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## **Evaluating the governance of a European program by identifying the types of overages based on the example of LEADER programs in France, Spain and Hungary: a problematic role for local institutional arrangements?**

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**Abstract:** The evaluation of the governance of the implementation of the European LEADER approach was carried out in six case studies in France, Spain and Hungary using an analytical grid cross-referencing two complementary theoretical frameworks: the analysis of overages (i.e. the identification of the diverse effects of public policy) and learning phenomena. It was shown that the overages (especially institutional) of the LEADER approach were greater when the governance and management learning subsystems converged. Conversely, the overages remain more limited when the two systems diverge, which is often the case when the program is used as a tool by certain political or economic actors. Overall, these results underline some of the limitations of bottom-up and integrated programs such as LEADER, which are characterized by a relative non-linearity in their implementation.

**Keywords :** public policy evaluation, territorial policy, overages, learning, governance, LEADER approach

### **Highlights :**

Governance learning effects play a major role in the implementation of European territorial policies.

Efficiency can be maximized when governance and management learning subsystems converge.

Learning is weak if territorial policy is exploited by only some of the local actors.

Cooperative actions are very sensitive to the learning effects.

European public policies implementation could be non-linear in case of monopolization of information by some actors.

### **Vitae :**

Pascal Chevalier is a professor at the Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3. After a Ph.D and accreditation to direct research (HDR) at the University Paul Valéry, he was the director of the Department of Geography and Spatial Planning. His work focuses on the geography of the implementation of local public action in rural areas in Europe, particularly the LEADER approach.

Dominique Vollet is a regional economist. After a Ph.D and accreditation to direct research (HDR) at the University of Burgundy, he was director of the Research Unit Territoires (in Clermont-Ferrand) and is now Director of Research and Deputy Director of the Institut Agrocampus Ouest. His work focuses on the evaluation of territorial policies and regional economic impact models.

### **Introduction**

Evaluating the governance of a European sustainable local development program raises the question of identifying its own effects. In the particular case of the LEADER approach<sup>1</sup>, the results are somewhat mitigated due to the highly variable nature of the effectiveness of local coordination (Dax et al., 2016; Navaro et al., 2015), which raises the question of non-linearity in the implementation of public policies. One of the analysis grids retained by authors, who have analyzed territorial governance more broadly, is that of the overages proposed by Rey-Valette et al. (2014).

Authors who have analyzed the LEADER method in various national contexts tend to show that the economic, social and institutional effects (which Rey-Valette includes under the term overage<sup>2</sup>) depend heavily on local arrangements: Austria and Ireland (Dax et al., 2016), Spain

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<sup>1</sup> LEADER is a European program that aims to support pilot projects in rural areas. LEADER is part of EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). It provides territories with a framework conducive to the emergence of first-rate collective projects through a bottom-up method. In this program, actors from different spheres and from various fields become involved in territories with multiple resources and for various sectors of activity.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we hypothesize that the economic, social, and institutional effects must not be defined as overages (a overage being the additional effect of the LEADER method), but as overages corresponding to the added value of the local development process through institutional arrangements. We refer here to Aagaard, Thuessen Annette and Christian, Nielsen Niels, (2014), A Territorial Perspective On EU's Leader Approach In

(Navarro et al., 2015), France (Chevalier, 2014). We define "institutional arrangements" here as "the ways in which actors use the rules or, more precisely, the ways in which transactions are organized within the framework of these rules" (Ménard, 2003)<sup>3</sup>. However, one of the variables most strongly affecting these national and regional contexts is the diversity of the historical dimension (i.e. the extent and age of the relationships between actors, particularly public and private in the context of a program such as LEADER) and of learning phenomena (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). The analyses in terms of integrated learning systems proposed by Nakhta et al. (2010) (developed more for the analysis of governance at work in protected areas) make it possible to distinguish two sub-systems. The first is the management learning sub-system implemented on a small spatial scale and valid in the short term, and the second is the governance learning sub-system implemented on a large spatial scale et in the long term<sup>4</sup>.

For all of these reasons, we propose to test the following hypothesis: The overages of sustainable local development policies (such as the LEADER program) would be higher if a convergence of the two learning sub-systems (i.e. in the case of simultaneous positive and identical actions) is possible through an adapted territorial governance. Conversely, in the event of a divergence of the learning systems (e.g. in the case of the emergence of local arrangements that are not conducive to this type of integrated and cross-cutting policy), the overages would be much lower or nil. The non-linearity in the implementation of sustainable development policies will thus be highlighted, particularly with regard to the interest of associating public and private actors (who are de facto associated in the implementation of the policy in the LAGs, see box 1) (Ménard, 2011).

