

Policy Transfer of the Local Development Model

The Leader Program Implementation in Central European countries

Pascal Chevalier¹, Marie-Claude Maurel²

ABSTRACT

The implementation of a new European policy based on integrated rural development is an entirely new experiment in the Central European countries, which formerly belonged to the communist system. The paper attempts to explore the conditions and the context in which the Local Development Model is being transferred from former member states to new ones, and the way they implemented it. To examine this issue, we consider European Union's Leader programme (an acronym of *Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale*) which became the fourth axis of the European Rural Policy (2007-2013). The Leader approach is usually presented as an original way of supporting local development especially through the Local action group (LAG) which is a local body constituted of public and private actors. We focus on how this approach is put into effects at in three new member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland).

Downloading policy to the local communities takes place via various hierarchical modes of governance. Domestic authorities (or transfer operators) transpose and implement European rules and norms which are more flexible than the former development policies. Looking at the main differences between the four countries we explore how the original model is being distorted by domestic institutional factors. Policy transfer processes are not restricted to ministries of agriculture but involve a wide variety of non governmental actors mediating the transfer of model to the local stakeholders who are the acting receivers. The Leader model is experimented in various territorial and social contexts, more or less receptive to this new way of thinking and managing local development.

The paper is based on the relevant academic literature, on official national sources and field research survey³. It is a cross-national comparative work that takes into account national and local variations in order to highlight similarities and differences in the transfer of a policy model.

¹ University of Montpellier 3, France, pascal.chevalier@univ-montp3.fr

² Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, maurel@ehess.fr

I- A policy model transfer : experimenting LEADER⁴ in the New Member States

The introduction of a new model of local development based on a bottom-up approach appears to be an entirely new experiment in the New European Members in Central Europe. The ongoing process of Europeanisation in these countries is acting as a catalyst for the transmission of this model of endogenous development, a model whose principles are to highlight the specific advantages of each territory and to foster the initiatives taken by decentralized actors. This paper attempts to explore the conditions and the context in which European Rural Development Policy is being implemented in rural areas of the New Member States. In the framework of implementing the LEADER approach, European Union rural development funding aims to provide the conditions for innovative actions and projects to emerge in local communities. The LEADER programme provides a current prospect for introducing a new type of bottom-up actions based on the undertaking of endogenous material and non-material resources to produce sustainable local development.

The paper concerns the launching of the LEADER programme in the New Member States (NMS)⁵. It attempts to assess the institutional context of its reception, looking at the responsiveness of three NMS (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic). Does the LEADER model fit with the interests and the policy preferences of these countries? Our hypothesis is that the transfer process and its outcomes will be dependent on the whole institutional opportunity structure⁶ both at domestic and local levels.

The paper examines the transfer cycle with its distinct sequences: introducing the policy model, transposing it to the domestic level, implementing it at the local level. It begins by defining the origin of the LEADER model and the institutional context of the policy transfer. It goes on by describing the "downloading" process of the policy model in terms of the operative institutional

³ Those results are part of the ALDETEC program financed by the French Research Agency n° ANR-08-BLAN-0270-01 (<http://www.cefres.cz/aldetec/index.html>) aiming at comparing Leader implementation and initiatives in five Central European States (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland).

⁴ LEADER is an acronym of *Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale*

⁵ Research project on "Local Action and territorial development in Central Europe, ALDETEC, began in 2009, based on continuous observation since that date of transformations occurring in selected local communities. Field-work studies were designed for data collection. Several Local Action Groups (LAGs) were selected in Hungary (Baranya county), Lithuania, Poland (Małopolska and Lodz voivodeships), and the Czech Republic (the regions of Central Bohemia, South Bohemia and South Moravia). The task was to understand how stakeholders coped with a new situation that involved strategic choices, and then to follow the design of their strategic plans. Each observed LAG was the subject of a separate study, each using the same methodology (interview guidelines), and applying a comparative approach. Set in their geographical context, these studies examined both the effects due to a place's integration in a specific national system and the effects proper to that place (given his social history).

variables at domestic level. Finally, it provides an assessment of the transfer outcomes at the local level assessing how the LEADER model is received.

