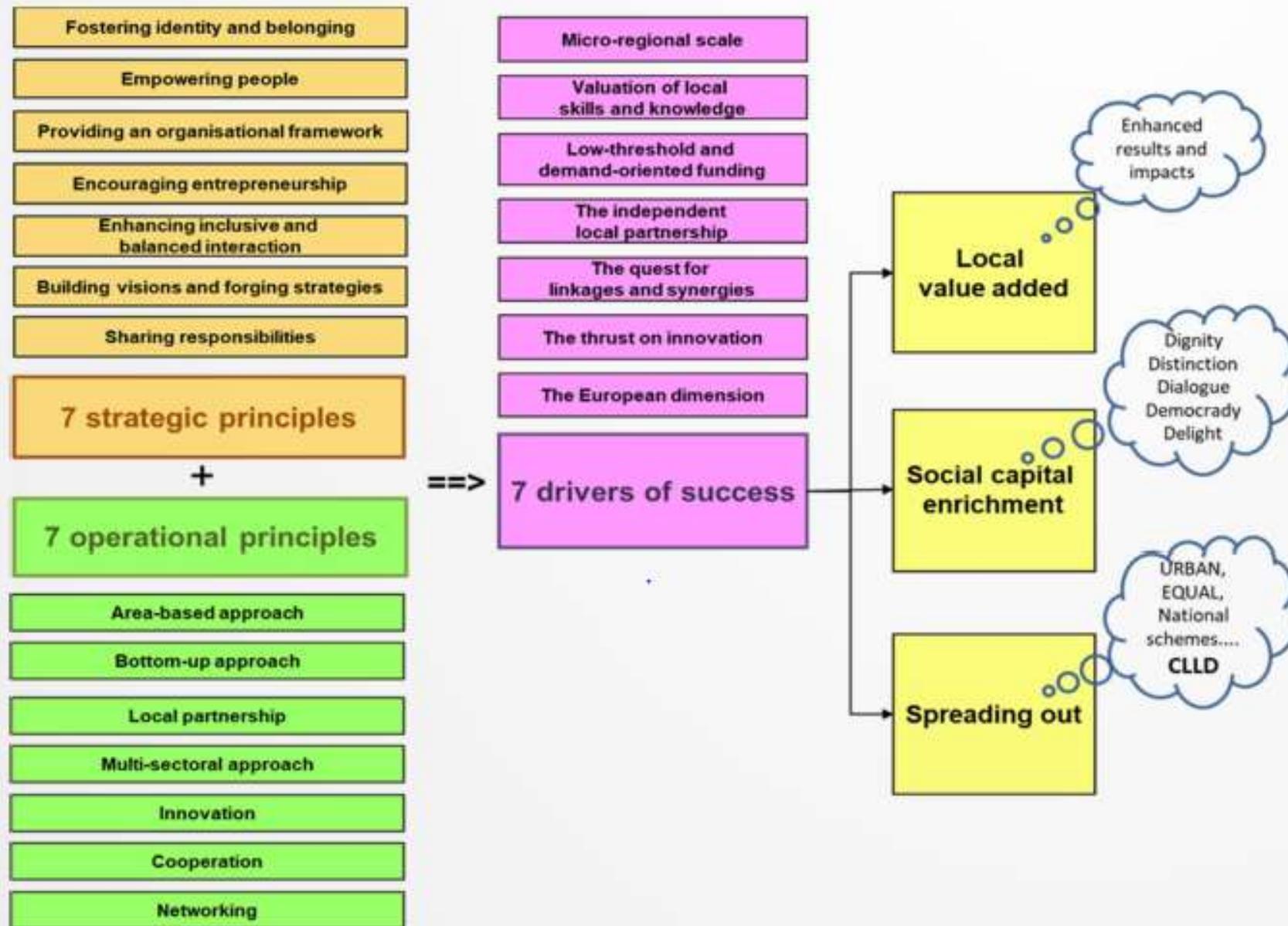