### **Box 1: The LEADER program**

Denmark: The Added Value Of Community-Led Local Development Of Rural And Coastal Areas In A Multi-Level Governance Settings, *European Countryside*, **6**, issue 4, p. 307-326.

<sup>3</sup> The commission presents the logic of LEADER as follows: "the main concept behind the Leader approach is that, given the diversity of European rural areas, development strategies are more effective and efficient if decided and implemented at local level by local actors, accompanied by clear and transparent procedures, the support of the relevant public administrations and the necessary technical assistance for the transfer of good practice." (CEC, 2006, p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> The management learning subsystem is implemented individually by local actors, populations, associations, or institutions. The governance subsystem relies on the mobilization of human resources, on the capacity to regulate a territory within the framework of a partnership system with multiple actors (ministries, European Union). It ensures that political, social, and economic priorities are based on a broad social consensus and that the foundations of the LEADER approach have been respected since its creation in 1991 (see box 1).

The LEADER local development model - which originated in the old EU Member States where it was experimented - has evolved considerably in the definition of its objectives and in its regulatory mechanisms (Pollermann et al., 2020). Decided in 1991, the LEADER 2007-2013 program is now part of the fourth axis of the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy. Its main mission is precisely to experiment with new approaches and methods on crucial issues that concern all general policies. Generally speaking, and bearing in mind that each State is free to decide how to implement the LEADER program on its territory (inclusion of European policy in national rural development policies, definition, planning and selection of areas for project territories, definition of priorities for local development strategies, procedures for selecting and financing projects, etc.), the objective of the program is ultimately to provide added value in relation to national and Community policies for supporting territories. This program must be structured with these same policies so that the effects of "synergy" and "complementarity" can be fully achieved.

The article is structured in four main parts: first there will be a presentation of the selection of the theoretical frameworks, followed by an explanation of the methods used. The main types of estimated overages in three different national contexts (France, Spain, Hungary) will then be presented. In a fourth and last part, the key variables affecting local learning systems will be explained.

### **1- The choice of two complementary theoretical frameworks: analysis of overages and learning systems**

To test our hypothesis, we have chosen two complementary theoretical frameworks: the analysis of overages to characterize and evaluate territorial governance and the analysis of learning phenomena.

The evaluation of territorial governance should go beyond the identification of effects to evaluate and estimate the types of overages. There are generally three types of overages identified: economic, social, and institutional. By analogy with companies and to their possibility of creating overages, it is possible to define a production function of a LEADER program as the creation of specific services, such as the elaboration of a medium- and long-term territorial project, the strengthening of participatory democracy, or the capacity building of local actors. Overages can be internal to the supporting organization, external to the participants, or external to the population (Strzelecka, 2015).

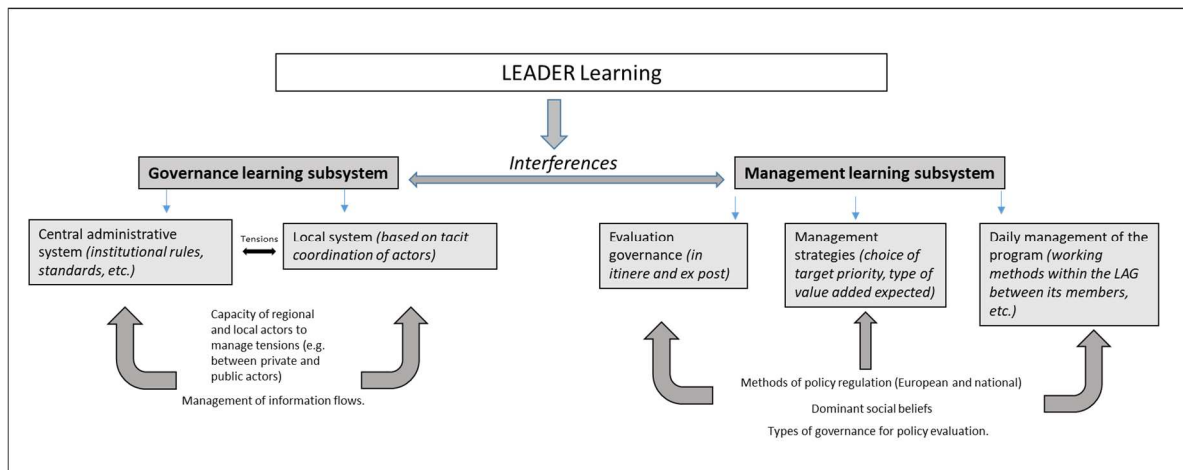
The economic overages can be evaluated either in terms of employment (sometimes improved productivity) of the structures (public or private) benefiting from public support, or in terms of avoided costs (reduction of conflicts, reduction of transaction costs). The social overages

can take two main forms: development of learning within the supporting organization, and the strengthening of social cohesion (the improvement of basic services being a structuring element of social cohesion). The institutional overages can also take four main forms: specific forms of social capital, reinforcement of democratic capacity, transparency of the program's governance processes (internal, referral by LAG members or for citizens) (Marquadt et al., 2012), and increased confidence in the institution that supports public policy (in this case the LAG).

