providing technical support and connecting projects and institutions were of vital importance for the effective operation of the partnerships and their projects. In many cases, the partnerships' staff also felt a personal responsibility or attachment to the projects, therefore providing special support during the planning and implementation phase and carrying them through the critical first year(s), thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of the partnership.

Decision making at the local level improved the quality of project proposals and their implementation. By discussing project proposals with local actors, the specific merits and weaknesses of a project became apparent before funding was granted. Such critical discussions served to improve the project designs, leading to more realistic and, in the end, more successful projects. Secondly, making decisions at the local level increased feelings of responsibility and ownership on the part of local decision makers, thus leading to higher personal engagement and a more sensible allocation of funds. Thirdly, local-level decision making gave local people an opportunity to observe closely and to learn from the planning and implementation of various projects, thus increasing the local capacity to plan and successfully implement projects. And, lastly, discussing the projects with all major stakeholders diminished potential opposition and delay during implementation.

The leadership qualities of the leaders of a partnership were crucial to its performance. The ability of a partnership to draw on local leaders' special abilities to mobilize people and build consensus led to a more successful functioning of the partnership and its projects.

Top-down initiation laid the ground for effective organization and management. Many of the studied partnerships were initiated by a funding programme, which entailed clear guidelines or requirements concerning organizational structure, development of a regional or business plan and also periodic monitoring and evaluation. These often provided a helpful framework for developing a locally adapted and yet effectively organized partnership.

Substantial outside funding ensured the effective start and growth of a partnership. Despite side effects, such as dependency on a certain funding programme, substantial and continuous external resource input was often vital for a quick start and a supportive environment for implementing projects. This seemed to be especially important during the first years of a partnership, after which more diverse and endogenous funding was more important for continuously effective development work.

Networking with outside institutions enabled new, mutually beneficial, collaboration. In cases where, for political reasons, formal cooperation did not exist (for example, across borders), some partnerships were able to create and exploit opportunities for cooperation. Where this happened, it increased the performance of both collaborating institutions and the partnerships themselves.

Endogenous development

DEFINITION Endogenous development was defined as a type of development that is oriented towards and driven from within the partnership area.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT Based on the empirical evidence, occurrence across partnerships and countries and causal plausibility, endogenous development was the second most important positive effect of the partnership approach. Fostering endogenous development was often a declared goal of the partnerships; hence they implemented a wide variety of locally oriented projects. For these they were able to effectively mobilize local resources, coupled, however, with substantial external support from public funding programmes. Without downgrading this considerable non-local backing, mobilizing local resources, involving local people and implementing local projects spurred locally oriented development and increased identification with the partnership itself (local ownership) and the partnership area.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, the following were the key cause–effect chains responsible for endogenous development.

More accessible and supporting staff enabled and strengthened local initiative. Many partnerships had local offices with a continuous presence of staff. This increased accessibility and the unbureaucratic atmosphere encouraged local people to come forward and seek help for their ideas/projects. Furthermore, the partnerships' staff were often in close touch and actively supported local groups to encourage local initiatives.

Community participation and decision making at the local level brought information and technical support closer to local people and projects. The fact that in many partnerships decisions about projects were made at the local level and with the substantial participation of local communities increased local accessibility to vital background information and the possibilities of technical support for local projects. Witnessing the planning and implementation process of these projects often sparked or encouraged new local projects.

Local decision making and community participation created endogenous group identity and led to more local orientation of projects. A second important effect of local decision making and community participation was that the local and non-local actors after a while developed a joint development identity, which fostered local initiative. Giving decision-making power to the local level also favoured a clearer local orientation of projects.

Local knowledge ensured a realistic identification of local weaknesses and potentials. Bringing local knowledge into the planning process often led to a more realistic analysis of an area's development capacities. Secondly, local solutions and initiatives were often considered and utilized first, instead of right away turning to outside recipes and resources.

Key persons drew in more local people and organizations, thus fostering local development. In some partnerships, key local figures who were involved in the partnership process from the beginning had strong local convictions and connections. They acted as facilitators of further participation from the local community. At the same time, these individuals were able to persuade the partnership to pay greater attention to local concerns and initiatives.

Capacity building

DEFINITION Capacity building was defined as improving the technical, organizational and managerial skills of a partnership's staff and members and of the residents of a partnership area.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT Capacity building was likewise one of the most important positive impacts of the partnership approach. Whereas in the traditional development model there are only limited and, most importantly, separate interactions between the development officers and the funding recipients, the partnership approach brings a large number of very different people together to jointly discuss local development issues and make funding decisions. This often resulted in intense and complex learning processes between all participants, leading to increased individual know-how, a common pool of knowledge, more self-critical perceptions, more strategic thinking and increased confidence and self-reliance of local and non-local actors. While increased capacity building seems to be almost a natural outcome of the partnership approach, it is at the same time a pressing necessity, as many partnerships are growing beyond the capacities of their staff and hence need to rely increasingly on the competence and willingness of their members.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In terms of the empirical evidence, occurrence across partnerships and countries and causal plausibility, the following were (in order of importance) the key cause–effect chains resulting in increased capacity building.

The know-how of the staff was transferred to local actors of the partnerships. In most partnerships the staff were in close contact with a wide variety of local actors, both within and outside the partnerships. The staff were usually highly committed to the local projects and local people whom they dealt with and were eager to share technical, managerial and political know-how – not least because many partnerships were understaffed and needed to devolve as much knowledge and responsibility as possible to voluntary actors. Thus it was often the expressed goal to support projects/local groups in a way that would eventually lead to their self-reliance. Conversely, the staff also learned and benefited immensely from the knowledge and experience of local and non-local actors involved in the partnerships.

Decision making at the local level provided the platform for diverse learning processes. Bringing people and institutions together (sometimes for the first time) in newly created local decision-making bodies and doing so on a frequent basis enabled everybody to learn from each other and from the projects that were being discussed. This often increased especially local actors' ability to network with officials and politicians, and gave them encouragement to start new projects and to take on leadership roles in local initiatives.

The diverse backgrounds of actors enabled knowledge and awareness creation. The diversity of actors involved in the studied partnerships

provided a rich reservoir of skills and knowledge that could be easily accessed by all partners. In addition to concrete practical benefits, this also served as an 'eye-opener' for formerly narrow-minded and sectoral perceptions. Accepting and learning from each other's perspectives was usually a mutually beneficial, but lengthy, process, for which the various local meetings so characteristic of the partnership approach proved vital.

Non-local actors benefited from the local knowledge of local members of the partnerships. Non-local members of a partnership, such as government officials, funding officers, etc., learned a lot from the intimate local knowledge of the local members. This process of knowledge creation or transfer helped non-local actors to connect, expand or adapt their formerly more general or technical knowledge, thus making them more effective in future projects.

Integrated development

DEFINITION Integrated development was defined as a type of development in which projects are synergistically linked within and across sectors.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT Integrated development was one of the four most important positive effects of the partnership approach. A number of central features of partnerships could be linked to a closer integration of projects. However, in many cases the resulting development was more of a multi-sectoral than a truly integrated nature. While partnerships were obviously in a better position to link projects across sectors than would be the development officer of a sectoral agency, there is still considerable untapped potential for conceptually and substantively linking projects to achieve significant synergy effects.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, these were the key cause–effect chains responsible for integrated development.

The central position of a partnership's staff enabled them to link projects. Since the staff knew all the partners and were actively involved in virtually all projects of a partnership they had the necessary overview and opportunity to create linkages between projects. The staff were the single most important project integrators.

Joint planning by diverse actors provided a multi-perspective overview, which fostered the linking of projects. Round-table meetings, in which all current and planned projects could be seen *in toto* and were discussed by a diverse spectrum of actors, worked as a safeguard against

(sectoral) one-sidedness and facilitated making linkages between projects. This contrasts with the conventional development approach, in which funding is distributed by sectoral agencies without the diverse perspectives and knowledge of local actors.

Local knowledge led to a holistic outlook and enabled linking/embedding of projects. Local actors' intimate knowledge of the environment, economy, culture and history of an area served as an important reservoir for linking initially isolated projects to already existing projects or institutions.

Key persons promoted integrated vision and integrated additional partners. In some cases, there was one influential person who had a broader, more integrated view of development and was able to open up a formerly more narrow and isolated development approach of a partnership. This key person often also pulled additional persons and institutions with diverse backgrounds into the partnership, thus enabling and consolidating a multi-perspective and integrated development approach. In comparison, in conventional rural development programmes, the decision-making process remains entirely within the development bureaucracy, thus foreclosing input from knowledgeable, integration-minded and persuasive local people.

Top-down (programme-led) initiation instilled an integrated approach and brought integrated funding. Some public funding programmes (such as LEADER or its national/regional equivalents, like PRODER in Spain or POMO in Finland) explicitly promoted or even required partnerships to pursue an integrated-development approach. Partnerships were encouraged or obliged to implement integrated projects. At the same time, being modelled according to such a programme, a partnership could access the programme's funds, which typically financed a wide range of activities, thus enabling top-down initiated partnerships to more easily pursue and combine projects relating to different sectors.

Innovation

DEFINITION Innovation was defined as the introduction of novel methods and products.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT The partnership approach was often conducive for innovation to take place. In fact, the setting up and operation of the partnership itself was in most cases already an innovation in its local context: collaboration of different societal actors, local-level decision making and more flexible funding procedures often marked a radical departure from the formerly practised approach to rural development.

The partnerships, bringing together diverse actors in non-hierarchical ways, were able to create a kind of creative milieu, which allowed experimental projects to be designed and implemented. These projects did not necessarily produce radically new products, but often adapted or combined new and existing ideas in a novel way. While this obviously created a new product, the innovation often related mainly to the process of producing this output.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, these were the key cause–effect chains responsible for innovation.

The abilities and the special role of a partnership's staff were critical for fostering or creating innovation. Partnership coordinators were generally more accessible than development officials; thus residents found it easier to approach them with 'crazy ideas'. Secondly, most coordinators were flexible, open-minded and innovation-oriented persons and were constantly scanning the partnership area for new project ideas. Lastly, being in contact with other partnerships enabled them to learn from and adapt new ideas from outside to the specific features of their own partnership area.

The independent status of partnerships provided the necessary space to innovate. Most partnerships were legally, politically and socioculturally less restricted in what they did and how they did it than traditional development agencies. This greater freedom in some cases unlocked creative potentials and enabled them to pursue more experimental projects.

The partners' innovativeness was yet another important factor for creating innovation. In some partnerships, there were exceptionally creative persons who provided a flow of innovative ideas. In other cases, partners had simply heard of or seen interesting projects in other regions and were able to see possible applications in their own partnership area. Both phenomena led one partnership coordinator to comment that they only had to pick up and polish innovative ideas being brought to him.

Decision making at the local level increased the pressure for and enabled the exchange of innovative ideas. Because local representatives and organizations were able to take part in the decision-making process, they were also subjected to local expectations and suspicions concerning the partnership. This created a special drive to be creative and do things differently. Furthermore, the local committee meetings served as platforms for a quick exchange of ideas, leading to their improvement or the emergence of new ideas.

The diverse backgrounds of the partners sparked new ideas and enhanced innovation. In almost all partnerships, the partners came from very different professional and social backgrounds. The partnerships' ability to bring these diverse people together meant a (temporary) concentration of different perspectives, skills and knowledge bases. This proved to be a fertile breeding ground for new solutions to the problems at hand. The diversity of know-how also led to a critical but constructive discussion of these new solutions, making them more finely tuned and conceptually robust.

Community involvement

DEFINITION Community involvement was defined as the direct and indirect involvement of a partnership area's residents in the partnership's decision making.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT The partnership approach by and large had a positive effect on community involvement. However, the degree to which this goal was pursued and achieved varied considerably between partnerships. Overall, the studied partnerships were more successful at involving local community groups in concrete, project-related decision-making processes than in the functioning of the partnerships themselves. Even though some partnerships came up with innovative and far-reaching participatory practices, the main channel for incorporating community interests was through particular board members (e.g. a mayor) and the staff, who were usually in touch with community groups.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, these were the key cause–effect chains responsible for community involvement.

The accessibility, skills and convictions of the staff were central for local community participation. If the staff of a partnership were convinced of participatory planning, they found ways of involving local people in the various partnership activities. This could range from simply passing on important information to community groups to full-blown village workshops or similar participatory exercises. However, the degree and frequency of participation depended to a large extent on the staff's training and experience in participatory techniques. In any case, though, many partnerships had their staff working in a locally-based office, making it easy for residents to pop in and voice opinions or discuss projects. For local people, it was very important to know that there was one person they could turn to with their varied needs and concerns – in contrast to the compartmentalized and bureaucratic functioning of the conventional development approach.

Making decisions at the local level provided new opportunities for local communities to participate in local development processes. While in the traditional development model decisions were often made outside the partnership area, the partnership approach brought the decision-making process closer to local communities – both physically and politically. Thus local people and organizations were better able to participate in decisions affecting their communities. This led to more community projects being funded, leading to an even wider interest of residents in engaging in the partnerships.

The independent status of partnerships invited apprehensive local people and organizations to participate in development activities. Partnerships operating in politically polarized contexts were able to mobilize locals from opposing camps because they were set up outside the traditional institutions, thus providing a neutral ground. This neutrality also lowered the threshold for local people to approach a partnership, in particular regarding sensitive issues that they did not want to bring before a government official. Thus partnerships became both an important contact point and a platform for dealing with local development concerns constructively and keeping political confrontations outside.

Explicit mechanisms for community participation spurred local community involvement. Some partnerships showed a clear commitment to involving local people – for example, by conducting group facilitation training workshops, using community animators or setting up community resource centres. These participatory measures were successful in improving the capacity of local groups to participate effectively in public decision-making processes and to initiate and plan projects on their own. While such far-reaching participatory procedures were not the norm, they are definitely more common than in the conventional, bureaucratic approach to rural development.

Organizational sustainability

DEFINITION Organizational sustainability was defined as a partnership's ability to sustain itself as well as its services and products on its own in the long run.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT The partnership approach also needs to be analysed in terms of its own sustainability, or rather whether the newly created partnerships are able to survive on their own in the long run. Overall, many of the studied partnerships exhibited characteristics that made them likely to continue their operation in the future. Very important in this respect was strong support from within the partnership, i.e. its members. This could be achieved by actively

engaging the members in the various planning and decision-making functions of a partnership. Equally important was securing support from the local community – for example, by fostering active community participation or by making sure that the partnership's membership covered a wide spectrum of local groups and institutions. If a partnership was strongly rooted and accepted in its partnership area, it was able to assert and defend itself against outside organizations and pressures. Furthermore, partnerships proved capable of growing and reorganizing themselves – for example, transforming from an informal to a formal, legally independent form of organization. For these transformation processes, it proved invaluable to have either staff or key members of the partnership with a clear vision for institutional growth. Lastly, such a growth process usually entailed moving from single-programme funding to a more diverse funding situation, including a higher proportion of locally raised funds. Despite causing understandable distress, funding programmes with a clear end and diminishing amounts of funding very much supported this process of moving towards greater independence and self-reliance. While many of the studied partnerships therefore looked flexible enough to adapt to changing needs and circumstances, most of them were still quite young and, at the time of the investigations, right in the middle of this transition. Thus it remained to be seen whether they would indeed survive in the coming years.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, these were the key cause–effect chains responsible for organizational sustainability.

Networking with outside organizations improved the partnerships' ability to survive. Especially exchanging ideas with other partnerships proved important for institutional learning and developing suitable long-term survival strategies. In some cases, this included collaborating with another to implement joint projects or form a larger partnership.

Community participation made partnerships more dynamic and more likely to carry on. When the local community was allowed to participate in a partnership, this usually led to greater community activism, more locally accepted projects, greater political interest and wider/more intense feelings of ownership in the partnership – all of which were important foundations for the long-term survival of a partnership.

Joint planning and decision making increased internal coherence and resilience against outside pressures. The more active engagement of members in the working of a partnership often led to a greater identification with the partnership. Joint planning also mobilized more know-how and ideas for developing a sustainable strategy for the partnership.

Key partners with a long-term vision were driving forces for the institutional growth of partnerships. This is self-explanatory.

Competent staff with appropriate partnership skills made the partnerships run smoothly and efficiently and thus laid the ground for the partnership's future. This is self-explanatory.

The sectoral heterogeneity of partners gave a partnership greater credibility, as well as a broader and stronger base for asserting itself against other organizations. This too is self-explanatory.