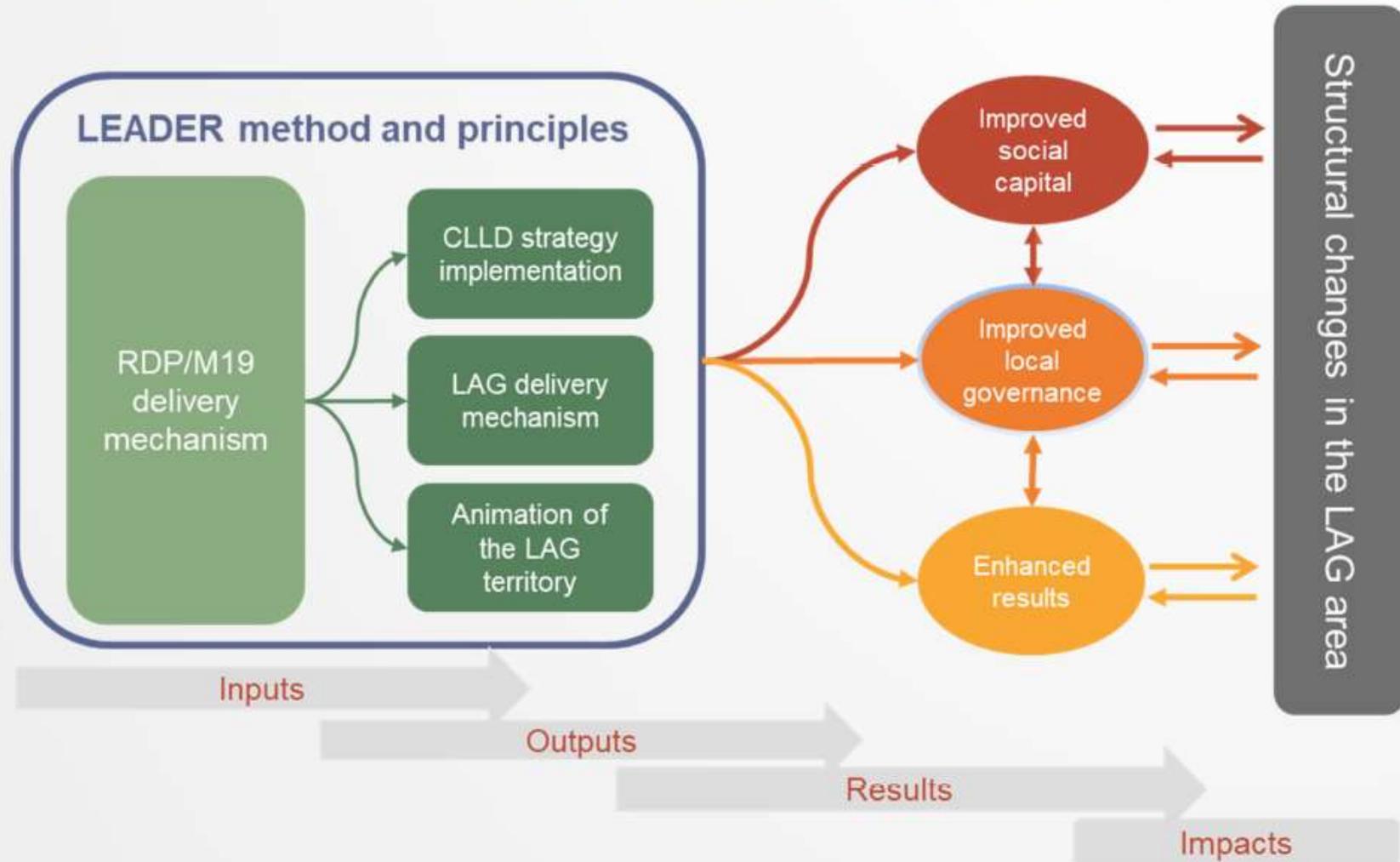