To formalize and understand the learning phenomena at work in the LEADER program, we suggest distinguishing two learning “subsystems” (figure 1) : the governance learning subsystem and the management learning subsystem. Among the key explanatory variables of the integrated learning system, Nakhata and Breen (2010) have identified:

- Multi-level governance: Two distinct “rural systems” have been identified by High and Nemes (2007): the central administrative system characterized in terms of formal institutions and the local system often based on tacit coordination.
- Tensions between opposing interests: the ability of regional and local actors to manage tensions (e.g. between private and public actors) depends largely on their experience in this area (via local development policies),
- Information flow management.

**Figure 1: The LEADER program's learning systems**



The learning phenomena within the management learning subsystem are noteworthy for: evaluation governance (in itinere and ex post), management strategies (choice of targeted priority, expected type of added value<sup>5</sup>) and daily program management (working arrangements within the LAG, between the president and the director: coordination is often based on personal and cultural values) (1).

As far as the governance learning subsystem is concerned, three corresponding strategic levels have been identified: the methods of policy regulation (European and national), the dominant social beliefs and theories of public action, and the types of governance for policy evaluation. The interferences and relationships between the two subsystems (mainly at the local level for the management learning subsystem, and at the regional and national levels for the governance learning subsystem) are strong. We will only mention a few examples. Program management, especially the working modalities within the LAGs, are closely linked to the dominant value systems at a national level (vision mainly focused on the agricultural dimensions of development or more open to integrated rural development; tradition of centralized decision-making of the country, or more regionalized management methods). The process at work during the evaluations carried out at national and regional level has important implications for the evaluation choices within the LAGs. Therefore, in a region with a long

<sup>5</sup> This added value resides in particular in the integration of actors and economic development projects into specific local governance methods, the stimulation of cooperation and the strengthening of the territory's coordination and engineering capacities with a view to transversality and efficiency. More broadly, the LEADER approach is intended to give rise to multiple experiments and innovative solutions for the rural environment, both in terms of method and in terms of actions.

experience of evaluation and relying on recognized expertise in the matter, the LAGs will be highly proactive in deploying proactive and ambitious approaches to evaluation.

Overall, the synergies between the two theoretical frameworks are potentially strong; while the analysis of the overages makes it possible to qualify and evaluate the quality of territorial governance, the antagonisms and complementarities are evaluated through better knowledge of the two learning sub-systems.

## **2- An analytical grid of territorial governance and learning phenomena in three European Union countries**

In order to analyze the overages generated by the implementation of the LEADER program in the territories, we relied on extensive fieldwork and monitoring of six LAGs, in Auvergne (Sologne Bocage Bourbonnais and Livradois-Forez), in Languedoc-Roussillon (Gévaudan-Lozère and Cœur d'Hérault), in the province of Valencia in Spain (LAG Region of Valencia), and in southern Hungary (Zengo-Duna). At the scale of these LAGs, and by means of questionnaires and interviews with certain members of the board of directors (in particular the presidents and managers), our work consisted first of all in understanding the way in which local actors (civil, political, and entrepreneurial society) have taken charge of the new public action mechanisms. These mechanisms were then analyzed according to the learning capacity deployed by the actors and the interpretation they have been able to make of them. Finally, the effects of governance on the territories were evaluated through an analysis of the overages generated (social, economic, and institutional).

In order to provide a rigorous basis for the comparative study, a common methodology to evaluate territorial governance was designed. It is based on the grid set up by Rey-Valette and Mathé (2012), which proposes a classification of the effects resulting from governance mechanisms. The results of this grid are then discussed according to the types of networks of local actors who have taken charge of the LEADER system at three key moments in the life of LEADER processes, paying particular attention to management and strategic leadership:

- At the time the project was created,
- As part of the LAG's operations,



- At the time of its evaluation.

### **Box 2: Methodological framework**

The methodology implemented in all of the LAGs is based on the work of Rey-Valette and Mathé (2012). Using surveys conducted in each LAG - including closed and open-ended questions for members of the LAG boards of directors (the number and nature of which are presented in Appendix 1) - we established indicators of economic, social, and institutional overages (see Table 1).

The 121 board members were interviewed.