Legitimation

DEFINITION Legitimation was defined as the local community's acceptance of the partnership as part of itself and/or having an official political mandate from the local community.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT The partnership approach had a mixed impact regarding the issue of legitimation. Predominantly, the case studies showed that, in comparison with the conventional development approach, the partnerships were seen as having greater legitimation. This legitimation was derived mostly from the direct involvement of locally elected politicians and public officials and to a lesser degree from involving local people, groups and institutions. A second source of legitimation was the reportedly more transparent decision-making process, but also the assured supervision and financial monitoring by the funding agencies. In addition, because the partnerships relied very much on their coordinators, their personal truthfulness and credibility became an important element of a partnership's overall legitimation. Lastly, in some cases, members of the partnerships and local community representatives said that the legitimation of their partnership rested to a large extent on the greater effectiveness with which projects were implemented.

Conversely, a lack of success also called into question a partnership's credibility. Other features of the partnership approach were also – at least potentially – a threat to legitimation. In particular, a non-representative composition of a partnership's decision-making bodies, the highly selective participation of local people as well as the dominant position of certain individuals or well-organized groups of actors could skew a partnership's activities and outputs in a particular direction, thus threatening its public acceptance. Some people were also concerned about the lack of formal, democratic accountability of most partnerships and the danger that partnerships developed into influential and yet non-accountable institutions of local governance. Overall, though, the negative aspects or tendencies did not feature prominently and most

partnerships seemed to enjoy good local support – at least more than had previous rural development programmes.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In order of importance, the following were the key cause–effect chains responsible for enhanced legitimation.

The actions and attitudes of a partnership's staff had a great influence on a partnership's legitimation. The staff's competent and responsible operation of a partnership increased its public acceptance, as did the responsible sharing of information, maintaining an attitude of neutrality and keeping in close touch with all stakeholders.

Drawing on local knowledge enhanced the legitimation of a partnership. When the local knowledge of members or non-members of a partnership was actively sought and incorporated into the decision making, the general acceptance of the resulting decisions and the partnership as such increased.

A heterogeneous composition of partners led to wider local acceptance. Even if participation in the partnership was not in any way representative, a greater mix of different societal actors contributed towards greater transparency and less one-sidedness of decisions, which in the end made a partnership appear more legitimized than would funding decisions made only by a development officer (even though that funding programme itself might have been legitimized by the decisions taken by a council/legislature).

On the negative side, very dominant partners and limited community participation diminished the legitimation of a partnership. In some partnerships, decisions were influenced more by a small group of individuals or organizations than by a wide spectrum of local groups, which resulted in less public acceptance of those decisions and partnerships.

Sustainable development

DEFINITION Sustainable development was defined as a partnership's ability to contribute to the long-term sustenance of its social, cultural, economic and natural environment. This definition thus includes both the long-term success of projects/development and the need for balancing the environmental, economic and social aspects of development.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT Due to the fact that our case study partnerships had to focus on integrated development, many of them also subscribed to the goal of fostering sustainable development. However, this goal often remained vague and was not expressly implemented. Nevertheless, the

partnership approach includes characteristic elements that led to the incorporation of sustainable development aspects into the partnerships' projects 'through the back door' (see below). Thus we found evidence that the partnership approach did contribute to more sustainable projects/development. Since most of our case study partnerships were relatively young, though, it is too early to arrive at a definite, final assessment of the long-term effects of the partnerships.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS In terms of their international distribution, causal strength and empirical evidence, the following are the most important cause–effect chains with regard to sustainable development.

Partnership staff focused on long-term implications and balanced growth. Due to their convictions, academic training and strategic position within the partnerships, many partnership staff explicitly brought sustainability issues into the decision-making process. This contrasts with the more conventional views of many development bureaucrats.

Partnership staff closely supported project implementers, thus favouring long-term success. The staff of many of our case study partnerships were highly engaged in the individual projects and extended intensive technical and institutional support to implementers. This engagement often extended beyond the officially required amount and the official funding period – thus backing up projects in case of unexpected difficulties.

Local knowledge gave a clearer idea of where and how to act to ensure long-term success. Knowing from personal experience the strategically important development issues of an area, the important individuals and organizations as well as successful or failed development attempts of the past enhanced the probability of projects being successful in the long run.

Local-level decision making created greater personal responsibility for effects. Local decision makers felt more responsible and were held more responsible by their local community. Therefore they were more likely to take long-term as well as social effects into consideration when making development decisions for their local area.

Local-level decision making brought conflicting interests together to find common ground. In some partnerships, conflicting groups (e.g. farmers and environmentalists) came to meetings at the local level and over time developed an understanding of each other's views. This provided the basis for discovering common concerns or for shaping projects or sets of projects that integrated the opposing views.

The sectoral diversity of partners brought in many perspectives/interests, leading to more balanced projects. Discussing a project or development strategy from many points of view in the end often led to more balanced/holistic projects or a more balanced set of projects. This contrasts with the more traditional, bureaucratic approach to rural development, in which these various perspectives rarely enter the decision-making process.

Social inclusion

DEFINITION Social inclusion was defined as the inclusion of marginalized groups in the social and economic processes induced by a partnership.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT There was only sporadic evidence that the partnership approach resulted in more socially inclusive development. Most partnerships did not actively try to involve older people, women or unemployed people, for instance, in their decision-making bodies. Nor did they explicitly target their outputs on any marginalized social group. In general, partnerships turned a blind eye to social inequity and instead focused on spurring the local economy. This may have had to do with the fact that the partnerships' decisions were shaped by those who were members of the partnerships' decision-making bodies – usually representatives of the active population or sector. However, even traditional rural development programmes were more geared towards improving life in general in a rural area than targeting specific marginalized social groups.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS Very few cause–effect chains relating to social inclusion could be identified. Besides the following, no clear patterns could be found at the international level.

The convictions of a partnership's staff can influence a partnership's actions towards greater social inclusion. In a few partnerships where the staff were very much aware of and committed to social inclusion, they were able to translate this into concrete actions or policies favouring marginalized social groups.

Strategic planning

DEFINITION Strategic planning was defined as a partnership's ability to analyse its external environment and to shape the structure and operation of the partnership according to a long-term plan.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT Overall, the partnership approach had only a limited effect in terms of strategic planning capacity. This did not mean that the studied partnerships did not have a business or development plan. In fact,

some funding programmes explicitly demanded such a plan. However, many partnerships only developed a plan in the beginning, including a comprehensive diagnosis of their area's strengths and weaknesses. Later on, this strategic plan receded more and more into the background and the partnerships started operating in a more reactive mode, supporting projects that simply emerged from outside or within the partnership membership. Only when forced from outside (for example, when applying for a new funding programme) did these partnerships develop a new or adapted strategic plan. This may also have had to do with the fact that most partnership coordinators worked only on short-term contracts and thus had to concentrate more on short-term results to ensure their position. Thus, with a few exceptions, the partnership approach has only had a very limited effect on fostering substantive and continuous strategic planning. It can be seen as one of the more important deficiencies of partnerships that they did not promote long-term strategic thinking for their own development.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS Because very few relevant cause–effect chains could be identified in the studied partnerships and because of the low impact these had, it is not possible to determine internationally valid chains. Indeed, the evidence was sometimes contradictory, as the following analysis shows.

Both top-down and bottom-up initiation had a positive impact on strategic planning. A few partnerships benefited from top-down initiation which instilled a strong planning orientation into their operations. Other partnerships, however, developed a strategic planning orientation because they slowly emerged from the local community and felt an internal need for strategic clarity and guidance.

The source and duration of outside funding had contradictory effects on the planning capacity of partnerships. Some partnerships' reliance on external funding helped or forced them to base their project funding decisions on at least a list of self-defined criteria (implicitly based on a particular plan or model of the partnership's development role); other partnerships were not strategically minded because they were sure of the programme's financial support. Likewise, some partnerships felt it impossible to operate strategically because of their insecure funding situation (for example, the end of a programme), whereas other partnerships in the same situation developed a strategic plan because the old secure days were over and they felt the need for a new vision.

Exogenous development

DEFINITION Exogenous development was defined as a type of development that is oriented towards and driven from outside the partnership area.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT In the studied partnerships, the partnership approach had hardly any effect on exogenous development. In fact, the idea of promoting exogenous development seems to run completely against the dominant philosophy of rural development partnerships. While they often operate on the basis of external funding, they generally use these funds to promote endogenous development – for example, by enhancing local infrastructure and supporting community groups or local businesses. In the cases examined, this inward-looking orientation may have been due to the fact that the partnerships consisted predominantly of local actors (besides some non-local public officials). However, a number of partnerships were, after some time, finding out that their economic projects could not be viable if they only catered for local markets. Also, some partnerships were becoming more engaged in rural tourism, for which at least a regional outlook and marketing were necessary. Hence it could well be that over time exogenous development might become more of an issue in the still very young partnerships that were studied. But endogenous development is likely to remain the dominant development paradigm of local partnerships.

KEY CAUSE–EFFECT CHAINS Because of the scarce evidence, it is not possible to detect any general patterns of cause–effect chains leading to or inhibiting exogenous development.

6.3 The Determinants of the Effects of the Partnership Approach: a European Analysis

This section focuses on the determinants that, according to our analysis of 182 cause–effect chains, brought about the effects discussed in the previous section. The list of hypothesized determinants on which this analysis was based was not simply derived deductively from our cause–effect hypotheses, but was reviewed and modified midway through the impact study, as the picture became clearer. The result was a rather comprehensive list of 33 determinants, which are defined in Appendix 4. Some of these were inherent or intrinsic characteristics of the partnership approach (for example, that a partnership includes partners from different sectors), while others were not intrinsic characteristics as such, but nevertheless very influential (for example, the number of partners of a partnership). After much discussion, we decided in favour of maintaining a long list of determinants in order not to be too blinkered at that stage of the research and in order to be able also to capture important conditional factors shaping partnership functioning. This distinction between intrinsic and contingent characteristics will be further discussed later on.

6.3.1 An overview of the analysis of determinants

Again, the reader is referred to Table 6.1, which contains the core of the empirical evidence assembled on the role of the determinants (though not all of it, as previously explained). Now, of course, we shall consider the rows in that table rather than the columns, as before.

Table 6.1 indicates that, of the 33, a dozen determinants had a particularly influential role in bringing about the various effects. So, while all 33 determinants will be analysed in more detail later, an overview of these 12 will provide a first impression of what distinguishes the partnership approach and makes it special in comparison with more conventional, single-agency-led approaches to rural development.

It will be seen from the table that very strong evidence of impact was found with respect to the competence and commitment of partnership staff. Because the partnership managers and supporting staff were involved in practically all of the activities of a partnership, this determinant had a large impact on almost all 12 of the effects. It is by far the most important determinant. The mobilization and inclusion of intimate local knowledge was also of considerable significance; because the use of local knowledge pervaded and improved almost all the project-related processes of a partnership, it likewise contributed to a large number of effects. The same may be said of decision making at the local level – meaning at the partnership level and not at the regional or national level. Decision making is arguably the most crucial element of any organization's activity and basing it at the local level clearly enabled the partnerships to draw in local knowledge, skills, institutions and individuals, which again improved almost all aspects of a partnership's functioning.

Strong evidence for cause–effect linkages was detected in the case of the sectoral heterogeneity of partners, i.e. the degree to which the partners came from different societal sectors. This is yet another very basic determinant that influenced many processes within the partnerships studied and therefore made an impact on many different effects of a partnership. Key actors (defined operationally as highly dynamic, innovative, supportive and powerful actors) also played an influential role, in particular in relation to the more tangible output-related effects, but less so or even negatively with regard to political (e.g. legitimation) and some social effects. The initiation of a partnership, i.e. whether it started from the top down or the bottom up, shaped a partnership's organizational set-up and activities profoundly and for a long time. It was therefore not surprising to find that a partnership's peculiar initiation history exerted significant impacts on several output- and process-related effects.

Equally strong was the evidence relating to the partnerships' networking activities, which concerned contacts with actors or organizations

outside the partnership, whether locally based or not. Not surprisingly, networking contributed to partnerships' added value, mostly with regard to organizational and social effects.

Significant, but perhaps a little less strong, evidence for their adding value in the development process was found in relation to the partnerships' efforts with regard to community mobilization and participation. Since this is about involving the local community, this determinant had an impact on all effects relating to local and political issues, such as legitimation and endogenous development. The fact that partnerships typically occupy independent/neutral institutional space obviously had the most impact upon the organizational and political effects of partnerships. However, the effects arising from this determinant turned out to be quite complex and far-reaching, as will be seen later.

Equally strong evidence was found for the pertinence of the diverse backgrounds and skills of partners. As these skills and perspectives were utilized in planning, decision making and the implementation of projects, the impacts of this determinant were relatively widespread. In addition, there was sound evidence for cause–effect links emanating from the determinant joint planning. Because joint planning is ultimately output-related, while at the same time involving all partners of a partnership, the corresponding effects upon integrated development and organizational sustainability were positively influenced by this determinant. The shared vision and perceived common benefits of partnerships also generated a wide variety of positive effects.

As suggested earlier, one can categorize determinants into those that are fundamental or intrinsic to the partnership approach and those that are more loosely related or merely contingent on the partnership approach. Interestingly, of the top 12 as just reviewed, only the staff determinant would fall into the contingent category, the other 11 appearing to be genuinely intrinsic to the partnership approach. This again indicates that the partnership approach as such is successfully adding value to rural development and that other features of the partnerships (for example, the size of their budget) are only secondary in that respect. The intrinsic determinants therefore demand special attention and they will be further differentiated in the 'emerging patterns' subsection of this chapter.

6.3.2 The determinants analysed according to the components of partnership

Before that, however, we must report a systematic analysis of the 33 determinants ordered according to the various dimensions of partnership (namely, partners, inputs, organization, processes) which are used in Table 6.1 to categorize them.

Partners

There was very strong evidence that the determinants that relate to characteristics of the partners of a partnership have an overwhelmingly positive impact on almost all 12 identified effects. Most important of all, mobilizing and drawing upon the intimate local knowledge of the partners significantly improved the partnerships' functioning on practically all fronts. This determinant was followed by the partnerships' ability to mobilize diverse actors in terms of both their sectoral origin and the personal backgrounds and skills of the individuals and their capacity for throwing up a key actor. Then came the twin determinants of the common problems and needs and common vision of the partners. These two determinants were relatively strong across the board, showing that having the fundamentals in common was an influential underlying factor for partnerships. This seems to indicate that partnerships thrive more on diversity than on homogeneity so long as some common purpose exists between them. The least important determinants concerning the partners were partners' innovativeness and the number of partners, the latter being noticeable only in relation to its effect on legitimation.

Inputs/resources

Determinants relating to the resources at the disposal of the partnerships were, quite surprisingly, relatively unimportant. This does not mean that resource input as such was unimportant. Resources are, of course, vital for implementing projects, employing partnership staff, etc. But this does not distinguish the partnership approach from more conventional approaches to rural development. Instead, we tried to analyse whether there was anything special about the resource input and how resources were mobilized by the partnerships. In this respect, only two determinants showed any significant evidence of cause–effect linkages. First, a high level of local resource input had positive impacts upon locally and project-oriented effects (endogenous development, effectiveness and community involvement). Secondly, poor continuity of funding had a quite understandable negative impact on effectiveness.

Other than these strong, but very particular, impacts, there was no or only weak evidence of cause–effect linkages for voluntary work (possibly because not many partnerships mobilized much voluntary effort), size of budget and bureaucratic funding procedures of the funding agency. The latter two results are especially surprising, because 'not enough funds' and 'too much funding bureaucracy' are frequently cited as main obstacles facing partnerships – but concrete empirical evidence to support these claims was slim. In sum, it seems that the value added by the partnership approach is less determined by resource issues (possibly because they are similar for conventionally funded projects) compared with partner-related determinants. Resources seem to play mainly a supportive, contingent function – but a very important one.

Organization

There was considerably more evidence that the way partnerships are organized has an impact on the 12 identified effects. The results were, however, somewhat surprising because some determinants that we expected to have a high effect (for example, the legal status of the partnership or the size of the area that it served) were less important, while others (e.g. the competence and commitment of staff or the independence and neutrality of the institution) showed unexpectedly strong effects. In particular, of all 33 determinants, the determinant competence and commitment of staff showed the strongest evidence, virtually across the board or for all effects. The central role of the partnerships' managers and supporting staff within the partnerships seems to give them exceptional leverage on all major processes and outputs. Without downgrading its importance, it may be argued, though, that this determinant is not really intrinsic to the partnership approach, as the success of conventional, agency-led approaches to rural development also depends on the quality of their staff.

Other organizational determinants were far less important. Some evidence was found for positive effects stemming from the lack of organizational complexity, the existence of working groups and the competence and commitment of leaders (e.g. board members) – all three mainly or exclusively having an impact on effectiveness. Strong evidence backed up cause–effect links based on the procedural flexibility of partnerships, this flexibility being not only important for fostering innovation and making partnerships run more effectively, but also for enhancing the long-term organizational sustainability of partnerships – possibly because partnerships could adapt flexibly to changes of their environment. The delegation of power by the funders was another important factor, but this greater power devolved to the partnership had a significant impact only on endogenous development.