The transfer cycle

Our approach focuses on the methods and the effects of transferring a new form of public initiative that is proposed by the EU to the Central European Member States. The rationale in terms of the transfer of the European LEADER model refers explicitly to the conceptual framework defined by the policy transfer studies.

For Dolowitz and Marsh, policy transfer is understood to mean the process by which the policies and/or practices in one political system are fed into and used in the policy-making arena of another political system. [Dolowitz, Marsh, 1996]. More exactly, these authors define policy transfer as "a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions in another time and/or place" [Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996:344].

The later working definition has to be completed by supplementary questions: What is transferred and how is it transferred to the NMS? Who are the actors involved in the decision-making of the transferring process? How is it operated? The transfer cycle extends from the moment when the LEADER model is designed to the moment when it is actually implemented.

The whole transfer cycle includes a pluralist configuration of actors, namely EU institutions, member states, local interests. The interventions of the domestic actors are shaped by the institutional context of the NMS. They could introduce some distorting effects that have to be identified. The transfer cycle could be broken down into three distinct sequences: selection, transposition, reception.

Relating to the **selection** sequence we will look at the source of inspiration, that is to say the origin of the Leader Model, initiated by the Western Member States, and the target aimed at, namely the rural areas of the NMS where the model was recently introduced⁶.

The **transposition** sequence is about how the Leader Model which became part of the European Rural Development Policy (ERDP) is transferred to the NMS. Adopted at the European Union level, this policy is implemented at the national level by the 27 Member States. Consequently, policy transfer involves different distinct levels, supra-national, national and sub-national levels and main agents of policy transfer are specific to each level. At the European level, different institutions are responsible for the normative and funding regulations shaping the LEADER axis of the ERDP. Each member state has to transpose the ERDP into their national strategic plans. Domestic authorities download the ERDP guiding principles and adapt them to their own

⁶ LEADER+ was introduced as a measure during the period 2004-2006 and from 2007 became an axis of the Rural Development policy.

juridical and normative rules. The regulative policy framework is then directly or indirectly (by regional institutions) forwarded to the local level.

Finally, the **reception** sequence is the result of the involvement of local authorities who are in charge of disseminating information to the local stakeholders. What are the distribution channels and how do they mobilize people? What are the factors favouring or alternatively hindering the LEADER approach implementation? In which way do the actors adopt this form of public initiative? What are the policy outcomes?

As a public policy inspired by the EU, and downloaded by domestic authorities, the LEADER Model includes a vast arena of negotiation involving many political and social actors. Because of the interaction between different tiers of government and hierarchical levels of public administration, the actorø configuration is complex. In the transfer cycle, we set apart the öprocess managerö who initiates the policy model, the "operators" of the transfer who are the main decision-makers, the "facilitators" who contribute to the dissemination, and the "recipients" who implement the transferred model. The interventions of the different categories of actors can introduce distorting effects which might transform the idea of the policy model.

II- Selecting the Leader Model from the Western Member States to the Central European Member States

The first issue is about **what is transferred**, that is to say the öLEADER Modelö referring to the specific concept of endogenous development. It is necessary to separate the rhetoric discourse drawing up the öLEADER Modelö from the regulative framework aiming to implement the policy⁷.

The source of inspiration: LEADER as an evolutionary model

The LEADER approach has its origin in a change of paradigm in rural development that occurred in Western Europe at the end of the 1980s [CEC, 1988]. The reforms of the CAP in 1988⁸ and 1992 confirmed the failure of the previous model of agricultural development based on the modernisation of structures and the intensification / specialisation of production, but without taking on board the consequences that this implied. Concepts were progressively re-oriented towards a vision of an integrated and sustainable rural development. A change in the way of thinking about rural development began to take shape at the turn of the 1990s. Some

⁷ Because the model includes a declared territorial dimension, it gives rise to a discourse which presents it as a more effective form of initiative than an intervention with an exogenous character. People like to stress the ethical dimension of the model, in view of the place given to participation by the local community in the endeavour to control the conditions and effects of development (Ray, 2000).