These surveys, from which the indicators were extracted, were structured into three thematic parts:

1) participation in the LAG project; 2) the presentation of funded projects; 3) integration into local social networks.

With regard to the first theme, "participation in the LAG project", the choice of open-ended questions was necessary in order to favor, following the model of the semi-structured interview, the autobiographical account of the LAG's creation, the reasons for participation, the perception of strategies, and the relationship to local society. The interview consists of seven thematic sub-categories, which are designed to determine the respondent's social capital. Thus, the questions deal with "relationship to local society", "trust indicators", "local identification", "perception of local governance", "perception of the way in which the local society is managed", "knowledge of the institutional arrangements of the LEADER program", and finally, "the relationship to political life".

The second theme concerns the nature and types of projects supported and financed by the LAG: identification of the project initiators, number of funded projects, nature of the jobs created, links with the territory's development strategy.

Finally, the questions relating to "integration into local social networks" are intended to highlight the structure of interaction among LAG members. In the course of the survey, the respondent indicates, from a numbered list of members of his or her LAG, the people he or she knows and does not know personally, the most and least active, those with whom collaboration is desired or, on the contrary, unwanted.

The interviews, presented above, made it possible to establish the indicator grid below.

**Table 1**

	Nature of averages	<b>Indicators from the interviews</b>
<b>Economic averages</b>	<b>General economic and employment effects</b>	Number of projects funded Number of jobs created Status of project initiators
<b>Social averages</b>	<b>Learning and cognitive effect</b>	Inter-knowledge between network members (socio-structural analysis) Diversity in the status of network members Relations between the actors according to their status (public, private)
	<b>Solidarity and social cohesion</b>	Nature and diversity of the populations involved in the local bodies of the LAGs and in the management of the projects.
<b>Institutional averages</b>	<b>Social capital</b>	Capacity for managerial expertise: institutional and administrative networks (between local actors, between local and external actors)

Although the evaluation of territorial governance does not necessarily make use of a list of indicators, it is possible to systematize the collection of information to evaluate the main effects of participatory or bottom-up programs such as the LEADER program.

For this, it is necessary to distinguish between the types of beneficiaries (public and private actors).

The effects of learning phenomena can concern three main dimensions:

- the dissemination of information and of social learning: these programs must be able to disseminate information to the target audiences, such as citizens, with the aim of achieving genuine social learning. The program must also aim to support the monitoring of its implementation.
- recognition and legitimacy of the actors: the public and private actors who drive the program are normally in a position to derive increased legitimacy from it, which in turn is a source of trust. This trust then allows for better recognition of common problems of all the stakeholders (regardless of their knowledge or forms of proximity with the actors in charge of managing the LEADER program): their action will then be facilitated in order to enhance the value of local resources.
- the strengthening of proximities: greater trust also translates into strengthened organizational and institutional proximities, by bringing public and private actors closer together and, ultimately, into real networking (which is reflected in the local action system).

These three effects are often embedded in each other. The reinforcement of proximity is very much linked to the quality of the dissemination of information: the proximity between public and private actors of the LAG will be all the stronger if the Leader program is perceived as transparent, able to disseminate reliable information, and legitimized by local actors.

### **3 The main types of overages generated by the LEADER programs in the more or less long term**

#### *3.1 A social overage activated in a differentiated way depending on the country and territory*

##### *3.1.1 Cooperative actions are very revealing of the links between social overages and learning phenomena.*

The social overages of the LEADER program are particularly noteworthy in terms of cooperative actions. Among the types of action that a LEADER program (whose budget model is submitted by the LAG and validated in advance by the national or regional administrations responsible for managing European funds) must **enable** are cooperative actions (i.e. exchange programs for LAG partners on selected themes in order to show, if possible, successful examples of rural development and to disseminate "good practices")

between LAGs in the same country (national cooperation) or in different countries (transnational cooperation). The cross-cutting evaluation of the cooperative actions of the LEADER program in Auvergne showed that out of the 17 cooperative actions, 10 were carried out by associations. 90% of those approached the LAGs on their own initiative. This is for example the case of the Stevenson paths (a hiking trail thought to have been used by the writer Stevenson and which crosses a southern part of the French mountains) and the network of Casadian sites (all the sites located throughout Europe which in the Middle Ages depended on the former Chaise-Dieu abbey in the Haute-Loire department of France and which were federated in an associative framework to stimulate inter-knowledge and international exchanges) which aim to develop the networking of cultural heritage.