Fig.1: The 'lessons from 15 years of LEADER' (2007) from hindsight

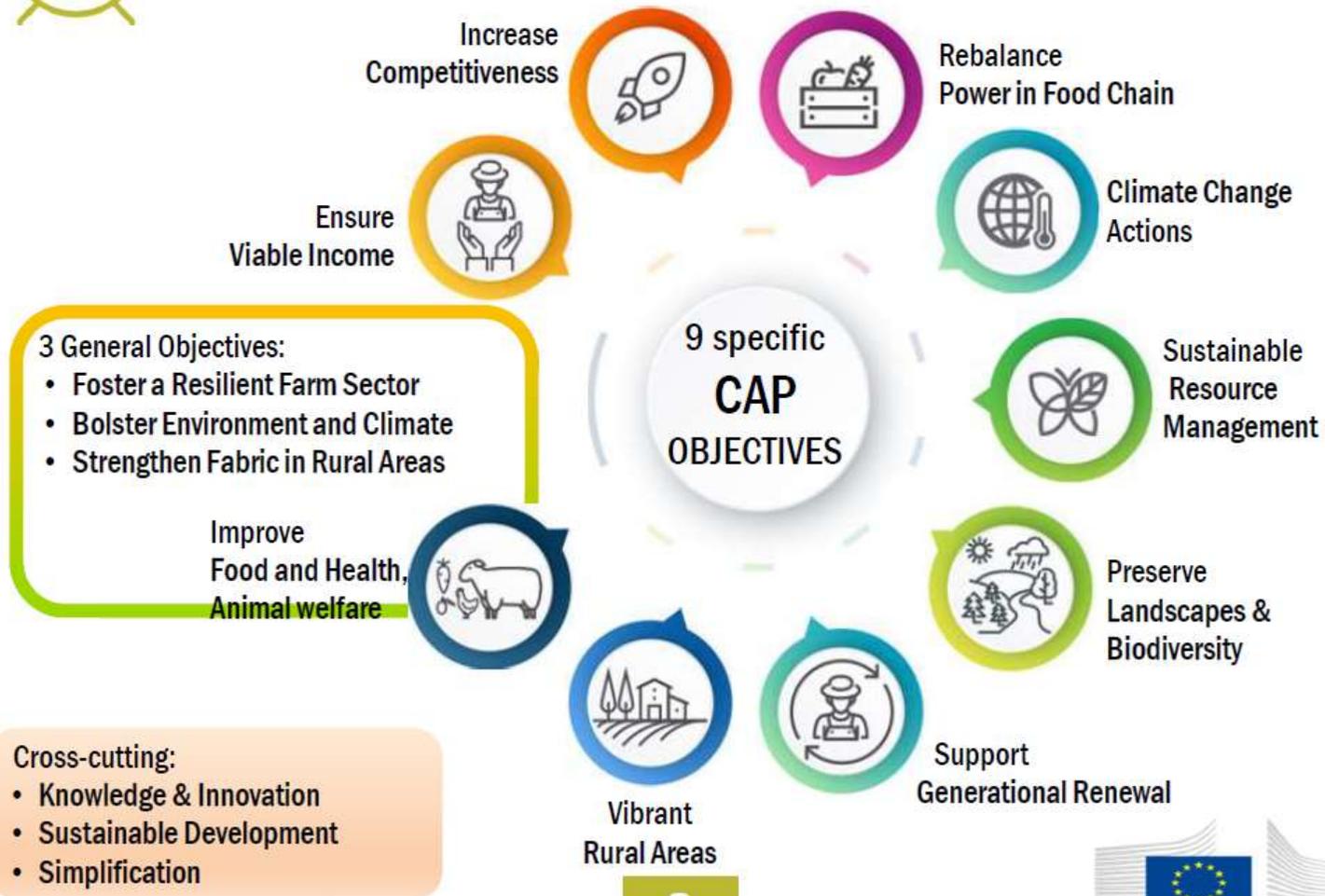


# ..... cLLD added value



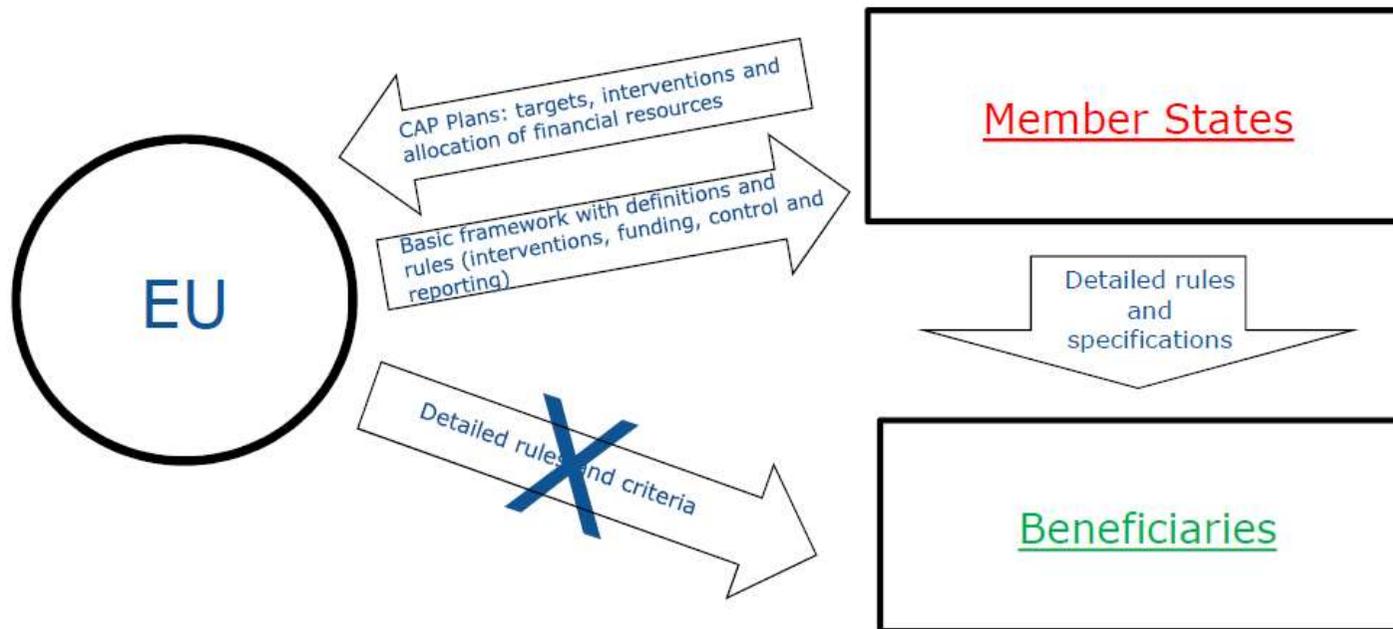


# COMMON CAP OBJECTIVES





## A NEW CAP DELIVERY MODEL



## History of Leader approach

Robert Lukesh, ELARD conference “Leader Reloaded”, September 2018 Evora.

<https://leaderconference.minhaterra.pt/rwst/files/i20-20181009XLEADERXRELOADEDXPAPERXROBERTXLUKESCH.PDF>

- In the 1980s economic crisis in lagging regions and old industrial areas threw up new responses such as ‘local employment initiatives’ (LEIs).
- The key characteristics of bottom-up local development approaches, with the triptych of ‘local partnership’, ‘local area’, and ‘local development strategy’ already emerging, offering a generic model of area-based development pursuing a broad range of social and economic development objectives
- All this evolved against the backdrop of accelerated industrialisation and structural change in rural areas, specifically in France, Italy and in the newly entered southern EU member states

### LEADER I (1991)

- Subsequently the first edition of LEADER was launched in 1991, in large parts drawn up by a very committed EC official named Michel Laine.
  - The European Union’s agricultural structures policy began a shift away from enhancing productivity to improving the quality of agricultural output and to take care of the environment, as well as finding new markets for agricultural products.
  - It rested on three elementary principles:
  - preparing and implementing a ‘local action plan’ in rural areas between 5,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. This plan was to define a limited number of strategic development axes and corresponding measures, which had to be put in action within a period of three years (1991-1993);
  - the local action plan was to be designed and implemented by a local partnership as the final beneficiary of the initiative;
  - multi-sectorality and systematic interlinking of development actions were to be embedded in an overall vision and strategy
- 
- LEADER I started as a pilot community initiative calling on local partnerships (Local Action Groups/LAGs) from **disadvantaged rural areas** in the EU12
  - to submit local action plans for funding via integrated global grants.
  - Call for Proposal: 217 LAGs were selected as beneficiaries.