The two determinants legitimation and clarity of partnership's policies, roles and regulations produced a number of effects, but the evidence for this was less strong. It seems that they are important background features for the general functioning of partnerships, but do not significantly add value. Lastly, little evidence was found for cause–effect linkages based on the size of the partnership area, the legal status of partnerships and equal decision-making powers of partners.

In sum, while the competence and commitment of a partnership's staff is clearly the most important determinant, the partnership's external independence/neutrality *vis-à-vis* other organizations (especially public sector organizations) is also very important. The internal organizational set-up provides an important basis for a proper functioning of partnerships, but these internal determinants are not as important as originally thought; they seem to have only a supportive function.

Processes

Together with the partner-related features, the characteristic processes of partnerships differed the most from conventional (i.e. non-partnership) development approaches and made a big difference in terms of added value. Almost all the process determinants that had been identified were intrinsic to the partnership approach. Overall, there was strong or very strong evidence that these process determinants contributed significantly to all the identified effects except social inclusion and exogenous development. In other words, it was the way that partnerships operated, how they combined partners and resources to create outputs, that made the crucial difference compared with conventional approaches. Looking more closely, it was not so much the act of implementation that was innovative about partnerships, but the preparatory stages of problem identification, planning and decision making. Partnerships tended to conduct these stages in a participatory, cooperative and locally based manner.

The strongest evidence was found for decision making at the local level (as distinct from the regional or national level). This determinant clearly constitutes an important intrinsic determinant of the partnership approach and there are documented impacts on many of the 12 pre-identified effects, making it the second most important of all the 33 determinants. Networking, constituting the partnerships' external relations capacity, likewise had impacts on many effects. Rather less, but still strong, evidence was identified regarding cause–effect chains based on joint planning and community participation. In the case of the latter, it could be shown that not only did community participation have positive impacts on a number of local output-, human capacity- and local-involvement-related effects, but there was also a negative impact on legitimation if community participation was lacking.

The manner of the initiation of partnerships had, as noted before, long-term and widespread impacts on the performance of partnerships, but this proved to be quite complex. Somewhat surprisingly, the strongest evidence for positive impacts on mainly output-related effects was found in relation to top-down initiation, while the scores for bottom-up initiation were significantly lower. This has to do with the positive effects of the top-down imposition of certain requirements on partnerships (for example, that projects needed to be integrated, that progress was periodically reported and monitored). Finally, there was only weak evidence that strategic planning and capacity building (viewed here as inputs rather than as outputs of partnership working) had any significant impact on the 12 effects. This can probably be explained by the observation that the partnerships studied were more concerned with producing short-term outputs and had little time for long-term-oriented activities like strategic planning and capacity building.

6.4 Determinants and Effects from the Six National Perspectives

As already emphasized, the impact study was undertaken in all six participating countries in basically the same way. Respecting a common methodology, the various empirical investigations and subsequent analyses were carried out, yielding for each country about 30 identified and tested cause–effect chains and the corresponding FACT sheets, as well as a filled-out national cause–effect matrix. On this basis, six national impact reports, averaging about 60 pages, were written which crystallized the national findings on this issue.

These reports were, of course, based on the in-depth investigation of four partnerships in each country. As explained in the methodology chapter, while the 24 partnerships selected across the six countries all needed to fulfil certain common criteria, the research team had otherwise deliberately tried in the selection process to capture as much diversity as possible with regard to the partnerships' organizational set-up, sources of funding, etc. It is interesting, then, that despite obvious differences which reflect the peculiar local and national circumstances and contexts, the national analyses came to quite similar conclusions as to what the crucial determinants and effects of the partnership approach were and are. This is an important finding.

Before turning to possible reasons for these similarities, we shall first briefly present a few examples from each country, which will give a taste of the diversity of contexts and experiences.

In Finland, which joined the EU only recently, the partnerships were also very young. Three of the four studied were initiated and funded by different funding programmes (LEADER and two different Finnish programmes). Nevertheless, the key determinants, cause–effect chains and effects of the partnerships were very similar across the four cases. Another important finding, confirmed by the other national teams, was that, while top-down- and bottom-up-initiated partnerships might initially differ a lot in the way they operate and create outputs, after a couple of years local ownership takes over and the partnerships' operation becomes bottom-up-oriented.

Sweden, once the prototypical welfare state, also has a well-developed voluntary sector – including in the rural areas, where the rural movement of the 1970s and 1980s is still being felt today. The Swedish case study partnerships, which were all informal partnerships, had therefore been able to benefit from a considerable input of voluntary work – almost to the point that local people were starting to feel exploited. The fact that these partnerships were thus able to operate on very small budgets may explain why finance-related determinants were not very important in the Swedish cases. Another important Swedish

contextual feature was the general concern for harmony and stability. This was reflected in the low scores of the 'diversity of partners' determinants and the high scores of the 'common vision' determinant. The Swedish case studies found a common, even egalitarian, vision/philosophy a crucially important element for running a partnership smoothly. But what might be good for the internal dynamics (and sustainability) of the partnerships was at the same time less conducive to the effectiveness of the partnerships – they were very concerned with keeping all the members content.

In the UK, the countryside has for many years been characterized by governmental fragmentation and privatization, but also by a differentiated and strong voluntary sector. There is clearly a need for integrating these diverse actors. However, the UK case-study partnerships were relatively unsuccessful in (or shied away from) delivering coordinated integrated development. Instead, they concentrated on implementing public funding programmes and producing concrete results. For this, they relied heavily, as did most other case study partnerships, on the competence of their partnership coordinators. This was shown most vividly when one partnership replaced their initial desk-bound coordinator with an outgoing and accepted local officer – the partnership practically took off from there. Another instructive case was the partnership in Northern Ireland, which found its status as an independent institution crucial for creating a neutral space in which both Unionists and Republicans could meet and work together constructively. Even if this was a very peculiar case, there was other evidence in the UK, as well as in other countries, that a measure of independence from political and administrative control had positive influences – for example, on the ability to try innovative approaches or projects.

Germany's rural areas are also marked by a great variety of public, economic and voluntary organizations – at least in West Germany. In the former East Germany, due mainly to its socialist history, civil society and the private sector are much less developed and public life is much more dominated by public actors. This is one reason why the East German case study partnership was very closely tied to the county's administration and had not really tried to grow beyond a small number of important members. This contributed to the partnership's high effectiveness – and at the same time to very low community involvement. Another partnership in central Germany had just recently been upgraded to a regional forum and was now discussing and making funding recommendations about public moneys from different sources (EU, national, regional) being distributed to their area. This new funding diversity was having a positive impact on creating truly integrated development. Lastly, the example of a partnership coordinator leaving his post because he could not be assured a continuation of his contract showed how an insecure funding situation could have a very significant impact

on a partnership's performance – because the coordinator's knowledge and experience were crucial for delivering many of a partnership's outputs and outcomes.

In Spain, the local authorities are more or less the only institutions with a strong presence in the rural areas. Economic associations are mostly based in the centres, and the civil society of southern European countries is traditionally not well developed. Local partnerships are therefore a real innovation in themselves. The Spanish examples show that some of the special partnership effects were brought about simply by having a technical office or presence in the local area. Increased accessibility brought about in this way led to more community involvement, greater legitimation and so forth. This example also showed that capacity building was not just about the local people learning from the partnership, but also about technical officers benefiting from the intimate local knowledge of the residents. Lastly, the Spanish cases shared a wider phenomenon in that cooperation in their areas was more funding-opportunity-oriented than problem-oriented. This lack of strategic planning resulted in a more short-term and possibly unsustainable development.

Italy is also a country with a dominant public sector and a relatively weak voluntary sector. This is most pronounced in Italy's rural areas, especially in the lagging southern regions where most rural development partnerships are concentrated. Just as in Spain, starting a public–private partnership in areas where only the local authorities have so far been engaged in development work is in itself an innovation. This context may also explain why in the cases studied it often took a very strong individual to mobilize the local community and get the partnership going at all. Many partnership effects, such as community involvement and effectiveness, could be very dependent on such a person. Lastly, it was found in the Italian case study partnerships, all of them LEADER-funded, that a top-down initiation could have a positive effect on the strategic planning capacity of a partnership. Thus the Italian LEADER guidelines required a local action plan to be developed as a precondition for funding and this plan often became an important tool for the partnerships.

Despite the big national and local differences touched upon in these examples, the national impact analyses yielded results which, by and large, are consistent with the international results presented in the preceding sections. What does this say about the partnership approach and the way it adds value to rural development? It seems first of all that the partnership approach is quite flexible in adapting itself to a great variety of contexts. The particular form of partnerships can differ a lot, but it seems that certain fundamentals of partnerships, such as joint planning processes, decision making at the local level and the involvement of diverse actors, do not differ as much. In other words, the intrinsic determinants of partnerships (which were shown to be the most influential

when it came to producing effects) are so basic that their range of variability is relatively small. Hence the various determinants and their cause–effect chains are relatively independent of national circumstances.

6.5 The Impact Study: Some Concluding Comments

As by now clear, the aim of the impact study was to establish, empirically, the impacts of the partnership approach to rural development. More specifically, it was to determine, from a strong base of factual evidence, whether the partnership approach did create special effects when compared with more conventional, agency-led approaches – in other words, whether or not and under what conditions it added value to the rural development process.

The method employed for making this assessment was itself unconventional. The FACT method, developed by the Dortmund team, focused right away on establishing cause–effect chains that linked special partnership features with partnership effects. This concentrated the research efforts on the important causal mechanisms, because in the end only those results that can be clearly linked back to the peculiar characteristics of the partnership approach can be rightfully considered the added value of the partnership approach.

The impact study has successfully shown that this experimental methodology was capable of systematically identifying and analysing such cause–effect linkages. But, while the study was therefore able to assess the value added of the studied partnerships, these findings were nevertheless limited by their being based on only 24 case-study partnerships. This is why a follow-up feedback survey was conducted to check how far the findings of the impact study are likely to hold true on a wider basis. That survey is reported in Section 6.6 below, and it did in fact very largely validate the results of the impact study. But, first, some conclusions on the impact study *per se*.

6.5.1 The effects or added value of the partnership approach

Looking in the round at the detailed study of the 24 partnerships spread across six European countries, it can be stated that the impact study revealed that the partnership approach underlying these case study partnerships had significant and positive impacts on nine of the 12 effects that were analysed. Since the cause–effect linkages connecting these effects with key characteristics of the partnership approach have been critically analysed and confirmed, we can confirm that the partnership approach has definitely contributed to those effects and has thus created added value.

Crudely ranked and grouped by the strength of evidence for a positive partnership-approach effect, these specific effects are as follows.

1. Strong evidence of a partnership effect upon:

- the effectiveness of partnerships;
- endogenous development;
- capacity building;
- integrated development;
- innovation; and
- community involvement.

2. Significant but rather less strong evidence of a partnership effect upon:

- the organizational sustainability of partnerships;
- legitimation; and
- sustainable development.

3. Little or no evidence of a partnership effect upon:

- social inclusion;
- strategic planning; and
- exogenous development.

All of this indicates that partnerships are adding value mostly in relation to producing certain types of outputs and enhancing local human capacity. Partnerships also positively influence their own political and long-term basis of support, as well as the long-term development of their area. The fact that partnerships have so far not been able to make much difference with regard to social inclusion points to a major shortcoming, however. Lacking a strategy for its own future and not reaching out beyond its own partnership area both suggest a short-sightedness that could become a real problem when the comfortable days of funding from a major funding programme are over.

6.5.2 The determinants of the effects of the partnership approach

Again, based on evidence from the 24 case-study partnerships, a dozen determinants could be identified for which there was strong or very strong evidence that they contributed to the 12 effects considered above. Crudely ranked with regard to the strength of evidence, they were:

- The competence and commitment of the partnerships' staff.
- The intimacy of local knowledge.
- Decision making at the local level
- The sectoral heterogeneity of partners.
- The presence of one or more leading or key actors.

- The manner of the initiation of the partnership.
- The networking of the partnership.
- Community mobilization and participation.
- The independence/neutrality of the partnership.
- The diverse professional backgrounds and skills of its members.
- Joint planning by the partners.
- The existence of a shared vision and perceived common benefits.

Even though the 33 determinants from which these 12 determinants were drawn encompassed quite a number of contingent determinants (see below), 11 of the above 12 are undoubtedly fundamental determinants which are intrinsic to the partnership approach. Only the determinant relating to the partnerships' staff may be seen as non-intrinsic. However, even this one is borderline, as it might be argued that, while competent staff are important even in conventional development programmes, the partnership approach relies very much on the existence of a central coordinator and also gives staff members more space to develop their potential. Be that as it may, the overall conclusion is that it is really the intrinsic features of the partnership approach which are most of all responsible for the effects described above.

A more comprehensive analysis of all 33 determinants revealed interesting results as well. For example, determinants related specifically to characteristics of the partners showed strong evidence of influencing the 12 effects. Also, being endowed with outstanding and diverse actors with common ground as far as problems and vision are concerned emerges as very influential. There was surprisingly limited evidence for determinants related to the resources of the partnerships having impacts on the 12 analysed effects; it seems that the resources managed by the partnerships play more of a supportive than a driving role in generating positive effects. Moreover, as already seen, the staff-related determinant and the determinants relating to institutional independence were much more important than the factors pertaining to the internal organizational set-up of partnerships. Lastly, almost all process-related determinants were important in delivering a wide range of added value.

6.5.3 Inherent and contingent determinants

The impact analysis was thus able to further differentiate between the determinants, and this will be important when it comes (Chapter 7) to making recommendations for a targeted improvement of the impact of partnerships on rural development.

To conclude this summary section, we shall therefore list those determinants which are arguably not inherently part of the partnership approach and which could be characterized as contingent determinants.

They were:

- Partners
  - Shared problems
  - Key actors
  - Partners' innovativeness
  - Number of partners
- Organization
  - Clear aims, policies, roles
  - Size of partnership area
  - Legitimation
  - Staff competence (see earlier discussion)
  - Leadership competence
- Resources
  - Continuity of funding
  - Size of partnership budget
  - Funding procedures
  - Resource dependency
- Processes
  - Strategic planning
  - Capacity building

The truly intrinsic characteristics of partnerships are summarized in Table 6.2. Here those determinants are ordered under two overarching characteristics of the partnership approach, namely the ability to bring together people, institutions and resources, and the status of maintaining independence from other organizations. The table shows what intermediate capacities derive from these two qualities, which of our more detailed determinants are connected with them and what the main effects are.

The distinction between intrinsic and contingent determinants should not be taken as implying that the latter are less important than the former. In fact, in a number of partnerships, the potential of the intrinsic partnership characteristics was not fully exploited because of problems relating to the contingent characteristics. Thus the contingent determinants are important in that they can obstruct or enhance the functioning of the intrinsic determinants, which have the potential to really make a difference in the delivery of rural development programmes. Some of these ideas are developed further in Chapter 7, where a metaphor is developed whereby many of the key determinants are portrayed as keys opening the doors of the inherent partnership characteristics and thereby releasing the hoped-for effects of the partnership approach to rural development.

Thus, overall, the impact study was successful in establishing the added value, the determinants and the causal processes underlying the partnership approach. But establishing how far these findings could be generalized to a larger number of rural development partnerships in Europe was the main task of the subsequent feedback survey, the results of which are described in the next section.

Table 6.2. The intrinsic determinants of the partnership approach and their effects.

Key intrinsic determinants	Main effects
Bringing together	
Mobilizing and integrating diverse actors for joint action Ability to improve project design Ability to link projects (diverse backgrounds, sectoral heterogeneity, joint planning)	Effectiveness Endogenous development Integrated development Sustainable development Innovation Capacity building
Involving local people and groups Ability to mobilize local potential, know-how (local knowledge, local decision making, community participation, initiation)	Effectiveness Community involvement Capacity building Legitimation
Pooling resources Ability to extend and diversify resource base (local resource input, diverse skills, voluntary work)	Organizational sustainability Effectiveness
Integrating top-down and bottom-up interests Ability to mediate and integrate different development perspectives (power delegation by funders, initiation)	Integrated development Strategic planning
Maintaining independence	
Neutral institutional space Ability to involve and integrate conflicting groups (neutral institutional space)	Capacity building Integrated development Social inclusion
Flexible/informal operation Greater accessibility for local people Quicker communication and reactions (procedural flexibility, low complexity of organization, independence)	Effectiveness Community involvement
Versatile compatibility Ability to attract funding from many sources Ability to connect/network with many organizations (independence, networking)	Effectiveness Organizational sustainability Integrated development Capacity building
Adaptability Ability to change, grow, adapt to changing circumstances, settings (independence, procedural flexibility)	Organizational sustainability Innovation
Freedom to innovate Ability to experiment, implement model projects (independence, power delegation by funders)	Innovation Endogenous development

6.6 Validation: the Feedback Survey

It will be recalled (from Section 3.6 of Chapter 3 (Methodology)) that the feedback survey sought the opinions of people actively involved in the everyday functioning of rural development partnerships. We wanted their views on the research team's provisional conclusions, very largely based on the impact study, relating to the role of local partnerships in promoting rural development. To that end, a questionnaire was sent to all of the 330 partnerships, spread across eight countries, that had responded a year earlier in our extensive survey. This time 225 responded, a response rate of 60.8% (see the earlier Table 3.2). The English-language version of this European feedback questionnaire is reproduced in an abridged format as Appendix 5.