⁸ In 1988, the debate over a new Structural Policy intervention for the EU resulted in the drawing up of a territorial, endogenous model for rural development. With the 1988 reform, the European Commission acquired the power to introduce its own pilot interventions, -Community Initiativesø of which the rural development version was LEADER [see Ray 2000].

commentators have seen a change of paradigm in this⁹, while other researchers consider that this change remained on the rhetorical level and that the elimination of the dominant paradigm was not taken right to its conclusion [Nemes, 2005].

Let us outline the various stages of this development. The LEADER approach was introduced at the beginning of the 1990s to promote a new model of rural development based on the initiatives of local communities¹⁰. As a political project, the endogenous type of development is based on a set of principles giving priority to innovation, the development of small-scale activities, the involvement of local communities, and the promotion of their resources. Its distinctive characteristic is having confidence *a priori* in the populations living in the rural areas, and in their capacity to discover what is best adapted to their environment, their culture, and their traditions [Shortall, Shucksmith, 1998, Dargan, Shucksmith, 2008]. This concept of local development is going with an experimental method which can be defined as follows: a territorial approach¹¹ and not a sectoral principle; the promotion of local resources in such a way as to maximise the revenue from activities and to retain the benefits locally; and a development targeted on the needs, capacities and expectations of the local population [Ray, 2000]. As a source of inspiration, the endogenous model of development took shape in the Western Member States, where various forms of programmes were first tried out. Since its creation the Local Development Model has evolved considerably, both in the definition of its objectives and in the regulation mechanisms. These include the LEADER initiatives incorporated in the European policy.

LEADER as a policy model

The LEADER I initiative, launched in 1991-1993 by the European Economic Community, which at the time had twelve members, was re-introduced as the LEADER II programme (1995-1999), in the form of pilot interventions aimed at stimulating innovative approaches on the local level, and then renewed after 2000 under the name LEADER+. As different stages of EU enlargement took place, the experience was extended to the new member states. The work devoted to the LEADER Community initiative places the accent on its innovative character, seeing it as a new stage in the development of rural areas in Europe. Starting in 2000, the Community initiative LEADER+ inaugurated a new style of intervention by the European Commission, which prepares the overall conception for the guidelines for the proper use of the funds and allows

⁹ We can refer, for example, to the articles published by *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol. 42, no. 2, April 2000.

¹⁰ The principles of this new approach were reaffirmed at the Cork Conference in 1996: "Rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept and multi-sectoral in application, with a clear territorial dimension" [Commission of the European Communities 1996].

¹¹ The originality of an integrated approach on a territorial basis consists of directing development aid towards projects designed on the scale of the rural communities with the aim of strengthening the capacity of local actors to take the initiative.

room for manoeuvre for domestic policies to adjust them.¹² The member states in turn give some latitude to the local actors for the implementation of the programme. Differing interpretations have been given of experiences relating to the Western Member States [Osti, 2000, Halamska, 2005].

It is this policy model, which had been tried out by the Western Member States for almost two decades that was proposed to the new ones in the form of the LEADER+ measure for the period 2004-2006.

The context of setting up the LEADER model in the New Member States

Is the LEADER model appropriate to the socio-economic conditions of the Central European rural areas? ¹³. It is important to recall the background to the transfer of the European rural development policy. It is now just over twenty years that the countryside in Central Europe has been following a path of socio-economic transformation. The restructuring process that occurred in former communist countries will be briefly outlined. During the systemic change, reforms concerned the building of democratic institutions, the shift to the market, as an economic regulation mechanism, and the restoration of private property.

In rural areas once organized and administered by collective agrarian structures, the transformation process implied both a transformation of socio-economic functions and a change in the manner of governing local communities [Baldersheim, Harald, Illner, Wollmann, 2003]. The dismantling of the communist regime meant a radical change in the institutional model. Local government reforms launched in 1990 introduced the principles of the Western institutional model, based on political democracy. Recognition of local autonomy made this self-government the key institution in the management of local affairs. Politically, democratisation and decentralisation have favoured the emergence of new elites likely to lead local self-governments, and new social stakeholders have appeared on the local scene¹⁴ [Maurel, Halamska, 2006].

At the same time, new regulation mechanisms of economic activities were introduced with privatisation. The recognition of the principle of free enterprise favoured the reorganisation of economic activities among small and medium-sized private enterprises (including foreign capital-owned firms). Faced with the challenges of economic competition, rural areas were

¹² Cf. the Community regulation of the Council dated 21 June 1999.