  - National and regional authorities were completely bypassed during LEADER I.
  - It did not disturb anybody of political influence, as LEADER was widely considered as a low-end measure with no budgetary or political importance.
  - However we know that disruptive innovations use to start at the low-end.
  - It embodies the paradox of ‘controlled loss of control’ which plagues authorities and auditors until nowadays.
  - EC created a networking hub (the so-called ‘Coordinating Unit’ entrusted to the AEIDL) for accompanying the emerging local action groups, fostering learning across member states, turned out to be a veritable booster for collective learning on a European scale.
  - The team of the European ex post evaluation of LEADER I, in collaboration with the LEADER II Observatory, laid the foundations of what is today called the ‘LEADER/CLLD approach’ or ‘method’, defined as the combined application of **‘seven operational principles’ or ‘key features’**

- Area-based approach;
  - Bottom-up;
  - Local partnership;
  - Multisectoral approach;
  - Innovation;
  - Networking;
  - Cooperation
- Originally “**Decentralised management and financing**” was the 7<sup>th</sup> principle, whereas “Networking” and “Cooperation” had been considered as one. Thus they kept being seven all the time, only that the most essential aspect of “Decentralised management and financing” got out of sight and literally went to the dogs during the first mainstreaming period (2007-2013). Although it has regained attention during the period 2014-2020, I propose to put things right by re-enacting it as the eighth LEADER principle, as was emphasized by Michael Dower in his final remarks during the workshop “LEADER Reloaded” in Évora on Sept. 28th, 2018

#### **LEADER II (1994 - 1999)**

- Subsequently LEADER II was implemented through 102 national/regional Operational Programmes (OPs) in the EU15
- The second stage of LEADER introduced four more elements:
- the initiative was inserted into the programming logic of Structural Funds;
- programme responsibility was entrusted to national or regional authorities – according to the Member States’ decision;
- the LEADER II Observatory was set up as the anchor point of European-wide networking and capacity building;
- transnational co-operation was incorporated as a regular programme component.