In most cases (almost 70%), it was the programme manager who filled in the questionnaire, though the chairman/president and the officers of the management team were also significant respondents. This meant that there was a danger of some bias here, since, as active partnership practitioners, the respondents might have been expected to have quite positive views about their effectiveness and therefore to be predisposed to agree with many of the conclusions of the impact study. But they were asked about rural development partnerships in general – i.e. not just their own – and in two countries, namely, Spain and Germany, control groups of other actors in rural development were also surveyed, with the reassuring finding that there was little significant difference between the two sets of views.

It should also be noted that what we were seeking were opinions on the perceived *relative* importance of different factors and outcomes, so that, even if the respondents tended to be overenthusiastic about the effectiveness of partnerships because of the positions they held, there would still be merit in looking carefully at the way they ranked or prioritized the different elements as outcomes, determinants or issues relating to partnership operation.

6.6.1 Perceptions of the impacts of the partnership approach

The first question posed in the feedback survey referred to the types of effects that partnerships cause. Twelve standardized effects were defined, based on the research team's impact study reported above. In response, the respondents observed that local partnerships were having positive impacts in all the fields proposed – but to a varying degree.

The percentage figures below relate to the proportion of the whole sample of 225 respondents agreeing with the relevant impact statement put to them. (Table 6.3 gives the related percentages for the respon-

Table 6.3. Perceived impacts of the partnership approach, by country (the percentage of respondents in each country agreeing with each suggested partnership impact) (from the feedback survey).

	Germany	Italy	UK	Spain	Sweden	Finland
Endogenous development	93.2	96.6	92.6	100	97.3	100
Sustainable development	88.7	89.6	63.0	86.9	89.2	90.2
Innovation	86.3	96.5	51.8	87.0	94.5	100
Legitimation	81.9	79.3	62.9	95.5	75.6	96.1
Capacity building	81.8	96.6	74.1	91.3	91.8	96.1
Effectiveness	81.8	89.7	85.2	87.0	75.7	96.0
Integrated development	79.6	96.5	77.8	91.3	100	100
Organizational sustainability	65.9	75.9	40.7	82.6	72.9	52.9
Community participation	56.9	69.0	62.9	87.0	83.8	92.2
Strategic planning	54.6	96.6	66.7	95.5	72.9	82.3
Exogenous development	45.4	27.5	7.4	39.1	56.8	43.2
Social inclusion	36.4	62.0	40.7	60.9	59.5	73.5
Average	71.04	81.32	60.48	83.68	80.83	85.21

dents of each individual country.) Also given in the listing below is a brief summary of what the respondents felt to be the main causal factors underlying this impact. Thus, partnerships were said to be having positive impacts on the following.

- Endogenous development of the local area: 96% of our respondents across Europe agreed with this, with partnerships being said to provide the necessary institutional space for local cooperation, the essential funding to undertake local projects and the power to allocate this funding according to local preferences.
- Integrated development (90%), because they allow for the involvement of many local collectives and interest groups around a common project and give financial support to local projects in all sectors.
- Capacity building (89%), in the sense that they provide a development structure and introduce new ways of management.
- Innovation (88%) in social relationships, in the way of management and in the types of actions supported.
- Effectiveness (86%), because the partnership's administration works closely with the project promoter, thus increasing substantially the chances of success in navigating through the bureaucratic process; also because, thanks to the partnership, useful information flows much more efficiently among the local people and, finally, because the managers get involved in the whole process and not only in their hours of formal employment.

- Sustainable development (85%), due to the fact that many partnerships help to raise awareness of the need for long-term cooperation and its benefits, and also because they have promoted the elaboration of strategic plans (see next point). (Note: it may be that some respondents interpreted this statement as relating to development sustained over time rather than to sustainable development in its purer sense.)
- Strategic plans (77%) – one of the most important elements in any development process, throwing light on the current situation of the territory and the desirable way forward.
- Legitimation (83%), as they provide the necessary consensus to undertake actions that will be widely supported by the local society.
- Community participation (76%), because they share widely some of the decision-making process, by involving a wide representation of local actors.

Other impacts felt to be less successfully achieved were as follows:

- Organizational sustainability (64%), with the longevity of the organization linked mainly to the availability of funding and not to the partnership approach *per se*.
- Social inclusion (58%), due to the fact that the less powerful and less organized members of the community are usually those most poorly represented in the partnership structures.
- Exogenous development (39%), since the partnership approach is, in most cases, substantially related to the endogenous approach to development, being based on local people and the local resources.

We also compared the national frequencies in the same data set in order to answer the following questions: Do these perceived impacts vary substantially from country to country? If so, in which directions?

Generally, the answers do not differ much from country to country, except in the overall relative importance given to all impacts. Differences appear not to be significant and so conclusions reached for the whole sample generally apply also at the national level.

6.6.2 Explanatory factors driving the partnership impacts

So much for effects. The second part of the European questionnaire related to possible factors causing impact. Respondents were asked to choose for each of the impacts listed (e.g. exogenous development, social inclusion) up to two factors (or causes) from a list provided. In this way, the perceived determinants or key elements explaining how the partnership approach produces a particular impact would be clearly established. In Table 6.4, the impacts are related to the four most mentioned factors or determinants.

Table 6.4. Views from the feedback survey regarding the impact of certain features of partnerships upon various aspects of development. (See the questionnaire in Appendix 5 for further detail.)

	Features of partnerships														
Aspects of development	Heterogeneous composition	Bottom-up initiation	Shared understanding of problems	Local knowledge	Local resources	Decision making at local level	External funding	Top-down initiation	Networking	Key individuals/ organizations	Community participation	Neutral forum	Flexible operation	Strategic planning	Joint planning
Integrated development	XXXX	XXX	XX							X					
Sustainable development			XX	XXXX	XXX						X				
Endogenous development		XXXX		XXX	XX	X									
Exogenous development							XXXX	XXX	XX	X					
Social inclusion	XXX	XX									XXXX	X			
Innovation	X								XX	XXXX			XXX		
Effectiveness			XX							XXX			X	XXXX	
Organizational sustainability					XX		XXXX			XXX					X
Legitimation		XXX				XX					XXXX	X			
Strategic planning			XX	X										XXXX	XXX
Community participation		XXX				XX					XXXX	X			
Capacity building	XX			XXX					XXXX						X

XXXX, main factor causing the impact; XXX, second most important factor; XX, third most important factor; X, fourth most important factor. Thus each row of the table contains each of the four symbols.

Thus in the table, each of the impacts listed has been linked to the elements of the partnership approach perceived as most influencing it according to the answers in the feedback survey. The results set out in that table can be interpreted as follows.

- Integrated development is better achieved when the partnership has been initiated by a heterogeneous and representative sample of individuals and organizations of the local society (i.e. a bottom-up process) that share a common understanding of the local problems. If this development is to be sustained in the long term, it is also important that the local circumstances are captured and interpreted correctly by the members of the partnership, that local resources form the basis of the development strategy and that the power of decision stays within the local society.
- Exogenous development is seen as a less desirable form of development linked to an external call to form the partnership, usually from the regional/national government, and to the availability of external funding.
- Social inclusion is favoured when the partnership tends to involve a wide and heterogeneous range of local community actors. A bottom-up initiation of the partnership is believed to positively influence its ability to promote social inclusion.
- The intensive interaction that partnerships favour among their members fosters innovation in the local context, through the exchange of ideas and experiences. The role of leaders is essential to the introduction and spread of new ideas.
- A partnership is a more effective development actor if a consistent strategy backs up all its actions. A common understanding of problems among partners will help to design the strategy, and the presence of key individuals or leaders will contribute to the reaching of consensus in actions and to the longer-term stability of the partnership.
- Since partnerships are, to a large extent, project-oriented, the main factor conditioning their organizational sustainability is the availability of external funding. Another factor has a significant impact on the long-term sustainability of the partnership organization – the presence of key individuals and organizations that can directly or indirectly help.
- One of the main requirements for a partnership to be accepted and valued is it being perceived as a legitimated organization. For this to occur, respondents believe that bottom-up emergence, wide participation by the local society, and decision making being kept at the local level are the key elements.
- The partnership also tends to have a positive impact on the long-term development of its local area when it favours the strategic thinking and the production of a strategic plan. For this to happen, it is essential, on the one hand, that partners are concerned with

common problems that need to be solved and, on the other hand, that they know the local problems and opportunities and can therefore develop the right plan.

- Community participation is one of the main goals and also potential resources of local partnerships. It can be better promoted, according to the surveyed partnerships, when the partnership emerges from the local society in a bottom-up manner and when it extends to all its members an opportunity for real decision making.
- Networking, local knowledge and a diversity of partners are said to facilitate capacity building in the local context. These factors involve the spread and exchange of information within and beyond the partnership, the mix of people from different backgrounds and the sum of living experiences and knowledge of the local context.

In relation to the underlying factors of the various impacts considered, some overall conclusions may be drawn from the feedback survey by looking down the columns and across the rows of Table 6.4 and by considering also various qualitative responses written in by the respondents. On that basis it appears that:

- The bottom-up initiation of partnerships is considered fundamental for long-term, sustainable, participative and legitimated development.
- The awareness of common problems that need to be solved is a key determinant in the emergence and sustainability of a common action through a local partnership.
- The presence of key individuals and organizations markedly influences the degree of effectiveness and innovation in the performance of the partnership and is also essential to assure its existence in the long run.
- The breadth of the partnership (especially the diversity and wide mix of actors) favours integrated development.
- When a jointly derived strategy guides the action of the partnership, the effectiveness of its operation and its achievement of objectives increase.
- External funding is crucial to the emergence of local partnerships for rural development.
- The sustainability of local cooperation depends primarily on the continuing availability of external funding and on the presence of key individuals (leaders).
- The more flexible the management of the local partnerships, the greater its efficiency and chances for innovation.
- Local partnerships help to build a more equal and democratic society if they are open and transparent.
- Sustainable development is more easily achieved if the local circumstances are correctly captured, interpreted and dealt with, with the involvement of the local community.

- The existence of a partnership of local people managing public programmes and physically located in the area increases the legitimacy of the public action.
- Real community participation in the partnership (i.e. wide and legitimated representation in the decision-making bodies) is needed in order to derive the benefits of the participative approach (including consensus in development actions, general support for local development initiatives, etc.) and to reduce political conflict and opposition.
- Networking is one of the golden rules of partnership. It favours innovation and capacity building.
- The achievement of integrated, sustainable and endogenous development is linked closely to the partnership's composition and operation.
- Exogenous development is generally seen as less desirable than endogenous development and even as an interference from outside.
- Local partnerships can provide a neutral institutional space, where a more real and equal democracy can be developed, but they tend to reproduce the balance of power within the local society.

6.6.3 An assessment of the feedback survey

Thus the analysis of the evidence produced by the feedback survey revealed that 225 partnerships for local rural development across eight EU countries, plus two non-partnership control groups in Germany and Spain, basically agree with the fundamental findings of the qualitative work undertaken in the PRIDE project through the analysis of 24 case studies.

The overall picture that respondents from the surveyed partnerships provide on the impact of this new approach to local governance is quite positive. It could be argued that 'people who live in glass houses should not throw stones' but the reality is that the two control groups surveyed show a similarly positive view. Moreover, most of the surveyed partnerships also included a number of critical observations in their responses.

Most of the local partnerships surveyed clearly believed that an enriched local democracy and successful endogenous development were key effects specifically linked to the partnership approach. Respondents also made clear the positive links between the existence of the partnership and the possibility of incorporating all significant local actors in the decision-making process. Many factors contributed to the success of local partnerships in promoting local development, but a crucial element that was stressed (pulling together several of the hypothesized factors considered) was the high degree of involvement of local people, actors and organizations in the development programme – all bringing their own knowledge, perspectives, enthusiasm and skills.

Still, however, everything seems to be dependent on the availability of external funding. It seems that the sustainability of the partnership organization requires there to be funding available. This means that, generally, partnerships still operate under a project management logic that distorts and reduces some of the potentials of the partnership approach.

To conclude, both the impact study and the subsequent feedback survey produced a solid basis of evidence which, put alongside the findings of the earlier extensive survey and study of practice, provided a sound foundation for the derivation of general conclusions and recommendations. It is to those conclusions and recommendations that we now turn.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 The Focus of the Chapter

We move on now to distil the main conclusions of the research, cutting across the various individual exercises undertaken and standing back from the national detail.

Of course, national differences are important; that is why in each of the chapters that present the empirical evidence and analysis, we have set out our findings both at the European level and for the individual countries studied. But conclusions on those individual countries are set out in greater detail in each of the published interim reports of the project (Westholm *et al*., 1999; Esparcia *et al*., 2000; Cavazzani and Moseley, 2001) and they form the basis of the national *Guides to Good Practice*, written in the appropriate languages, that have been produced since the end of the project. Thus, on Spain, see Esparcia *et al*. (2001); on Sweden, see Hasselberg (2001); on the UK, see Cherrett and Moseley (2001); on Italy, see PRIDE – Unita de Ricerca Italiana (2001); on Finland, see Kahila *et al*. (2001).

The point here is that there is a European picture beneath the national detail, a picture composed of the common elements emerging from the survey of 330 partnerships in our extensive survey and/or in the 24 detailed case studies of partnership and broadly confirmed in our feedback survey of over 200 rural development practitioners. As explained in Chapter 3, that European picture has been crystallized particularly through the writing and subsequent discussion of a series of synthetic position papers, based on our set of interim reports and looking at the key issues from a variety of perspectives.

So as to present the conclusions in a logical and structured manner, this chapter will return to the four fundamental questions set out at the

start of Chapter 3, because clear answers to them will effectively respond to the longer list of issues posed at the outset of the research. Those four questions were:

1. What are the key characteristics of rural development partnerships in the countries being examined?
2. What impact have they had on rural development?
3. What factors have significantly influenced their effectiveness in this respect?
4. What measures would improve their effectiveness in this respect?

The fourth of these questions is effectively an invitation to present our recommendations to policy makers and practitioners and these are set out in Section 7.5, below.

Before proceeding further, however, we should also recall the working definition of rural development partnerships that was agreed at the start of the research project and consistently guided the research throughout:

> a voluntary alliance of organizations from at least two societal sectors (state or public-sector organizations, private companies, civil associations) with a clear organization structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and that shows an integrated approach towards the development of local rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants.

It is the characteristics, impact and effectiveness of such partnerships, as revealed by the research, that this chapter now addresses.

7.2 What are the Key Characteristics of Rural Development Partnerships?

In this context, the word 'characteristics' means a host of elements, which may be conveniently considered under the headings emergence, structure and operation/performance.

7.2.1 The emergence of rural development partnerships

Rural development partnerships are still a relatively recent phenomenon in Europe. The vast majority of those identified and studied were launched in the 1990s; indeed, most of them date from 1995 or later. The literature review suggested that their emergence reflects fundamental social, economic and political changes, and our research has confirmed this. No longer can the expert knowledge of a few national and local agencies suffice to manage development at the local level; rather, a

sharing of the experience of several actors involving decisions normally reached by consensus, in short, local governance rather than government, is increasingly seen as essential.

Various developments relate to this:

- A retreat from big government and the centralized state, expressed in decentralization and deregulation, has forced local authorities in all of our studied countries to play more of a facilitating role, working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector and with other agencies, to deliver services and promote development.
- Increasingly, a holistic perspective has been necessary, accepting the links between issues and the need to link together disparate actors and projects.
- A strong territorial focus now features in most rural development programmes, reflecting an appreciation of local diversity and of the need to involve local people and institutions in the development of local resources.
- Increasingly, but not universally, there are also growing demands made by local people to be involved in shaping the future of their locality.

All of these 1990s developments were confirmed in our research to have played a significant part in the emergence of local rural partnerships – but there have been other more concrete factors as well. In particular, the vigorous promotion of locally focused rural development programmes by the EU and by national and regional governments and agencies and the associated availability of funding which properly constituted local partnerships might access have been a major factor. Indeed, the desire to access such funds has been a major stimulus to partnership creation, these partnerships becoming in effect local incubators of high-level initiatives.