In the LAG Region of Valencia, led by the association of an agricultural syndicate, the situation is different: the cooperative actions mainly concerned companies (19 out of 22 actions that were initiated). Most of them had an interest in cooperating with the LAG, particularly within the framework of agro-tourism projects. 15 of the 19 entrepreneurs were also members of the agricultural syndicate that manages the territory. This Spanish case highlights the risk of clientelism. Generally speaking, the networks of political and economic interests are sometimes very strong in this region. They find new legitimacy at local level through the LEADER program, which limits the effects of the program to a few professional players. In this case, this underutilization of the potential for transnational cooperation present in the LEADER approach is in line with the conclusions of other authors (Pylkkänen et al., 2020).

More broadly, these impacts are more or less long term, sometimes "institutionalizing" cooperation in structures that have become permanent. Thus, in Gévaudan-Lozère, by joining forces with the association "des monts de la Margeride in 2014", the elected representatives of the LAG, under the auspices of the Departmental Council, have created a mixed syndicate for the promotion of local fauna and flora, which since 2019 has been the initiator of a Regional Nature Park project. It is the same with the agricultural syndicate of the country of Valencia, which, by establishing relationships with the elected officials of its territory, formalized in February 2021 a partnership with the University and three engineering schools in agronomy in the creation of a competitiveness cluster. The longevity of these collaborations is therefore very difficult to anticipate or predict from the initial characteristics of the LAG. As a result, the implementation of LEADER programs has a non-linear aspect.

### *3.1.2 A highly differentiated activation of social capital according to the importance of the networks of “dignitaries” involved*

The influences of dignitaries are mobilized in very different ways in the LAGs. Two opposing poles seem to emerge, revealing variable balances between bonding social capital (strengthening of local, close and homogeneous identifying links) and bridging social capital (development of links between different and external individuals) identified by Robert Putnam. (Thiébaud, 2003). A balance between these two forms of capital is indeed necessary in a LEADER approach (Labianca et al., 2020).

In the first case, the structures involved in LEADER see the program as an opportunity for development, promoting a new integrated development approach which complements the action of the supporting structure. These are typically the LAGs of Livradois, Sologne and Cœur d'Hérault. The coherence of public action can be analyzed as the attempt by the LAGs to foster the emergence of innovative projects in the "LEADER spirit", which bring "added value" and are linked to the social capital of the area. The case of Sologne's LAG is particularly illustrative of this. The entire procedure for writing the convention was the result of concerted work between actors concerned about respecting fair rules of transparency. The president of the LAG had been offered his position by the SMAD team. He is a young elected representative of the area who has a political commitment to European values. The work of writing the conventions was carried out without the presence of the current president of the LAG, and the territorial analysis which was used to draw up the targeted priorities of the LAGs was the result of an overall development plan resulting from the SCOT drawn up between all the actors in the area. In this case, the public or private members of the LAG were all integrated into the local development approach, as well as all the technicians of the group of municipalities, by the director and the president of the “Pays” (local development initiatives regrouping several municipalities) or Region. The president of the LAG was involved in the same way as all of these elected counterparts. Under these conditions, the LAG's approach results in a relative balance in the mobilization of social capital inside and outside the territory, i.e. a balance between bonding and bridging, which has all the characteristics that will enable it to last beyond the timeframe of the program.

In the second case, the LEADER program is only a developmental component included in the development strategy of the organized territory. This is particularly the case in the LAGs of

Velay and Vichy, where there is no strong differentiation between "Pays" and "LAG LEADER", LEADER sometimes even being confused with "Pays" in order to make it operational. The active members, and in particular the political decision-makers (the "technotables") have influence over the LEADER program. The personal involvement of these key officials of the LEADER program is generally geared towards making the LEADER program an integral part of the "Pays" development policy, using LEADER grants to support the area's projects. No effort is made to differentiate the LEADER approach from the Pays approach. There are also "strong personalities" in these LAGs, elected officials with significant experience. They have several "functional" and elective mandates, sometimes in the agricultural and French departmental government sectors, and have also put together the comprehensive LEADER dossier for the Pays with the aim of releasing LEADER credits for the territories of the *departement* of origin, drawing legitimacy from their mastery of LEADER technicalities, but also from their relational skills with the administration. The link with the outside world (or bridging) is clearly privileged to the detriment of internal cohesion.

Overall, the activated social overages is of very different levels in both cases: rather high and favorable to the development of learning phenomena in the first case (in particular by promoting the renewal of elected officials) (Keohane, 2010.); rather low in the second case, where learning is limited to the small group of a minority of "dignitaries". While in the first case, a wide range of LAG members and actors (associations, company managers, elected officials) are involved in both the design of the action plan and the evaluation (often with a participatory dimension), in the second case, only a small group of LAG members is involved in the action plan and the evaluation (which can become a very formal exercise).