¹³ Gorton M., Hubbard C., Hubbard L. consider the lack of convergence in the socio-economic conditions of rural areas in NMS and established Member States to be an explanation why the CAP does not fit Central and Eastern Europe (Gorton M., Hubbard C., Hubbard L. 2009).

¹⁴ The decentralisation policies which were introduced from the beginning of the 1990s were accompanied by institutional restructuring at various sub-national levels, from the village to the region. Poland re-established the *gmina* and *miasto* local self-governments, and then put in place two further administrative levels (the *powiat* and the *województwo*). Hungary did the same thing at local level, but only has one level of regional government, the *megye*, which only has limited competences at its disposal. Czech Republic has a very fragmented network of local communities and only one level of self-government regional units (*kraj*).

subjected to the imperative of restructuring economic activities, upgrading infrastructure, training human resources, etc. It accelerated the transition from a mono-functional rural economy to a more diversified one [Kovach 2002].

The transformation process was linked to the process of accession to the EU (which occurred in 2004) and the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, in particular of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). At the request of Brussels, Rural Development Operational Programmes (RDOPs) were prepared by the governments of the NMS. The LEADER+ measure was included in the RDOPs¹⁵. Welcomed by the NMS, this measure inspired by the Community initiative LEADER+ and financed by the EAGGF Guidance Section, has offered them the ability to launch a rural development policy based on a new strategic approach. This first experience for the period 2004-2006 has turned out to be very useful [Maurel, 2008]. It has helped these countries to prepare better for the launching of the new European Rural Development Policy (2007-2013).

III- Downloading the policy model

The current European version of LEADER

EU is the "process manager" of the policy transfer. In September 2005, the European Council adopted Council Regulation (EC) N° 1698/2005, a new Rural Development Regulation for the financial programming period 2007-2013¹⁶. The development policy for rural areas thus depends largely on the strategic guidelines and the multiannual financial programming established on a European level. For 2007 to 2013, a greater emphasis was put on consistent strategy for rural development across the EU as a whole. Within the framework of the objectives established in Rural Development Regulation, the strategic guidelines identify rural development priorities. On the basis of these strategic guidelines, Member States will design their national strategy plan as the reference for the preparation of rural development programmes. According to their own policy preferences, they are allowed to draw from the EU menu of support measures those which are fitting to the needs of their rural areas. Every Member State (or region, in cases where powers are delegated to regional level) must prepare a rural development programme, which specifies what funding will be spent on supporting measures in the period 2007 to 2013. The new generation of rural development strategies and programmes will be built around four axes. To help ensure a balanced approach to policy, Member States and regions are obliged to divide up their rural development funding¹⁷, among these thematic axes. These are: Improving the

¹⁵ Six new member states have chosen to adopt this measure following LEADER+ principles. Among them are the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Slovakia has not adopted the LEADER programme. The three Baltic States, which are also transition countries, exhibit different features than the Central European countries.

¹⁶ Known as the second pillar of the CAP, the Rural Development policy is financed by a new financial instrument, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

¹⁷ Within the regulatory minimum funding limits for each axis (10% for axis 1, 25% for axis 2, 10% for axis 3 and 5% for Leader axis, reduced to 2,5 % in the case of the NMS), Member States can devote resources depending on their specific context.

competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; improving the environment and the countryside; quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy. A further requirement is that some of the funding must support projects based on the "LEADER approach" to rural development (that means individual projects designed and executed by local partnerships to address specific local problems). Based on the LEADER experience, the fourth axis brings in possibilities for innovative governance through locally based, bottom-up approaches to rural development.

Transposing Rural Development Policy into National Strategy Plans

In proposing instruments of public initiative, the EU thus defined a normative framework and principles that gave a direction to domestic rural development policies. Although in the case of the LEADER axis, it is essentially a conceptual approach to development and a method that are being transferred, the Rural Development Policy is a rather restricting framework. Two variables will have a decisive influence on the process: from one side, the European governance regime, from the other, the domestic institutional variables (domestic interests, policy preferences, administrative cultures).