The local authorities played a major part in getting appropriate partnerships created – local government generally having the information, expertise, political influence and financial resources to take the lead in this respect. But, in many areas, key individual people – with energy, good contacts and a talent for making things happen – also played a crucial role. We also found that, while many partnerships have been created as a tactical response to funding opportunities and therefore had in effect been externally promoted, most moved quickly to exercise local control. But often this local control rested predominantly in the hands of the local authorities and other key local agencies – more a case of local top-down rather than truly bottom-up.

National factors have certainly conditioned this general model. For example, the long Swedish and British experience of community and voluntary-sector involvement in local politics and service delivery, the

very limited powers of local government in Ireland and the young democratic traditions of Spain and eastern Germany have all added particular elements to this general picture. And, in Italy, private institutions have played a significant role in the emergence of local partnerships.

7.2.2 The structure of rural development partnerships

About 70% of the partnerships studied in the extensive survey had a formal legal status, normally that of companies, associations or cooperatives, the rest relying on some form of memorandum of agreement to define the partners' roles and responsibilities.

The number of partners in the partnership ranged from four to over 200, though most had fewer than 25. The larger partnerships tended to rely rather more on their management and other staff and, perhaps ironically, may therefore have achieved rather narrower community participation than have the smaller ones.

The partners comprised a mix of public-sector and private-sector organizations and NGOs or voluntary and community-based not-for-profit organizations. The degree of involvement of NGOs was something that varied significantly between countries – important in the UK, much of Germany and the Nordic countries, less so in southern Europe and eastern Germany, where that sector is less developed. Very noticeably, the private, commercial sector was generally under-represented in the partnerships, with the exception of those in Italy, many private-sector members being unclear about their roles and sometimes losing interest as the partnership matured.

Public-sector (often local authority) dominance was often apparent, reflecting their key role in the creation of many partnerships and their professional expertise, financial resources and history of being the principal actor in the local area. This brought a mix of costs and benefits; in many cases, the local authorities provided the necessary drive and leadership, a measure of political legitimacy that would otherwise be lacking and significant amounts of co-finance. But this dominance could stifle the other partners. In some cases, however, as the partnership matured over time, the other partners asserted themselves more and achieved a broader base of ownership.

As for their decision-making structure, nearly all partnerships had, in some form, a two-tier structure involving fairly infrequent meetings of an assembly of all the partnership organizations and more frequent meetings of a board or executive committee, where real power normally lay. An interesting question is how far the partnerships also had a third tier of subcommittees or working groups – and how far such committees or groups were given real work and a measure of responsibility and thereby served as a way of spreading real involvement across the whole

membership of the partnership and reducing the dominance of an informal inner cabinet.

Our 24 case studies, which involved over 300 interviews with local actors, revealed the main factors influencing the degree of partner involvement in the work of the partnership. The individual partners were more likely to play an active role if the partnership had clear, coherent goals that were perceived as relevant to the local needs; if the partnership had strong but not overdominant leadership; if the staff were competent and provided good technical and administrative support; if the channels of communication within and beyond the partnership were efficient and user-friendly; if the partnership was visibly delivering real benefits to the local area; if the partners were exposed to the experience of other similar partnerships; and if there were trust and mutual confidence uniting the partners and a good *esprit de corps*.

7.2.3 The operation and performance of rural development partnerships

We have already noted that, while the initiation of rural development partnerships is often essentially top-down, albeit with the input of key local agencies and individuals, the general model is that in due course they tend to become genuinely locally owned – though by whom exactly is an interesting point. Decision making by the committee or board of directors was generally by consensus, with considerable variation apparent regarding how far the partnership manager – a crucial individual – and his/her staff had delegated powers.

As for funding, the sources were diverse, with the EU, national and regional governments and some local authorities generally accounting for the largest share and with private-sector contributions being often very modest. Two points arose in our research over and over again. First, the bureaucracy involved in drawing down project funding from the funding agencies was often onerous and could act as a constraint on the effective operation of the partnership. Secondly, the partnerships' long-term viability almost always rested on their ability to secure further funding from external sources and this challenge of trying to secure further funding was often a serious distraction during the final year of the programme in question.

Most rural development partnerships are project-oriented in the sense that they see their principal function as the delivery of funded programmes by selecting, funding and supporting individual projects. Most of these projects are generated, and in due course managed, by local people and enterprises, and in that sense most partnership-managed rural development programmes that we studied were genuinely bottom-up. But this underlying perception of their key role – the implementation of application-led one-off projects – calls into question their determination to be strategic and proactive, rather than *ad hoc* and reactive.

Nearly all of the partnerships that we studied professed their commitment to holistic, integrated and sustainable development, but these goals and the strategy documents encapsulating and interpreting them seemed generally to exist somewhere in the background, giving only a broad steer to the real business of delivering projects. That is not to say, of course, that these background values and ideals were set aside and not achieved (see the next section dealing with impact); but funding projects was what most partnerships are fundamentally about.

A host of factors emerged in our study as relevant to the efficient operation of the partnerships. Seven in particular may be mentioned, in no specific order:

- A clear strategy and sense of purpose, closely reflecting the needs and resources of the area.
- Leadership without domination – equitable partner participation in decision making.
- Committed, competent and sufficient management and staff.
- Secure and adequate funding over several years.
- Good informal networking and communication within and beyond the partnership.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust.
- A good level of involvement of the wider community – individuals, community groups, other organizations and the business world.

In addition, there were two largely external factors influencing efficient operation. Though external, they were not wholly immune from the influence of the partnership itself – i.e. they were contextual factors to be worked at. These two factors were:

- The level of community and business entrepreneurship in the area, as the partnership's success ultimately depended on the number and quality of the project proposals coming forward for consideration.
- The attitudes and behaviour of both the funders and other agencies involved in the area. The degree to which they would delegate (funders) and cooperate (other agencies) was an important element in influencing the partnership's effectiveness.

As for community involvement, virtually all of the partnerships indicated that this was both important to them and something they tried to foster. How far it was a reality depended on a host of factors, including the communication skills of the partners and the staff, the importance attached to capacity-building initiatives and events, the visibility and perceived value of the partnership's funded projects and the general transparency and openness of the partnership's activities. By and large, the partnerships were not very good at social inclusion, meaning the drawing into their deliberations and activities the more disadvantaged and less visible groups in the areas they served.

7.3 What Impact Have Partnerships Had on Rural Development?

7.3.1 Introduction: recalling the key issues

We now move on to the heart of the research – the frequent assertion that there is something about local partnerships *per se* that adds value to rural development. Examining this assertion or hypothesis has involved exploring both partnership impact on development and the influences upon that impact. These elements are intimately related and, in this section and the next one, we must consider what the impact is, how it happens, how far it happens and how it comes about.

This has not been easy – seeking to establish key determinants and effects in the process of rural development and to crystallize the role of partnership in all of this. But the prize for even partial success has been a significant one – that of isolating the key elements that need to be carefully addressed if partnerships are to be more effective in promoting local rural development in future. This question, relating to practical measures that might be taken to improve partnership effectiveness, is the fourth of those posed at the start of this chapter and is addressed in Section 7.5 below.

In addressing the various questions about impact, evidence has been drawn from all of the exercises undertaken. The extensive survey and the study of the practice of partnership in the 24 case-study areas each threw light on the performance of partnerships and upon factors related to it, and the study of the impact of partnership in those case study areas sought explicitly to trace connections between 33 determinants (or potential causal factors) on the one hand, and a dozen effects (or outcomes), on the other. The feedback survey sought to validate the emerging findings on these cause–effect linkages, so that too is relevant at this point.

7.3.2 A revised conceptual framework

In seeking to define the essence of partnership and what this might mean for the delivery of local development, the research has revealed that there are really two key intrinsic characteristics of local partnerships if we compare them with conventional single agency operations. These characteristics are their bringing together of disparate actors and their independence (or at least quasi-independence) from the statutory agencies and their normal procedures. Each of these requires some elaboration.

The 'bringing together' characteristic offers the chance of generating synergy, whereby the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. There are several elements to this, notably:

- The coordination of the actions of several different and normally separate actors.
- The joint working or cooperation of those actors – reconciling their differences in joint planning and shared projects.
- The involvement of the local community – people, organizations, businesses.
- The pooling of resources – financial, human, capital, intellectual.
- The integration of top-down and bottom-up interests.

The 'independence' characteristic offers:

- More freedom to experiment and innovate.
- Greater freedom to work flexibly and with less bureaucracy, particularly through informal networks within the local area.
- Greater informality and user-friendliness as far as the local community is concerned.
- The ability to attract funding from sources not usually open to the statutory agencies.
- A neutral space in which different and normally conflicting bodies or individuals may choose to work together for the common good – a chance to leave the baggage outside.
- The ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

These fundamental characteristics of local partnerships may be conceived as doors, which open the way for added value being delivered to the local area. But the doors need to be unlocked and this will not happen without various keys being in place, these being the crucial determinants or aspects of partnership operation which might facilitate rural development. Thus genuine partnership-added value will only occur if the intrinsic characteristics of local partnerships are effectively unlocked by attention being paid to the determinants – such that desirable outcomes or impacts subsequently ensue. Figure 7.1 attempts to put these connections together.

But which outcomes or impacts do partnerships successfully deliver? And which determinants or factors are crucial in helping them to deliver? This section and the following one (Section 7.4) seek to answer these questions in turn.

7.3.3 The outcomes of rural development partnerships

The impact study, which involved tracing nearly 200 cause–effect chains linking a host of outputs/outcomes apparent in the operation of the 24 case study partnerships to factors or actions in some way determining them, was described at some length in Chapters 3 (regarding the method) and 6 (regarding the results).

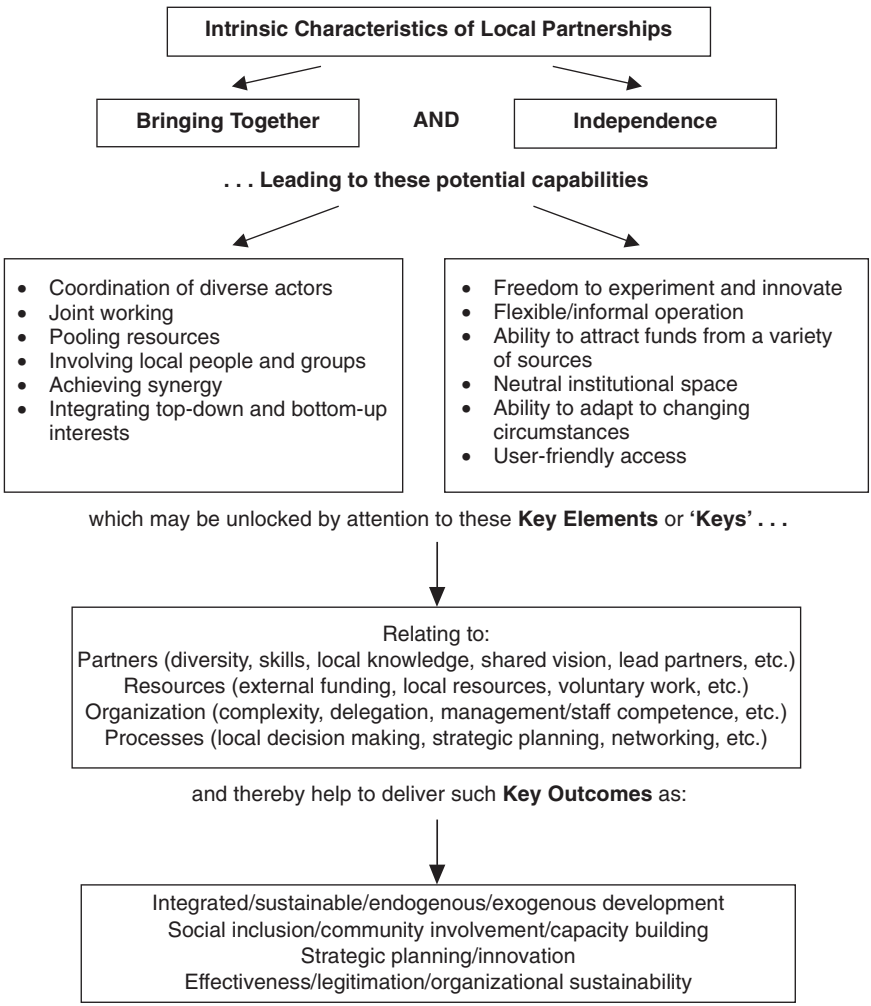


Fig. 7.1. How partnerships add value to rural development.

That analysis made possible the definition and tentative ranking of the main outcomes of the partnership approach *per se*. Those 12 outcomes were also put to our large sample of rural partnership practitioners, across eight EU countries, to see if their ranking might be similar or different.

According to the in-depth analysis of the evidence of the 24 case studies, the impact study, the most important outcomes of the partnership approach *per se* are as follows.

Outcomes strongly related to inherent partnership characteristics

- Effectiveness (the ability of the partnership to achieve its goals).
- Endogenous development (development mainly driven from within and oriented towards the local area).
- Capacity building (the improvement of the technical, social and organizational skills of people in the partnership and the area).
- Integrated development (whereby projects are synergistically linked).
- Innovation (the introduction of new behaviour and practices).
- Community involvement (whereby the local community is actively involved in the work of the partnership).

Outcomes moderately related to partnership characteristics

- Legitimation (the formal or informal acceptance of the partnership or its products by the local community).
- Organizational sustainability (the ability of the partnership to sustain itself and its work into the future).
- Sustainable development.

Outcomes not achieved or else only loosely related to partnership characteristics

- Strategic planning (deliberate shaping of the partnership's work according to a plan).
- Social inclusion (participation of marginalized groups in the decision making and benefits of the partnership).
- Exogenous development (development mainly driven from outside though oriented towards the local area).

As for the feedback survey, it produced remarkably similar results. Endogenous development received almost unanimous support as an outcome successfully achieved and strongly related to partnership operation. The next five outcomes, in terms of their successful delivery by local partnerships were: integrated development, capacity building, innovation, effectiveness and sustainable development. Rated less highly in this respect were legitimation, strategic planning and community involvement, with organizational sustainability, social inclusion and exogenous development coming lowest on the list.

Clearly, then, and most significantly, the research has shown that rural development partnerships do indeed have a significant effect upon the endogenous development of the areas they serve and that their effectiveness in this respect derives at least in some measure from intrinsic partnership characteristics and not just from the money that

they are able to disburse. It also shows that the partnerships significantly achieve the building of capacity in the local community and achieve, but to an extent that is open to some question, community involvement. That capacity building and community involvement, however, may often not embrace the socially excluded and, more generally, there is room for considerable doubt about how far the partnerships have genuinely accepted and internalized the requirements of strategic planning to set a context for the necessary opportunism that is inevitably a part of local development.

Has partnership working also had an effect upon the partnerships themselves? All the evidence, especially that of the study of practice, indicates that the answer must be 'yes'. All of the intrinsic elements of partnership discussed above – joint working, community involvement, the pooling of ideas and resources, flexibility of operation, networking within and beyond the partnership, operating in a neutral space, etc. – have served to increase the awareness, confidence, skills and determination of many or most of the people involved. In short, partnership operation builds partner and partnership capacity.

Finally, have rural partnerships had any negative effects on local development? The research team has been constantly aware, throughout the research, of the dangers of seeing the world through rose-tinted spectacles – of tacitly assuming that partnerships are a good thing and that the only research need was to establish how and how far and in what circumstances that was true. Our scepticism on that score explains why in every case study a wide range of people unconnected with the partnerships under scrutiny were also questioned – i.e. as well as partnership insiders. It explains why, in two countries at least, control groups were included in the feedback survey. It explains why in individually writing our position papers at the end of the whole research project – i.e. papers to pull together the fundamental results of the project around three key questions – one of those questions posed the possibility of negative impact.

That question was: 'In what ways and to what extent do local partnerships have negative effects on the development of the areas they serve?' It was considered, by the six research teams working independently of one another, in relation to each of the five research tasks undertaken and to each of the six national bodies of evidence (i.e. in 11 position papers in all).

The unanimous response, contained in those separately written position papers, was that no actual harm to development could be identified, only failures to achieve full potential. Thus we can point to examples of limited effectiveness, underperformance and shortcomings of one sort or another, but not to actual damage. There have certainly been problems in some areas, at some times, of the following:

- Limited legitimacy or democratic accountability.
- Over-representation in the partnership of the local elite or establishment.
- An excessive focus on project delivery and on spending the money rather than on the strategic pursuit of a coherent programme of integrated development.
- An excessive focus on the short term.
- A failure sufficiently to address social exclusion and to seek the fuller involvement of a wide cross-section of local society.
- Insufficient transparency in the partnership's operation.
- The diversion of energy into the pursuit of continuation funding.

But we found no evidence of any of these making the local situation worse than it was to start with or offsetting the benefits brought to the areas by the various partnerships. This is an important conclusion.