### *3.2 A significant institutional overage*

#### *3.2.1 A limited yet visible capacity for democracy in cooperative actions*

As in the case of the social overages, the ability to share what is at stake with a large number of citizens at the local level is mainly the result of cooperative actions. **The transversal evaluation of the cooperation actions of the LEADER program in Auvergne showed that more than 60% of the actions in all the LAGs of the study involve the general public.** One example is a project carried out by the Langeac group of municipalities in the Lafayette LAG: the introduction of local products in the collective catering sector involved organizing the farmers supplying the canteens, changing the practices of the collective catering agents, and involving children and parents. A systematic evaluation of the degree of involvement was even carried

out. "Active" involvement means engaging the public directly in the cooperative action and in interaction with foreign partners (i.e. by getting involved in the design and implementation of the action). The public will be qualified as "passive" if it is simply present in the cooperative action but without playing a role in the design or implementation. The mode of participation is clearly differentiated according to the partners: the 17 actions involving professional actors involved their active participation. This is also the case for the 14 actions involving a young public.

### *3.2.2 What communication strategies to optimize the institutional overages?*

A certain "monopolization" of information by a few key institutional communication vectors is at work in the strategy of each LAG (much more pronounced in the second case described above), making it possible to convey information by targeting it to "source" intermediaries that are well established in the territories and able to attract potential project leaders. Concerned about wider dissemination and less dependent on certain previously identified players, some LAGs (particularly those in the first category presented above) implement a specific communication strategy towards potential project promoters. This mainly involves making members of the programming committee "ambassadors" of the LEADER program in the territory, whether private or public. To this end, frequent interventions are organized at the beginning of the programming period in order to make the stakes of the LEADER program clearly understood. Others have even gone out to meet potential LEADER project leaders because of the particularly advanced targeting during the drafting of the agreement and the development of the LAG's intended priorities. (e.g. LEADER newsletters sent directly to these categories to inform them about the LEADER program).

The creation of "monopolies" of LEADER information in the territories can represent a pitfall in the formation of real program overages in the sense that the actors managing this "monopoly" are strongly tempted to take over the objectives of the LEADER program for their own benefit, and above all to make LEADER information always available to the same category of population, which can restrict the variety of project initiators. This risk is further increased when the LAGs have key players such as "dignitaries", who can truly "phagocytize" the program's integrated development logic. The possible creation of "monopolies" of LEADER information by certain actors is very random and difficult to foresee or anticipate, thus the implementation of hybrid forms of governance represented by the LAGs can be non-linear. Lastly, a choice between specific audiences in the LAG's targeted priorities can lead to

a shift from "client-based" management of the LEADER program to a few key players in territorial development. This risk is all the greater since the evaluation of the communication actions has shown that communication is limited to a few institutional actors already known to the members of the LAG (see above). However, it should be remembered that in 2006 the European Commission published a White Paper on European communication policy, proposing to increase the visibility of European programs, the responsibility for this work falling *"above all on national public authorities. Government, at national, regional and local level, is responsible for consulting and informing citizens about public policies - including European policies and their impact on their daily lives (...)"*.

On the whole, and especially in the French LAGs, the potential overages of the LEADER program seem to have suffered from a certain monopolization of information by a category of actors involved in its implementation and evaluation in a number of cases. In fact, a majority of private and public actors were active during the diagnostic phase, but were not involved in the development of the action plan and the rest of the process. The phenomenon is all the more pronounced in that the French national authorities have remained very much in the background with regard to communication measures.

### *3.3 Limited economic overages*

The economic effects observed in the six LAGs studied are relatively limited in the short term and can be identified mainly in terms of jobs, regardless of the country. Depending on the LAGs, expressed as a percentage of total employment, the number of jobs created or supported concerns 0.2 to 2% of total employment. This remains very marginal and proves that LEADER has little impact on net job creation. However, LEADER has a significant potential to support and even perpetuate existing employment. This is especially the case in Hungary and Spain. In these two countries, these are essentially jobs in the private sector. In the Hungarian Gal, 69% of the jobs perpetuated are in the craft industry and small-scale industry. In Spain, 59% of jobs are in the agricultural sector. This situation is mainly explained by the fact that in these two countries, the legislation limits the financing of public or parapublic jobs with LEADER funds. At the same time, the financing of jobs in associations is also very limited. In Hungary, for example, associations have the same status as institutions. They cannot, in fact, use LEADER funds to justify one or more jobs.