#### **LEADER+ (2000 – 2006)**

- As its name implies, LEADER+ incorporated further improvements, namely the following characteristics:
  - All rural areas within the EU became, in principle, eligible;
  - the operational principle of ‘innovation’ was amalgamated with the regulative principle of ‘sustainability’ aiming at encouraging more ambitious ‘pilot strategies for integrated rural development’;
  - priority themes of particular interest at European level were defined around which Local Action Groups should focus their development strategies;
  - the participation of public actors in the decision making bodies was limited to 50%;
  - an increased emphasis was laid on co-operation between rural areas with LAGs or LAG-like structures within and between Member States, even outside the EU.
- LEADER+ continued to play its role as a laboratory aimed at encouraging the emergence and testing of new approaches to integrated and sustainable development and at complementing other rural development programmes by encouraging those involved in rural communities to devise and implement integrated and innovative development strategies.

### **LEADER as the fourth (horizontal) axis of the RDPs (2007-2013)**

- 'Mainstreaming' the LEADER Approach into Rural Development Programmes
- The end of LEADER+ marks a hiatus in the 27 year-long history of LEADER.
- The merger with the mainstream programmes was a way to make the LEADER approach survive, but already at that time many experts uttered their anxieties about Noah's ark possibly turning out as Babylonian captivity.

### **LEADER/CLLD (2014-2020)**

- In the current period, the LEADER method is applicable to all European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) under the name of Community Led Local Development (CLLD).
- CLLD still runs under the name 'LEADER' in the EAFRD

## Lessons Learned. Strategic and operational principles and drivers of success

- **Micro-regional scale:** Over the last two periods, there has been a tendency to increase or amalgamate smaller LAG territories **into larger territorial units**. This was seen as a measure to increase the **efficiency of the LAG management** which in many areas had gradually morphed into a multipurpose development agency operating on a number of funds, not only of the EAFRD, but also on Structural Funds and additional schemes. I believe that the enlargement of LAGs has in some cases diminished their ability to act as a local development catalyst.
- **Valuation of local skills and knowledge:** This is undoubtedly a trump card of LEADER because it goes along with a secular trend – that of emphasizing inimitable capabilities in a globalising world, that of somewheres as opposed to anywheres, of glocals who marry their attachment to place and community with a cosmopolitan horizon.
- **Low-threshold and demand-oriented funding:** If this is not guaranteed, the failure will directly impact on the quality of LEADER implementation.
- **The independent local partnership:** Leave the decision-making power to the LAGs. The accumulation and interaction of **rules** between different Structural Funds and between administrative levels produce **uncertainties** and thereby **risks** which do not seem to match the benefits expectable from a relatively small share of public expenses. This is one of the reasons why CLLD and multi-funding has not been wholeheartedly taken up by regional and national authorities such as many EU officials or local development experts would have wished.
- **The quest for linkages and synergies:** The first letter of LEADER – standing for ‚Liaison‘ – is still **the most obvious driver of success**. It means forging linkages at a personal level and at that of collective actors, **through intensive networking and cooperation inside and outside the area**. It is a prerequisite for learning and knowledge sharing, for constantly putting the own potential and limits under scrutiny and pushing the envelope gradually further. I still cannot understand that this quest is sometimes limited by petty prescriptions.
- **The thrust on innovation:** Regarding LEADER, innovation was always in the centre of local actors, policy makers and experts. Innovation means change, and this may imply the break of ties; however knowing that ongoing change happens in any event, it is the gain in command upon these changes which is in the focus of innovation: The little spin we can give the ongoing changes in our environment and ultimately in ourselves which leaves us with more options to act, with more leeway to make mistakes, with more resilience in the face of all the known and unknown occurrences. To quote Mahatma Gandhi, ‚freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes‘.
- **The European dimension:** From the very beginning, LEADER was a means to connect people from different backgrounds not only with each other, but also to make them familiar with the rules, mechanisms and methods of the European governance architecture. Regarding the recent estrangement of many rural people from established democratic institutions in many developed countries (not only in the EU), and the increasing rural-urban divide in many issues of societal concern, the European dimension takes centre stage. LEADER can bring Europe closer to the citizens.