7.4 What Factors Have Significantly Influenced the Effectiveness of Partnerships in Having an Impact upon Rural Development?

We turn now to the research team's conclusions regarding the relative importance of the factors relating to partnership operation which really have a positive influence on local rural development. These conclusions come principally from the impact study, reported in Chapter 6, as corroborated or amended in the light of the feedback survey. Also relevant are our findings about the efficient operation of local partnerships drawn together in Section 7.2, above.

7.4.1 Evidence from the empirical studies

The impact study, involving as it did the tracing of nearly 200 cause–effect chains in the operation of the 24 case-study partnerships, revealed the following key determinants of the impact upon rural development of rural partnerships.

A very high level of influence

- The competence and commitment of partnership staff.
- The successful mobilization of local knowledge about the needs and resources of the area.
- Decision making being exerted at the local level.

A high level of influence

- The sectoral heterogeneity of the partners.
- The involvement of one or more key actors with leadership skills.
- The way that the partnership was originally initiated.
- The networking activities of the partnership.

Also influential

- The community participation achieved by the partnership.
- The independent/neutral status of the partnership.
- The diverse background and skills of the individual people representing the partnership organizations.
- The joint planning undertaken by the partnership.

It is notable that some of these key determinants of partnership impact relate to individual people (staff and partner representatives), some to the partnership organizations brought together in the partnership and some to the organization and processes of the partnership as a whole.

Reassuringly, the two other relevant pieces of work undertaken by the research team – the practice study and the feedback survey – lend a good deal of support to these conclusions. Respondents to the feedback survey, however, also stressed the importance of secure and sufficient external funding for the achievement of significant outcomes and of the continuity of partnership operation, which the impact study did not emphasize so much. Those respondents (all of them, it will be recalled, practitioners on the ground) also made an important point about the relevance of the way in which the partnerships were originally initiated. They suggested that top-down initiation might help the delivery of a programme of economic development but that bottom-up initiation tends to do more for social inclusion and for community development.

7.4.2 Conclusions on partnership impact upon development

Before proceeding to consider what measures, based on these research findings, might significantly improve the partnerships' effectiveness in delivering local development (i.e. to set out our recommendations in Section 7.5), it is necessary to draw together our key conclusions on the role of partnerships in this respect.

Referring back to Fig. 7.1, we can conclude that the intrinsic qualities of partnerships do indeed add value to the local development process. This is an important conclusion; partnerships do add value, sometimes significantly. They are able to do so particularly because they bring

together a range of local and non-local actors in a quasi-independent context. That bringing together and that independence give to partnerships some significant advantages over the single-agency alternative, whether those single agencies be sectoral divisions of the state or local authorities working alone. Those advantages relate to the partnership's ability (when compared with single agencies) to coordinate, to foster cooperation rather than conflict, to pool resources, to operate informally through local networks, to experiment and innovate, to attract other sources of funds, etc. – in short, to all of the capabilities set out in Fig. 7.1.

But these capabilities need to be unlocked; we found many instances of partnerships failing to exploit fully the partnership capabilities because other key elements were not in place.

We can now say what these keys are. They are a mixture of factors relating to the partners themselves, the resources of the partnership, the organization of the partnership and the processes of the partnership. Most notable, and in no particular order, are the following:

- Diversity and commitment – both of partner organizations and of the individual people representing them.
- A shared vision and sense of purpose, reflecting local needs and resources.
- A clear and coherent strategy, built on local knowledge and respecting the strategies of other relevant actors, to guide the partnership's work.
- Clear rules of engagement, setting out the mutual expectations and contributions of the partners.
- Strong but not overdominant leadership.
- Decision making firmly at the local level.
- Secure, flexible and sufficiently devolved funding.
- The strong involvement of local groups and individuals with local knowledge.
- Competent and committed staff, with the appropriate skills to support a local partnership and to promote local development.
- Good links/networking with other relevant agencies and the wider community.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust.

Thus we argue, on the basis of our research, that with those elements in place, each of them serving to unlock the inherent capabilities of partnerships as set out above, real progress can be made in fostering endogenous, integrated, sustainable development that makes good use of local resources – i.e. the human, social, man-made and natural capital of the area – and addresses the key needs of that area.

We now move on to set out the research team's recommendations – i.e. its practical proposals for releasing more of the potential of local partnerships.

7.5 Recommendations: What Measures Would Improve the Effectiveness of Local Partnerships in Promoting Rural Development?

Our recommendations are wholly devoted to answering the fourth of the four fundamental questions set out originally at the start of Chapter 3 and recalled in Section 7.1 above. We therefore present 34 specific recommendations arising directly from the research. Each is based firmly on the evidence – they are not just bright ideas that occurred to the research team or were suggested to us by the hundreds of people whom we consulted. Rather, they were crystallized over the final 3 months of the research by a systematic reflection on each of the key findings or conclusions of each piece of empirical analysis – and then refined in a final team meeting and by subsequent correspondence between the research team members.

Roughly equal numbers of recommendations are targeted at the sponsors of partnerships and at the partnerships and potential partnerships themselves. But the two lists are not watertight and both sets of actors could usefully consider the whole body of recommendations. (By sponsors we mean all the agencies that promote rural development partnerships in some way – the EU of course, but also a host of national, regional and local government organizations and private organizations, such as charitable trusts.)

The recommendations are not presented in an order of priority, but rather in what seems to be a broadly logical order. Those aimed at the sponsors deal with the establishment, funding and operation of the partnerships; those aimed at the partnerships themselves deal with getting started, operating the partnership and links with the local community and other organizations. All are designed to help local partnerships foster rural development, in its widest sense, more effectively, and in this respect it is important to note that such development is a long-term process. Both the sponsors and the partnerships themselves need to retain this perspective and to plan for sustainable rural development as well as the long-term sustainability of their development work. Thus most of the recommendations embody and develop this continuity and sustainability dimension – shifting the emphasis on from the mere delivery of funded projects.

7.5.1 Recommendations mainly to sponsors

Establishing local partnerships

1. The first and most straightforward recommendation is that sponsors support the local partnership approach as a tool of endogenous, com-

munity-based, capacity-building rural development. Local partnerships tend to supplement, not duplicate, the work of the local authorities, with whom they should be encouraged to have a good working relationship. We have not been able to find any truly negative consequences of partnerships upon the areas they serve.

2. As for the membership of partnerships, it is wise to ensure the following:

- Diversity in terms of the public/private/NGO mix of members, and also the professional background and skills of the individuals put forward by the partner organizations to represent them.
- That sufficient people and organizations are included who have intimate local knowledge.
- The adequate representation of commonly excluded groups such as women, young people and environmentalists.
- Periodic reflection on membership and the opening of doors so that all interested parties can become involved in some way, if not all at once.

3. Ensure that the partnership is given the time to do the necessary preparatory work before beginning to implement the development programme as such. It must set its proposed projects within a rigorously researched long-term strategy that reflects the needs of the area, incorporates wide-ranging consultation with other relevant local actors, especially the local authorities, and promotes an integrated approach. Devising a good strategy takes time and much of this work may best take place after the funding of the partnership has been agreed but before the work begins on the ground. This is also a good time to work at building the capacity of the partnership – developing the skills of the people who will manage the partnership's work and seeking to increase the range of people involved.

4. Recognize that often, but not always, the best partnerships are those that emerge from the bottom up, with local people and organizations coming together to address a common concern. Many community-based partnerships do not require much funding to do effective work. Be prepared to support such partnerships even if they do not form part of some larger partnership programme. Ensure that such bottom-up groups are aware of funding opportunities. But top-down partnerships, brokered and constructed by a local or regional authority, also work – so long as they respect, rather than ignore, local identities.

5. Be prepared to encourage the creation of new local partnerships where appropriate ones do not exist, but do not force the creation of artificial partnerships (or 'forced marriages'), i.e. partnerships with a membership or geographical configuration that is not perceived as appropriate by the local actors.

6. The geographical size and population size of the area served by the partnership can be important. The area should not be so small that it

lacks sufficient local resources for development, or so large that it lacks a sense of local identity and makes difficult the fostering of good relations with local actors. Appropriate size can be defined only in the context of local circumstances, but note that over half of the partnerships researched in the extensive survey served areas with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants.

The funding of partnerships

7. Recognize that partnerships need stable and uninterrupted funding for several years, coupled with help to become self-sustaining in the long run. Interruptions and insecurity have a negative effect on the partnership's effectiveness. Short-term funding leads to a rush to spend the money and to the devotion of much of the final year to seeking new funding. This was a strong message coming from the extensive survey and from many of the case studies.

8. Seek to reduce bureaucratic complications in the sponsor–partnership relationship, especially relating to formal project approval and the drawing of funds, subject, of course, to safeguards to avoid the misuse of funds. Basically, too much time and effort goes into liaison and negotiation with funders over quite small sums of money.

9. Offer assistance to local actors, especially, but not only, the local authorities, to ease the gradual shift to the more local funding of partnerships. Sponsors can help by using their influence to persuade other actors to increase their support. Organizational instability, linked to insecure funding, was a big concern revealed in the research. In other words, the sponsors of the partnerships need to plan their gradual withdrawal from funding, so that the partnership has the best chance of continuing its work.

The operation of partnerships

10. Without neglecting the need for accountability, respect and seek to protect the partnership's measure of political and institutional independence. Give them space to do their work and make some mistakes. As far as possible, allow decisions to be made at the partnership level rather than having them referred up to higher authority. The impact study shows that this quasi-independence encourages community involvement, endogenous development, capacity building, the readiness to innovate, etc. But it also suggests that if independence is taken too far it may reduce the partnership's legitimacy and also its effectiveness.

11. Assistance with the training of partnership members is often valuable. Sponsors are usually in a position to fund training and also exchanges of experience, bringing together key actors from the various partnerships and increasing their skills and knowledge.

12. Promote a type of evaluation of partnership performance that focuses only partly on tangible outputs but also on the operation of the partnership in its local context – e.g. its adaptability to new circumstances, its social inclusiveness and readiness to welcome more local involvement and its ability to change the attitudes of local people and to build local capacity.
13. Ensure that the partnerships are sufficiently well funded to have an adequate complement of staff in relation to the work they will do. Board members can lose motivation if they have to undertake the day-to-day work that staff normally perform.
14. Avoid top-down domination. When local or regional authorities are both significant funders and active members of a local partnership, ensure that the necessary leadership that they give is not at the expense of sidelining or discouraging those other partners that are not making a large, or any, financial commitment.
15. Recognize that partnership working needs time to mature and to deliver results. Some of the LEADER II programmes that we studied began 2 or 3 years late and their work clearly suffered by being rushed.

7.5.2 Recommendations mainly to existing and potential partnerships

Getting started

16. Consulting widely, take time to create a strategy that links effectively to other agencies, actors and programmes operating in the area. This strategy should be less a strategy for the area and more a strategy for the way the partnership will serve the area. Pay explicit attention to social inclusion in the strategy. Set your objectives and proposed projects, with agreed levels of priority, within this strategic framework. Disseminate the strategy widely and use it to enthuse and involve the local population.
17. Promote the skills, confidence and methods of working of members of the partnership board and its committees. Clarify what skills or resources each partner is able to bring to the partnership, what role they feel able to play and what the partnership as a whole expects of each partner. Write this down in clear rules of engagement. Building up the competence of the partners might usefully involve training initiatives, team-building exercises, visits to other partnerships, etc. This can usefully be linked to exercises developing a shared vision for the area and a common appreciation of the area's problems and future. (Partners must work well together, share a common vision and know their role – often some members are unsure of their role and lose interest.)
18. Seek to increase the role of the private sector within the partnership; this will mean clarifying roles and what and how such people can

best contribute. (Sometimes the representatives of the private sector get involved only for selfish reasons or else for rather indeterminate reasons that may leave them feeling frustrated and wasted. Often they feel ill at ease with the committee way of working. But their business experience gives them an important role to play.)

Operating the partnership

19. Ensure that the strategy document is actually used to guide the partnership's main decisions and choices and is not simply put in a file and forgotten. Avoid concentrating excessively on project delivery, as distinct from the strategic and focused pursuit of a coherent area-wide programme of integrated rural development. Spending money on projects is only one way of pursuing that goal. (Sometimes project appraisal and selection are undertaken with little reference to the agreed strategy.)

20. Build up the skills and professional capacity of the management and field staff. Skills in networking, community development, project appraisal, etc. are crucial and may need to be acquired by those coming from different backgrounds.

21. Consider delegating some power and responsibility to subgroups comprising a small number of partnership members and possibly some coopted people from the local community. Their tasks could include distributing small amounts of money for community projects or preparing advice on project selection for consideration by the main board. Some subgroups may be of fixed duration; others may be permanent. They can release more energy, increase the sense of local involvement and ownership and make more efficient the work of the main board.

22. Key partners and key actors, often from the local authority, have been shown to play a significant part in ensuring a partnership's success. But a balance must be struck between this and preventing some partners, or individuals, from so dominating the partnership that other partners feel marginalized and redundant. This may be best achieved through developing a climate of open self- and mutual evaluation. Leadership without domination is the goal. (Many partnerships waste the talent of some partners by allowing a few key partners to dominate. This emerged clearly in both the impact study and the practice surveys.)

23. Try to ensure that the representatives of organizations involved in the partnership represent that organization and not just themselves. This requires attention to the system of reporting back between representatives and their organizations and to the two-way flow of information more generally. This is particularly important for those people representing the elected local authorities; good linkages to and from the political arena are important.

24. Partnerships should develop continuous self-evaluation and mutual reflection as the work proceeds. An honest and effective evaluation of how the partnership is working should complement the more conventional evaluation of partnership outputs. This should prevent the partnership becoming fossilized and lead to its maturing and developing over time, taking on new roles and ways of working. This concept of growing maturity is an important one and has to be worked at. Self-evaluation and mutual reflection should also build up mutual trust and an *esprit de corps*.
25. The composition and operation of the partnership should be organized to allow for flexibility and innovation as needs and circumstances change. As the partnership matures and evolves, new responsibilities and skills may become important.
26. As far as may be consistent with respecting confidential information, try to make the operation of the partnership as transparent as possible. This will encourage greater community involvement, the legitimacy of the partnership and a sense of local ownership. In practice, this is likely to mean, for example, publishing the agendas and minutes of meetings, having open meetings and systematically going out to meet the people.

Links with the community and with other agencies

27. Develop good, constructive relationships with other development agencies and actors, both inside the area and outside the area. Networking of this kind is important.
28. Seek constantly to increase community involvement in the work of the partnership and in local development more generally. This requires investment in communication and in capacity building and also a willingness to operate the partnership in an open, inclusive and welcoming way. Operating funds for small projects, with project selection delegated to local groups is also often useful. The impact study shows that this has a significant effect on capacity building, endogenous development and the legitimization of the partnership.
29. Invest in the capacity building of leaders and potential leaders in the local community – so that other people may, in due course, be brought into positions of responsibility.

7.5.3 Recommendations for further research

This report has been replete with suggestions that more research would be useful on this or that, but here we present just five suggestions, all related to how partnerships work and how they might generate added value in rural development.

30. The role and potentially enhanced role of the private/commercial sector within local partnerships – as distinct from that of the state, local government and the voluntary sector – needs to be researched. We found that only rarely does the private commercial sector play a major role in the operation of partnerships, as distinct from its familiar role of proposing and running individual projects. Private-sector members are often confused as to why they are involved in local partnerships and what they might contribute.

31. There is a need for research on how local partnerships might more successfully involve socially excluded people, both in the shaping and delivery of their programmes and as beneficiaries of funded projects.

32. We did not study in any depth spontaneous bottom-up partnerships, which involve a range of local people coming together to discuss and seek to resolve local problems, without any expectation of external funding, at least initially. More research on their experience would be useful.

33. Our study has applied a new methodology to the identification and appraisal of the true value added by partnerships. This methodology, and others developed with the same objective, might usefully be further developed to reduce the dominance of research and evaluation tools that tend wrongly to assume that all the outputs of a partnership necessarily derive from partnership *per se*, rather than from the disbursement of project funds. Certainly it would be useful if our impact-analysis methodology were tested and refined in other case studies.

34. Our research has focused on partnerships at one point in time – albeit asking questions about their past and anticipated future. It would be useful to set in train some longitudinal research – tracing how a small sample of partnerships changes over time. This suggestion is linked to remarks made above about the need for partnerships to mature and to adapt to new circumstances.

Appendices

Appendix 1: An Abridged Version of the Extensive Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire was produced in six languages: English, German, Finnish, Swedish, Italian and Spanish (see Section 3.2 for an explanation).

Respondents were first asked to give the official name and address of the partnership to which the information related and the name and position in the partnership of the person filling in the questionnaire.

Respondents were advised that 'in this questionnaire the term partnership is used to refer to an institutionalized cooperation of several public and/or private organizations'.