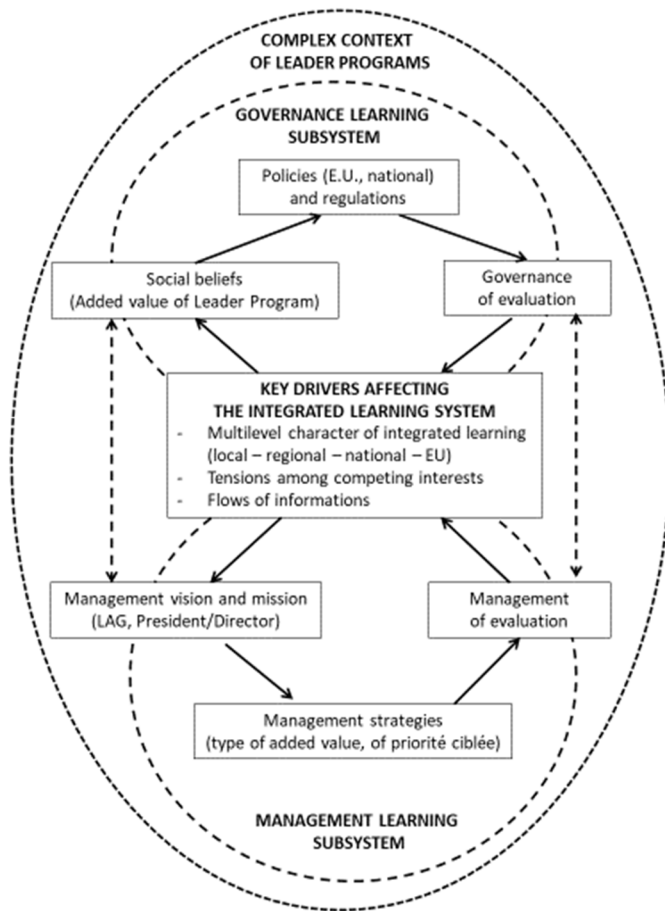
The situation is more variable in France depending on the targeted priorities chosen by the LAG. The mobilization of LEADER funds to finance public or associative jobs is much more developed. The Sologne Bocage Bourbonnais LAG, which focused on hospitality services, supported as many private as public jobs (in activities related to childcare, for example), while the Livradois-Forez LAG, which is more industrial, was more favorable to private employment. In Gévaudan-Lozère, the situation is even more marked where nearly 40% of the jobs supported (or financed thanks to LEADER) belong to the public sphere (or para-public via associations). This situation is not exceptional and shows the extent to which LEADER very often replaces the finances of local authorities.

#### 4. *Which key drivers affect the integrated learning systems in the LEADER program?*

To evaluate the extent to which the LEADER program's contributions depend on local arrangements, we mobilized the analyses in terms of integrated learning systems proposed by Nakhta et al. (2010) (Figure 2). These distinguish between the two subsystems presented in Chapter 1 (Figure 1):

- the management learning subsystem:
- the governance learning subsystem:

**Figure 2: A framework for exploring an integrated learning system for the governance and management of LEADER programs**



Three key variables affect the operation of the integrated learning system:

- 1) The multi-level nature of integrated learning: Learning phenomena occur in very different ways:
  - at the local level: some territories have old LEADER practices while others are new to the system,
  - at the regional level: for the 2007-2013 programming period, each regional echelon (“DRAAF” or regional council for agriculture and forests in France, Ministries of Agriculture in Hungary and Spain) had a certain latitude for the selection and convention phases with the territories.
  - at the national level: despite the instructions given at the European level, national differences of interpretation have been significant (on the type of LAG support structure, on links with local administrations, etc.).
- 2) Tensions between conflicting interests: some LAG presidents see the LEADER program as a real opportunity to develop a bottom-up program with an integrated

development perspective. For others, it is one funding opportunity among others, sometimes serving their own local strategy.

3) The management of the flow of information: it can be more or less open to the economic sphere and more broadly to local society depending on the local conceptions and conditions of the implementation of the program.

The analysis of the case studies clearly shows two categories of situations according to local institutional arrangements.

In the first case, the local institutional arrangements ensure that the two learning subsystems (governance and management) are well-aligned: the vision of local management (that of the LAG president and director) is shared at the local level and is reflected in the establishment of a program monitoring and evaluation system enabling them to guide the program strategically at the local level. This system is then in a position to contribute to- and benefit from- the evaluation procedures set up at regional and national levels. The local strategic vision concerning the added value of the program and the overages is then fully consistent with what is expected at the European and national levels. This is typically the case in France and Spain.

In the second case, local institutional arrangements mean that one or more "technotables" take over the system either for their own benefit (to increase their local legitimacy) or for the benefit of an institution (Chamber of Agriculture for example). This phenomenon is particularly visible in the formation of the LAG, which may be more or less in line with the targeted priority. Local strategic management then develops a leaner monitoring and evaluation system, often only internally, in order to make it more difficult to interact with the evaluation processes set up at regional or national levels. The notion of the added value of the program as proposed by the European Union is quite often not widely shared, as is very often the case in Hungary (Maurel, 2008).