## Effects and the added value of LEADER

Three main effects of the LEADER approach, if properly applied:

- Local value added
- Enriched social capital
- Spreading out.

The LEADER evaluation guidelines of the Rural Evaluation Helpdesk define the “**Added Value of LEADER**’ as the combined benefits deriving from

- improved social capital
  - improved local governance
  - enhanced results of strategy implementation.
- **Local value added:** value and results of the projects. Some of these projects would not have occurred at all without Leader. Other projects included more different actors than in non-Leader context. Or were organized in more innovative, demand responsive or sustainable ways in the Leader context.
  - **Social capital enrichment:** Leader generates strong effects via the enrichment of the social capital through sensitisation, animation, capacity building and networking activities. This can be measured in various ways. In the Evora presentation from 2007, we epitomised our insights as the **5 D:**
    - Dignity: The emergence of new, previously **overlooked actors** and the reassessment of their skills, ideas, actions and contributions to the society.
    - Distinction: The recognition of the particularity or even uniqueness of one’s identities and contributions
    - Dialogue: The willingness and capability to enter a conversation and act cooperatively on the basis of universal concerns and respect for other people.
    - Democracy: Participation and stakeholder dialogue are capacities which are dearly needed in democratic governance, and increasingly so in a world in which the denial of reason has re-entered the stage of political communication. The local action group de facto plays an educative role for democratic governance – and should be utterly conscient of that role –, for it seeks to combine the virtues of representative, deliberative and participative governance to achieve common well-being.
    - Delight: After all, people involved in LEADER confirm it time and again: **LEADER is fun**. From a Danish LAG we got the quote: „Even if it has been blood, sweat and tears....we would do it again.
  - **Improved local governance:** Social capital and local governance are complementary, like the pasture provides the context for the cow. LEADER is an institutional innovation. If we say that local governance is improved through the implementation of LEADER, we stipulate that it has also an effect on institutional innovation. The LEADER approach cannot be conceptualised without taking into account the whole delivery chain and the multiple tiers of decision making.
  - **Spreading out:** Already since its second edition, the LEADER approach has inspired the emergence of a host of national schemes, such as in Finland, Germany, Ireland and Spain. The ultimate step was the formulation of the CLLD Articles in the Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013 which allowed for the expansion of the CLLD/LEADER approach to the four cohesion policy instruments ERDF, ESF, EMFF and EAFRD. This move seemed to lay out a new horizon, a wide field of opportunities to reshape territorial policies in urban, rural and coastal areas even-handedly.

## Pitfalls which might come along with the mainstreaming of LEADER in the RDPs:

- **Submission:** that the LEADER approach shrivels to an appendix to conventional programme implementation, deprived of its operational features, at very most becoming a ‚guichet‘ for a few designated measures;
- **Backstreaming:** that the LAGs develop into tools to implement the goals of rural development programmes mainly dictated by sectoral (agricultural) interests or becoming a proxy for intermunicipal cooperation (a grouping of mayors);
- **Degeneration:** that the LEADER approach be fragmented and only implemented in parts, according to convenience, disregarding the basic assumption that the LEADER method only unfolds its virtues if the **seven operational principles** are applied as a package.
- **Overload:** that the LAGs be left with duties and responsibilities for which the local actors have not been accordingly prepared;
- **Tickover:** that the LAGs be charged with administrative requirements which sucks up their human resource capacities, to the detriment of their core task as a catalyst for local development. In other words, the LAG management would run out of gear.

## Calls for a radical renewal of CLLD/LEADER

- See ELARD **Tartu Declaration** ‚Renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+‘
- See paper Grupo CARMEN ‚Reinventing Europe – with and for its people‘. An essential instrument would be a ‚separate fund for citizen-led local development, with a separate programme, with no demarcation between funds. **Finance must be decentralised to provide the flexibility** for local strategies to respond to local needs and challenges with a shift from compliance to achieving goals and respecting the agreed principles and methods‘.
- See **Venhorst Declaration** from European Rural Parliament 2017, which describes in more detail **how such separate fund for CLLD should be structured**. The Fund should receive a significant proportion of all European Structural Investment Funds (10%) and should be deployed on a decentralised basis, through local partnerships, so that local strategies can respond to local needs and challenges.