Note that several questions required the respondent to use a four-point importance scale:

1 = very important
2 = important
3 = slightly important
4 = not important

I. Emergence of the partnership

Respondents were asked:

1. (a) When was the partnership formed? Year:
(b) At the beginning, for how long was the partnership intended to operate?

2. Why was the partnership initiated?

Respondents were asked to use the importance scale with regard to these eight possible reasons:

To strengthen existing cooperation networks
To involve local community
To make new links
To pool resources
To secure access to funding
To address common needs and problems
To jointly implement projects
Other (please specify)

3. What were the key influences on the emergence and development of the partnership?

Respondents were asked to rate each of the nine possible influences in relation to emergence and development. These nine possible influences were:

Key individuals
Local community
Voluntary-sector organizations
Private-sector organizations
Local government
Regional policies/programmes
National policies/programmes
European policies/programmes
Other (please specify)

II. Partners

4. Who are the partners of the partnership?

Respondents were asked to list the partners, indicate the type of organization and give the dates of the start/finish of their membership.

5. What are the main roles and contributions of the individual partners?

Respondents were asked to use the importance scale to indicate, in relation to each partner, the importance of their role/contribution with regard to nine functions:

Representation of local community
Information/expertise
Strategic planning
Implementation
Administrative support
Office equipment
Staffing
Funding
Other (please specify)

III. Objectives

6. What are the main objectives of the partnership?

Respondents were asked to create their own list and to attach any published information or official document stating the objectives.

7. What key issues/policy areas is the partnership addressing?

Respondents were asked to use the importance scale in relation to ten issues or policy areas.

Environmental conservation
Agricultural change
Economic regeneration
Social inclusion
Community involvement
Cultural heritage
Recreation/tourism
Physical regeneration
Integrated/sustainable development
Other (please specify)

8. What spatial area is the partnership relating to?

Respondents were asked to specify the area and give the approximate population size. They were asked to attach a map if available.

IV. Organization

9. What is the status of the partnership?

Is it an informal network (please specify) or a formally constituted organization (please specify)?

10. How many people are currently working for the partnership?

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of full-time and part-time staff and the number of partners, e.g. board members. For each they were asked to indicate whether they were paid for by the partnership, by individual partners or not paid at all (i.e. volunteers).

11. What is the approximate annual budget of the partnership (for the most recent year)?

c. ..... [national currency]

12. What are the main funding sources of the partnership? (please specify)

Respondents were asked to indicate, for each programme or organization, the funding amount (as % of annual budget) and the type of funding (e.g. donation, grant, fees, …).

13. How is the partnership organized in terms of meetings, boards, committees, etc.?

Respondents were asked to indicate, for each type of meeting or committee, its function, frequency and number of members.

14. What responsibilities and decisions are delegated to the employees of the partnership? (open question)

V. Operation

15. What are the main activities of the partnership?

Respondents were asked to use the importance scale in relation to nine activities.

Dissemination of information
Mobilizing the local community
Exchange/coordination between partners
Lobbying
Production of action plan
Providing funding for activities/projects
Implementation of projects
Delivery of service
Other (please specify)

16. How does the local population get involved in the partnership?

Respondents were asked to use the importance scale in relation to 12 means of involvement, namely:

Special community events
Information gathering surveys/questionnaires
Consultation exercises
Public meetings
Planning workshops
Implementation of projects/measures
Evaluations/evaluative surveys
Through locally elected political representatives
Through other key individuals
Through community groups
Other (please specify)
They do not get involved at all

17. Does the partnership have any evaluation process?

Respondents were asked to check one of four options:

Yes, internal self-evaluation
Yes, external evaluation

No evaluation
Don't know

They were also asked: if yes, please comment briefly on frequency, procedure and content.

VI. Achievements

18. What are the key outputs of the partnership to date? (please list main achievements, products, etc.; please attach published information if available) (open question)

19. Which of the objectives of the partnership (question 6) have been most successfully achieved? (please comment briefly) (open question)

20. Has the partnership brought about any other broader changes within its local area or within the partnership? (please comment briefly on any organizational, social, political, economic or environmental changes) (open question)

VII. Assessment/reflections

21. What are the main strengths and opportunities which have contributed to the success of the partnership? (please comment briefly) (open question)

22. What are the main challenges and difficulties that the partnership has faced? (please comment briefly) (open question)

23. What changes or assistance do you think are needed to improve the operation of your partnership in the future? (please comment briefly) (open question)

24. Any other comments, suggestions, wishes? (open question)

Finally, respondents were invited to attach:

- a map/outline of the area the partnership is operating in; and/or
- any other informational material (brochures, leaflets, constitution, etc.) to depict and characterize your partnership.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 2: List of the 330 Partnerships Responding in the Extensive Survey

Note: the acronym LAG or GAL denotes a LEADER Local Action Group.

Finland

1 Varsinais-Suomen Jokivarsikumppanit Ry
2 Seinänaapurien Kehittämisyhdistys Ry
3 Pohjoisimman Lapin LEADER-Yhdistys
4 Meän Taijot Tuottamhaan Ry
5 Keski-Hämeen LEADER II
6 Kainuun Naisyrittäjyys LEADER Ry
7 Oulujärvi LEADER Ry
8 NHS-LEADER II Ry
9 Vaala-Karjalan LEADER Ry
10 Joensuun Seudun LEADER-Yhdistys
11 Koillis-Savon LEADER Ry
12 Savon Amazon Osuuskunta
13 Rajapusu LEADER Ry
14 Lakeuden LEADER Ry
15 Rieska-LEADER II Ry
16 Svenska Österbottens LEADER Programme
17 Etelä-Karjalan Kärki-LEADER Ry
18 Pohjois-Satakunnan LEADER II
19 Lounas-Suomen Itsenäiset Maaseutuyrittäjät, Lsim Ry
20 Itä-Uudenmaan LEADER Ry
21 Länsi-Saimaan Seudun Kehittämisyhdistys Ry
22 Monet Polut Ry
23 Osuuskunta POMO-Harava
24 Koillisverkko Ry
25 Oulujoki-Alueen Kehitysyhdistys Ry
26 Ylä-Savon Veturi
27 Pirityiset Ry
28 Sisä-Savon POMO Ry
29 Jämsän Seudun Vesuri-Ryhmä Ry
30 Promoottori Ry
31 Karhuseutu Ry
32 Ruoho Ry
33 Varsin Hyvä Ry
34 Maaseudun Kehittämisyhdistys Sampo Ry
35 Kehittämisyhdistys Kymenlaakson POMO Ry
36 POMOSEITSIKKO Ry

37 POMOVÄST Rf
38 Maaseudun Kehittämisyhdistys Ravakka Ry
39 Kantri Ry
40 Pyhäjärviseudun Kehittämisyhdistys Ry
41 Startti 900
42 Seinänaapurien Kumppanuusyhteisö
43 Paikallinen Kumppanuus Kajaani
44 Lohjanseudun Kumppanuusprojekti
45 Kotka-Haminan Seudun Kumppanuushanke
46 Itä-Lapin Kumppanuusprojekti
47 Isku – Iisalmen Seudun Kumppanuus
48 Maaseudun Kehitys Nelos-POMO Ry
49 Kemin Paikallisen Kumppanuuden Kehittämishanke
50 Saarijärven Seudun Kylät Ry
51 I Samma Båt Rf
52 Kaustisen Seutukunnan Kumppanuushanke
53 Work Up – Kontio
54 Viitaseudun Kumppanuus
55 Sipoon Kumppanuusyhdistys Ry
56 Rovaseudun Kumppanuusprojekti
57 Lapuan Kumppanuushanke
58 Imatran Seudun Kumppanuusprojekti
59 Ähtärin Kumppanuus-Osuuskunta
60 Tyytti-Projekti
61 Pieksämäen Seudun Kumppanuushanke
62 Inarin Paikallisen Kumppanuuden Kehittämishanke
63 Haapajärvi Ja Työllistäjäkumppanit
64 Joensuun Kumppanuushanke
65 Enon Paikallisen Kumppanuuden Kehittämishanke

Germany

1 LPV Östliches Harzvorland
2 LEV Höchsten-Dornacher Ried
3 LPV Vöf Kelheim
4 Plenum
5 AEP Puderbach
6 Umweltberatung Altenburg
7 LA 21 Dillingen
8 Förderverein Biosphäre Schaalsee
9 Förderverein Zeuss
10 Pro Regio
11 Igis Iffgau/Steigerwald
12 Kronach Creativ

13 Bürgerforum Saarburger Land
14 LA 21 Schwandorf
15 LA 21 Ostholstein
16 LA 21 Rhein-Hunsrück
17 LA 21 Schwabach
18 LAG Nordsaarland
19 LAG Grosspösna
20 LAG Schiebener Land
21 LAG Nordwestmecklenburg
22 LAG Jura 2000
23 LAG Hochschwarzwald
24 LAG Saale-Unstrut-Trias
25 LAG Anhalt-Zerbst
26 LAG Schmalkalden-Meininge
27 LAG Hildburghausen/Sonneberg
28 LAG Wartburgkreis
29 LAG Hohenlohe
30 LAG Trier-Saarburg
31 LAG Vogelsberg
32 LAG Höxter
33 LAG Nordharz
34 LAG Uelzen
35 LAG Demmin
36 LAG Ostvorpommern
37 LAG Rottal-Inn
38 LAG Zeulenroda
39 LAG Burgwald
40 LAG Leer
41 Zweckverband Knüllgebiet
42 Modellprojekt Konstanz
43 Standortmarketing Fulda
44 Aove
45 Naturpark Obere Donau
46 Pro Regio Oberschwaben
47 LPV Wendland-Altmark
48 Nachbarschaftsausschuss Region Boizenburg
49 LAG Saalfeld-Rudolstadt
50 Verein Für Regionalentwicklung Lk Kassel

Ireland

1 Western Rural Development Company
2 Galway Rural Development Company
3 East Cork Area Development

4 South West Mayo Development Company
5 Ballyhoura Development
6 Arigna Catchment Area Community Company
7 Roscommon Partnership Company
8 Longford County Enterprise Board
9 County Monaghan Partnership
10 County Wexford Partnership
11 County Leitrim Partnership
12 Louth County Enterprise Board
13 Longford Community Resources
14 Kilkenny County Enterprise Board
15 Laois County Enterprise Board
16 Mid South Roscommon Rural Development Company
17 Cavan Partnership
18 South Kerry Development Partnership
19 West Limerick Resources

Italy

1 GAL Marsica
2 GAL Cosvel
3 GAL A.L.L.BA.
4 GAL Le Macine
5 GAL Valle del Crocchio
6 GAL Consorzio Sviluppo Alto Crotonese
7 GAL Alto Jonio Cosentino 2
8 GAL Alta Locride
9 GAL Ga.La.Ti.Ca.
10 GAL Pollino Sviluppo
11 GAL Valle del Crati
12 GAL VATE
13 GAL Partenio
14 Patto Territoriale Agro Nocerino Sarnese
15 Patto Territoriale Il Miglio D'oro SCPA
16 GAL Alto Casertano
17 GAL Altra Romagna
18 GAL Colli Tuscolani
19 GAL Reatino
20 GAL Antola & Penna LEADER
21 GAL Alto Oltre Po
22 GAL Valle Camonica
23 GAL Azione Ossola
24 GAL Valli del Viso
25 GAL Valli Gesso-Vermenagna – Pesio LEADER

26 OC Isola Salento
27 GAL Meridaunia
28 GAL Capo S. Maria Di Leuca
29 GAL Baronie
30 GAL Sulcis
31 Ottana Sviluppo SCPA – Contratto D'area
32 GAL Sviluppo Valle Dell'himera
33 GAL Asi Calatino Sud Simeto
34 GAL Sviluppo Lunigiana
35 GAL Ambiente E Sviluppo Alto Mugello-Val di Sieve
36 GAL Eugubino-Gualdese-Perugino
37 Patto Territoriale Appennino Centrale
38 GAL Prealpi e Dolomiti Bellunesi E Feltrine
39 GAL Cargar Montagna
40 OC Occhialeria Bellunese

Luxemburg

1 Sivour
2 LAG Clervaux-Vianden
3 LAG Redange-Wiltz
4 Naturpark Obersauer
5 Cooperations ASBL
6 Islek Ohne Grenzen

Spain

1 AAMM Behemendi
2 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Integral Sierra de Montanchez y Tamuja (ADISMONTA)
3 Asociacion para la Promocion y El Desarrollo Rural de las Villuercas (APRODERVI)
4 Grupo de Accion Comarcal Serrania-Rincon de Ademuz
5 Corporacion de Promocion y Desarrollo del Pas
6 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Sostenible del 'Valle de Alcudia y Sierra Madrona'
7 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Endogeno de Almazan y Otros Municipios (ADEMA)
8 Centro para El Desarrollo de la Comarca Natural Oscos-Eo (CEDER OSCOS-EO)
9 Grup D'accio LEADER Salines-Bassegoda SL
10 'Aderco' Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural de la Comarca de Olivenza
11 Alto Palancia-Alto Mijares

12 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Integral del Valle de Ambroz (DIVA)
13 Fundacion para El Desarrollo Comarcal de Bergantiños
14 Fundacion para El Desarrollo Comarcal de Terra Cha
15 Centro para El Desarrollo de Sobrarbe y Ribagorza
16 AAMM Deba Garaia
17 Grup Serra de Tramuntana, LEADER II
18 Grupo de Accion Local Mendikoi SL
19 Asociacion Comarcal Don Quijote de la Mancha
20 Asociacion para El Desarrollo de Aliste, Tabara y Alba (ADATA)
21 Asociacion para El Desarrollo de la Comarca de Almaden 'Monte Sur'
22 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Socioeconomico de la Loma y las Villas (ADLAS)
23 Asociacion para El Desarrollo del Mezquin y Matarraña
24 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Local de la Comarca del Sur 'Comarsur Guadalajara'
25 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural Integrado de los Municipios de la Vega del Segura
26 Asociacion para El Desarrollo de la Montaña Palentina/Agencia de Desarrollo
27 Del Alto Carrión y de la Comarca Palentina (ACADE)
28 Promocion y Desarrollo Serrano (PRODESE)
29 Asociacion para El Desarrollo del Litoral de la Janda
30 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural de la Isla de Lanzarote (ADER-LAN)
31 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural de la Comarca Nororiental de Malaga (ADR-NORORMA)
32 Centro para El Desarrollo del Valle Ese-Entrecabos
33 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural Integral de la Costa Occidental De Huelva
34 Centro para El Desarrollo del Maestrazgo
35 Asociacion Intermunicipal para El Desarrollo Local de La Comarca de Santa Maria la Real de Nieva
36 Bergueda Iniciatives Societat de Desenvolupament, SL
37 Grup LEADER II – Pla De Mallorca
38 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Rural En Los Ayuntamientos de Ourense, Coles y A Peroxa (DROUCOPE)
39 Centro de Iniciativas de Desarrollo de la Comarca de Conso-Frieiras
40 Iniciativas LEADER Comarca de los Velez, SA
41 AAMM Debemen
42 Asociacion Grupo Local de DR del Parque Natural del Complejo Dunas de Corrubedo y Lagunas de Carre
43 Asociacion Salmantina de Agricultura de Montaña (ASAM) y Asociacio Ambasierras
44 Asociacion para El Desarrollo de la Sierra Y Mancha Conquense (ADESIMAN)

45 Asociacion para El Desarrollo Integral del Bajo Martin
46 AAMM Urremendi
47 Estados del Duque

Sweden

1 Företagens Hus
2 Nätverket Enen
3 Nätverket För Kooperativt Och Socialt Företagande
4 LEADER Storsjöbygden
5 3:E Sektorn
6 Socialpsykiatriskt Kunskapscentrum I Västerbotten
7 Referensgruppen För Anhörigstöd
8 Ekriket, Karlskrona Landsbygd
9 Agenda 21, Svenljunga
10 Projektledargruppen
11 LEADER Skärgårdslaget I Väst
12 LEADER Norra Bohuslän
13 LEADER Smålandsgruppen Fgh
14 Landsbygdsutveckling I Härjedalen
15 Samrådsgruppen
16 Referensgruppen För Anhörigstöd*
17 Referensgruppen För Anhörigstöd*
18 Bolmen 2000
19 Fegensamverkan
20 Globala Hudiksvall & Nordanstig
21 LEADER Stad & Land – Hand I Hand
22 LEADER Mitt I Landet
23 Utvecklingsrådet
24 Bygdeutveckling – Norra Bohuslän
25 Europeiskt Ungdomscenter
26 Landsbygdsrådgivning
27 Castle Link Networks
28 Projekt Landsbygdsutveckling
29 Referensgruppen För Anhörigstöd*
30 LEADER II Dalarna
31 Mål 5b I Skärgården
32 Dellenstugan
33 Öriket Karlskrona Skärgård
34 Hälsingevux
35 Projekt Kultur Och Information
36 Näringslivsutveckling
37 Genomförandgruppen För Landsbygdsprogrammet I Västernorrland
38 Industrihistorisk Mötesplats

39 LEADER Värmland
40 Kooperativ Utveckling I Jönköpins Län
41 Regionala Partnerskapet
42 Interregiprojektet
43 Landsbygdsutveckling I Västra Gästrikland
44 Emilkraften
45 Intresseföreningen Hagfors – Munkfors Regionsutveckling
46 Landsbygdsturism I Östra Norrbotten – Adapt Anticipation
47 Tass-Projektets Svenska Del
48 Skånes Lokala Utvecklingsgrupper (Slug)
49 Landsbygdsrådet
50 Referensgruppen För Anhörigstöd*
51 Småföretagarutvecklare På Landsbygden I Alingsås, Vårgårda Och Herrljunga Losek (Lokalutveckling Och Social Ekonomi)

* These four partnerships involve the provision of 'community care' in four separate localities.