Overall, the political choices made by the state actor have an impact on the conditions of reception of the model by local actors. In Hungary, the strong instrumentalization of the LEADER program limits the room for maneuver of local communities, while in France and in Spain, the greater degree of freedom granted to local actors to form partnerships has an impact on their mode of operation. Made up of a large number of members, with no links of inter-knowledge, the Hungarian LAGs are structured around a handful of local elected

representatives and managers. The lack of social capital circulating in the network weakens the cohesion of the partnership and the possibilities for convergence of local arrangements. Generally smaller in size, the French and Spanish LAGs are characterized by denser inter-knowledge links ensuring a better integration of the group. However, nowhere has local governance been radically transformed. Through their position within the network and their role, local elected officials or entrepreneurs - knowing that they are well-positioned in the territorial project - exercise real leadership. They are very often the only ones able to mobilize the energy of the other actors, the skills of the actors acting as intermediaries for the administrative services, as well as the co-financing that is essential for the project implementation. They are convinced that they are serving the interests of their local community, but do they not serve their own first?

### ***Conclusion***

The overages of sustainable local development policies (such as the LEADER program) is indeed higher when there is a convergence of the two learning subsystems. Institutional arrangements work in the same direction whether between the two subsystems (management learning and governance learning subsystems) or between geographical levels (national and local). The management of the flow of information is then more open, which increases the institutional overages of the program.

On the other hand, if the institutional arrangements diverge significantly between the learning subsystems, the overages are smaller (often because of the presence of networks of dignitaries at a local level), thus blocking possible arrangements with the national and European levels.

The "best performing" local governances seem to be those that have succeeded in setting up a strong "guidance/shared decision-making" function between actors and local authorities. In the "best performing" LAGs, these new modes of shared decision-making and self-regulation between actors will tend to become more refined over time by becoming institutionalized as a way of working together, with the emergence of new standards of behavior and cooperation. In the project territories, this "shared decision-making" function is underpinned by the *leadership* of a small core of "proactive" players, often grouped together in the "LAG Board of Directors" or within another formal entity created on an *ad-hoc* basis to embody the LAG's inter-community guidance body.

The socio-economic actors who are representative of the territory can be very diverse: consular chambers, associations, agricultural syndicates, etc. Monographic analyses show that the involvement of these socio-economic representatives of the territory is not always achieved strictly through the LAG Board of Directors imposed by European regulations. Indeed, our work shows that the most "effective" territorial governances fulfil a function of reflection/concertation often divided into major federative themes (employment, equipment/living environment, town planning, tourism, etc.). This function is based on the capacity of the actors of the territory to generate a great wealth of relevant ideas, proposals and development projects, and on the capacity of local leaders to take these ideas, proposals and projects into account in their process of strategic reflection on the territory. This capacity is based in particular on the profound transformation of the decision-making culture of elected officials, but also on a rationalization of the reflections traditionally carried out by actors of civil society. This requires a permanent adjustment and the creation of participative, open reflections, connected to the political power.

These results relating to the analysis of learning systems confirm the limitations of "hybrid governance forms" that combine public and private actors in the LAGs. These limitations largely explain the non-linear nature of the implementation of this type of public policy (Cf. the results observed for cooperation and communication in 3.1.1 and 3.2.2). The association of private partners in the decision to allocate funds and the LAG's strategy in all its dimensions makes implementation more dependent on the interplay of local actors, more difficult to anticipate *ex ante*, and therefore ultimately makes implementation less linear. The examples of communication and cooperation developed in this article are very revealing from this point of view. Even if European regulations make the presence of communication and cooperative actions compulsory, their implementation can vary greatly in each LAG, which can be an advantage (better appropriation and sustainability of **permitted** the actions, which is very pronounced for cooperative actions) or a disadvantage (great difficulty in getting out of local games of influence that are not conducive to the dissemination of good practices). Moreover, from a more theoretical point of view, the combination of analyses in terms of overages and learning sub-systems makes it possible to better understand the multi-level nature of the effects linked to the structuring between the micro and macro levels. While overages analysis identifies the nature of overages (institutional, social), their respective interplay is precisely broken down at all geographical levels, while integrating the decisive learning effects in the implementation of a policy.

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**Appendix 1: Statutes of Board members surveyed**

LAG	Institutional representatives	Associations Representatives	Business community Representatives
Gévaudan Lozère	8	4	4
Cœur-d 'Hérault	12	8	6
Valencia	6	4	9
Zengo-Duna	18	6	4
Sologne Bocage Bourbonnais	7	3	4
Livradois Forez	11	4	3