UK

1 Pennine RDP
2 Bridport Town Council
3 Watchet Regeneration Partnership
4 West Tyrone Rural 2000
5 North Yorks RDP
6 Teme Valley LEADER Programme
7 Somerset RDP
8 Ross & Cromarty LEADER Programme
9 Vale Royal Agenda 21 Group
10 Arnside/Silverdale AONB
11 North Yorks Moors Moorland Programme
12 Great Torrington & District Community Development Trust
13 Rural Down LEADER Partnership
14 Western Isles, Skye & Lochlash LEADER Programme
15 Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Rural Development Programme
16 Chilterns AONB Conference
17 Cumbria Fells & Yorks Dales LEADER Programme
18 Devizes Development Partnership
19 Broads Fenland Restoration
20 Peak Business Support
21 North Antrim Local Action Group LEADER Programme
22 Doncaster/Stainforth Rural Challenge
23 Hampshire Rural Disadvantage
24 N. Ireland Canal Corridor LEADER Programme
25 Suffolk Coasts & Heaths

26 Norfolk 5b Landscape Project
27 Signpost Rural Challenge, Cornwall
28 Snowdonia National Park
29 Uttlesford Local Agenda 21 Group
30 Cumbria Biodiversity
31 South Shropshire Rural Challenge
32 Bakewell Project
33 Coleraine LEADER Programme
34 Groundbase, Wigtown LEADER Programme
35 Norfolk Leader Programme
36 Grampians Woodland
37 Isle of Wight RDP
38 Scottish Borders RDP
39 Selsey Regeneration
40 Hassocks Regeneration, Sussex
41 Mole Valley Agenda 21 Group
42 Bodmin Moor Project
43 Exmoor Tourism Group
44 Redcar & Cleveland RDP
45 South Pembrokeshire Action With Rural Communities
46 Rural Transport Coordinator Project, Herts
47 Alford & Wainfleet Rural Challenge Partnership
48 Fermanagh Local Action Group Leader Programme
49 Sussex Downs Conservation Board
50 Dorset RDP
51 Northumberland RDP
52 Menter Powys
53 Exmoor National Park Authority
54 Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Appendix 3: FACT Sheet Used in the Impact Study

This pro forma is in the form used by the researchers, except that the blank space provided for responses has been reduced (see Section 3.5 for an explanation).

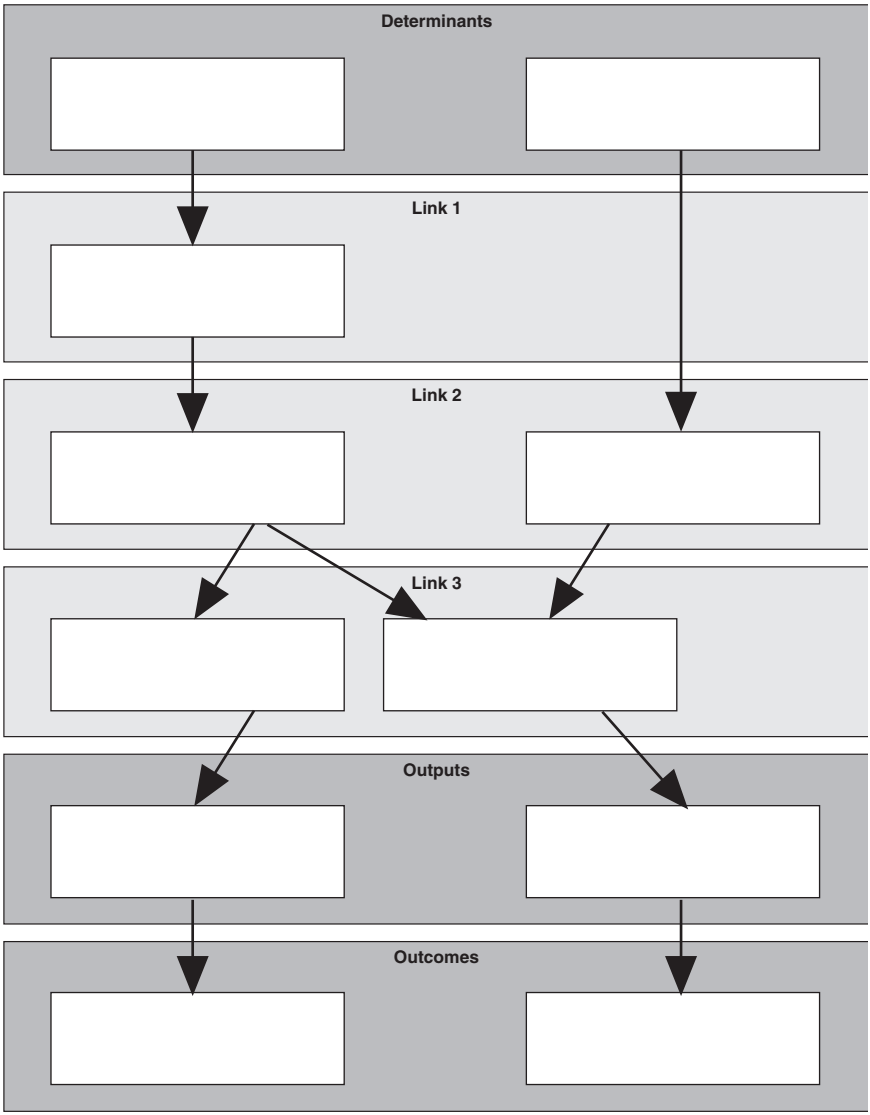
FACT Sheet (Focused Assessment through Cause–Effect Tracing)
Cause–Effect chain: (insert code)
(Name of the chain)

1. General Data

Country:	
Partnership:	
Legal status:	
Main source of funding (*c.* … %):	
Number of partners:	

2. Sources:
(Please list all data sources used for this particular cause–effect chain)

Primary sources:	participant observation (meetings) and interviews; for interviews include name and function of interviewee
Secondary data sources:	(author, year, title, place, type (e.g. unpublished manuscript))



3. Flowchart of the Cause–Effect Chain
   (Please summarize the chain by graphically mapping the major stages of the chain on to the blank flowchart diagram, using text boxes and arrows like in the example. Use more intermediate links if necessary.)

4. Summary of the Impact Chain
(Please describe the impact chain by way of presenting the facts that the chain is built on – using quotes from the interviews, secondary data, etc.)

5. Testing the Impact Chain

5.1 Negative Rival Evidence and Rival Explanations:
(Please indicate any information or explanation that your interviewees or you have that contradict, qualify or weaken the plausibility of the chain)

5.2 Degree of Confidence/Reliability:
Considering (i) the amount and reliability of data you have and (ii) the degree of their convergence or contradiction (Section 5.1 above), please indicate how confident you are in the factuality/correctness of the chain.

Rating (1–3)	Short Explanation

6. Qualifying the Impact Chain

6.1 Degree of Context-relatedness:
(Please assess the degree of context-relatedness of the chain)

	tick <u>one</u> option
chain cannot be generalized at all since it is highly dependent on very rare local contexts or processes	
chain could be generalized to national level since it relates mainly to contexts or processes often or typically found in this country	
chain could be generalized internationally since it rests on contexts or processes of a more universal nature	

Please explain briefly:

6.2 Degree of Impact Chain/Partnership Approach Effect:
(please indicate the impact chain's effect on the output/outcome in relation to all other influences on this output or outcome)

chain had small effect	medium effect	high effect	on these outputs/outcomes (taken from flowchart):

Please explain briefly:

7. Measuring the Impacts

7.1 Description/Measurement of the Outputs: (Please describe the outputs which are identified in the impact chain in both quantitative and qualitative terms)

Outputs (taken from flowchart)	Qualitative description (indicate source)	Quantitative information (indicate source)

7.2 Description/Measurement of the Outcomes: (Please describe the outcomes which are identified in the impact chain in both quantitative and qualitative terms)

Outcomes (taken from flowchart)		

8 Qualifying the Impacts

8.1 Affected Spatial Area:
(Please describe what area was mainly affected by the chain [e.g. only one particular part of the partnership area, only a few villages, only the main town, the entire area …])

Outcome (taken from flowchart)	Mainly affected area (please describe/explain)

8.2 Affected Population:
(Please describe which population groups were mainly affected by the chain [e.g. only one particular group, only farmers, only old people, or entire population …])

Outcome (taken from flow chart)	Mainly affected population group (please describe/explain)

8.3 Affected Context/Partnership Element:
(Please indicate which contexts or which partnership elements were mainly affected by the outcome. If the chain had more than one outcome use the additional columns.)

Had important impact …	check off (only important impacts)				(Remarks)
… on contexts of partnership:					
Built environment					
Natural environment					
Economic context					
Social context					
Sociocultural context					
Administrative/institutional context					
Political context					
… on partnership itself:					
Functioning and organization of the partnership					
Members of the partnership					

Social: Demography, social disparities, social cohesion, etc.
Sociocultural: Norms, values, identity, etc.
Administrative/institutional: Organization and functioning of public administrations, cooperation with and among local organizations, emergence/disintegration of local organizations, etc.

9 Validating/Checking the Findings

9.1 'Validators':
(Please list all persons [at least one person involved in the chain and one 'outsider'] who have checked and validated the chain afterwards. Please include name and function.)

9.2 Outcome of the Validation:
(Please describe what came out of the validation, e.g. did the validators confirm the chain, did they make qualifications, did they attach more/less importance to the chain …)

Appendix 4: Definitions of Effects and Determinants

Note: see Section 3.5 for an explanation of the role of these terms in the analysis of the impact of the partnerships. See Sections 6.2 and 6.3 regarding their use.

I. Effects

Integrated development	partnership's projects synergistically interlinking within and across sectors
Sustainable development	partnership contributing to the long-term sustenance of its social, cultural, economic and natural environment
Endogenous development	development oriented towards and driven from within the partnership area
Exogenous development	development oriented towards and driven from outside the partnership area
Social inclusion	inclusion of marginalized groups in social and economic processes induced by the partnership
Innovation	introduction of novel methods, procedures and products
Effectiveness	partnership's capacity to achieve its goals and objectives
Organizational sustainability	partnership's ability to sustain itself as well as its products and services on its own in the long run
Legitimation	partnership accepted by local community as part of itself; partnership having official political mandate from local community
Strategic planning	analysing the external environment and shaping the structure and operations of the partnership according to a long-term plan
Community involvement/ participation	direct and indirect involvement of partnership area residents in partnership's decision making and benefits
Capacity building	improved technical, organizational and management skills of partnership's staff, members and local residents

II. Determinants

Partners

Number of partners	only organizations/individuals who are official members of the partnership (e.g. registered members or listed in charter)
Sectoral heterogeneity of partners	origin of the partner organizations in terms of societal sector, organizational culture, etc.
Diverse professional backgrounds and skills of members	individual members' professional training, position, experience and technical and social skills
Intimate local knowledge	knowledge of local area's potentials, culture, resource persons, networks, etc.
Shared problems and needs	problems and needs shared by most/all partners and resulting in awareness for collective action
Shared vision/perceived common benefits	a common image of a future improved situation and the resulting flow of benefits
Dominant partner/key actor	existence of a highly dynamic, innovative, resourceful, powerful actor
Partners' innovativeness	partners' capability and willingness to experiment with new approaches, take tactical risks, etc.

Inputs/resources

Resource dependency	partnership only able to sustain its operations with continued resource input from outside sources, e.g. funding programme
Voluntary work	amount of unpaid labour used in the partnership
Size of overall partnership budget	annual financial and other resource outlays
Continuity of funding	timeliness and long-term reliability of flow of funds
Bureaucratic funding procedures	inflexible regulations and procedures constraining timely payments
Local resource input	finances and other resources from local organizations and population, e.g. for co-financing projects

Organization

Legal status	partnership's status as registered legal entity (formal) or only network (informal)
Complexity of organization	number of levels of hierarchy and distribution of authority and responsibility
Working groups with delegated power	importance of authorized working groups/committees within the partnership
Equal decision-making powers of partners	equal voting power of partners; no dominance of one partner
Management competence of leadership	leadership's (e.g. board members') ability to effectively plan, organize, staff and control the partnership
Competence and commitment of staff	technical and social skills and motivation of partnership staff
Clarity of partnership's policies, roles and regulations	partnership's leadership, staff and members having common understanding of goals, policies, procedures, rules of engagement
Power delegation by funders	funders' willingness to delegate/let go power and authority to partnership
Procedural flexibility	procedures that allow flexible/adaptive operation of the partnership
Legitimation	partnership accepted by local community as part of itself; partnership having official political mandate from local community
Size of partnership area	size of geographical area covered by the partnership
Independent/neutral institutional space	partnership serves as an independent, neutral institution or forum which brings together individuals or organizations that otherwise have conflicting agendas

Processes

Initiation of the partnership	impulse for starting the partnership mainly from the local community (bottom-up) or from regional/national agencies/programmes (top-down)
Community mobilization and participation	reaching out, informing the local community; involving the community in the partnership's decision making and benefits

Joint planning	partners deciding jointly and sharing responsibility
Decision making at local level	decision making at the partnership level as opposed to at regional/national level
Strategic planning	analysing the external environment and shaping the structure and operations of the partnership according to a long-term plan
Networking	establishing working relationships with local and non-local organizations
Capacity building	improvement of technical, organizational and management skills of partnership's staff, members and local residents

Appendix 5: The European Questionnaire for the Feedback Survey

See Section 3.6 for an explanation of this tool and to whom it was sent. It was produced in six languages. See Section 6.6 regarding its use.

1. Impacts of the partnership approach

Please tick the appropriate boxes in column number 1 from +2 (strong positive impact) to –2 (strong negative impact).

	1					2	
The partnership approach leads to …	+2	+1	0	–1	–2		
Integrated development (Projects are synergistically linked within and across sectors)							
Sustainable development (Long-term sustenance of the social, sociocultural, economic and natural environment)							
Endogenous development (Development mainly driven from and oriented towards partnership area)							
Exogenous development (Development mainly driven from and oriented towards outside)							
Social inclusion (Participation of marginalized groups in decision making and economic benefits of the partnership)							
Innovation (Introduction of novel processes, behaviour and products)							
Effectiveness (Ability of the partnership to accomplish its goals)							
Organizational sustainability (Ability of the partnership to sustain itself, its products and services on its own)							

Legitimation (Informal or official acceptance of the partnership and its projects by the local population)							
Strategic planning (Deliberate analysis and shaping the partnership's structure and projects according to a plan)							
Community participation (Active role/involvement of the local community in decision making of the partnership)							
Capacity building (Improvement of technical, social and organizational skills of members and staff of the partnership)							

2. Most important influencing factors

For each of the impacts listed above please select up to two factors from the following list and write their number(s) into column number 2 of the above table. (Please note that these can be applied as positive or negative influences. When the influence is negative, please indicate it with an 'N' after the number)

1. Top-down initiation (initiated by outside/non-local organizations)
2. Bottom-up initiation (initiated by local population/organizations)
3. Size of partnership area (geographical size of area that partnership decided to operate in)
4. Heterogeneous composition (wide range of partners from many sectors of society)
5. Key individuals/organizations (who initiated and have been shaping the partnership)
6. Shared understanding of problems (partners having common view of problems and issues)
7. Local knowledge (about local problems, culture, networks, etc.)
8. Local resources (from local population/organizations)
9. External funding (e.g. from EU, national/regional government, etc.)
10. Flexible operation (non-bureaucratic operation of the partnership)

11. Joint planning	(partners deciding jointly on major issues)
12. Strategic planning	(organization and projects developed according to a plan)
13. Decision making at local level	(instead of at regional/national level)
14. Community participation	(participation of local community in decision making)
15. Neutral forum	(open/not partial towards any particular interests)
16. Networking	(new relationships with local/non-local organizations)

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