Downloading policy to the member states takes place via a more or less hierarchical mode of governance in which softer rules are transposed and implemented by domestic authorities. [Bulmer, Dolowitz, Humphreys, Padgett, 2007]. For the EU Rural Development policy the governance regime is based on "soft" rules (strategic guidelines offering measures) which will generate discretionary forms of transfer. The Common Rural Development Policy places considerable control in the hands of individual Member States and regions. Unlike the *acquis communautaire*, the transfer of which proved to be coercive and normative, the transposition of the LEADER programme offers the NMS the chance to try out a new instrument for use in public initiatives. This form of transfer is flexible and voluntary, with the "importing" countries enjoying relative autonomy and retaining a degree of freedom allowing for the possibility of modifications to the model.

The reactive responses of the NMS are based on their perceptions of the benefits of the LEADER model. However, the transfer process is subject to the normative and institutional constraints of the domestic political system. The LEADER model is being transferred through an institutional process, the mechanisms of which will be examined below, along with their political and practical effects on the new members' institutions, stakeholders and policies.

Are the general guiding principles enough to ensure compliance with the original endogenous development model inspiring the LEADER approach? What does the implementation of this single EU intervention tell us about rural development policy in each national context? How do domestic authorities appropriate the new approach that relies extensively on local initiative?

Domesticating the implementation

At the national level, the state administration is the principal actor implementing the policy transfer. In practice, the institutional mechanism brings together the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), the payment agencies in charge of financial management, and ad hoc foundations. Several similarities between the experiences of the countries involved can be

mentioned: the predominant role of the MADR in the interpretation of the regulations and the management of the programme, the formulation of the normative mechanism. In the Central European states, MADR usually dominated by farming interests prove a weak capacity in managing non agricultural programmes. Another common feature can be found with the centralised nature of the whole process leading to a slight transparency and a relative slowness of the procedures for evaluation, selection and financing the strategies proposed by the LAGs. The institutional configuration inherited from the centralist tradition has accentuated the hierarchic character of the domestic governance. The version of the LEADER programme that is implemented by the NMS is downwards and gave the domestic authorities a decisive function in terms of institutional mediation. In Hungary, the MADR makes use of the LEADER programme in order to implement its own planning policy by regrouping at least two micro regions in one sized rural community endowed with a LAG and extending the programme in order to reach a complete coverage of rural areas. This uniform network of rural communities became the operative framework for managing the third axis projects of the RDP [Pola, Kovacs, 2010].

Because of its normative role (in particular the formulation of action principles, definition of procedures, adoption of the criteria for eligibility), domestic authorities in fact possess considerable power to intervene. As the main actor implementing the transfer, the MADR controls the information and the channels by which this is disseminated. In addition, it initiates the programmes for training people in the LEADER method. It can rely on the support of various levels of public administration (in the regions and/or the districts) for these operations¹⁸. A strong asymmetry is thus established in the relationship between the national and local actors. In the tradition of subordination inherited from the former communist regime, the local actors continue to have to cope with the good will of the central administration and its various devolved bodies. The latter play a role in the dissemination of information and the transfer of solutions in the form of public initiatives. This is supplemented by the role of the "facilitators" of the transfer, which take part in disseminating ideas; here we can mention the network of NGOs working in the rural areas and also the consulting bureaus, genuine entrepreneurs of the transfer, which can contribute to its success by creating conditions favourable for its reception.

IV- Receiving the Leader model

Involvement of local actors

At the bottom of the transfer cycle are the "recipients" of the LEADER Model, who are encouraged to become involved in putting it into practice. The originality of LEADER lies above all in the method on which the decision-making and the initiatives arising from it are based. In a bottom-up process, the LEADER method is based on the principles of **subsidiarity and partnership**. These two principles underlie the creation of a decision-making entity, a Local Action Group (LAG), appearing as the project manager for the projects carried out by three

¹⁸ In Poland, regional self-governments are in charge of the management of the whole process of assessing and selecting the LAGs.

categories of local stakeholders (self-governments, entrepreneurs, associations)¹⁹. Decisions on the strategy of local development and on projects are prepared by the LAG. In terms of consultation and cooperation between the stakeholders, it is the representatives of the local self-governments who are called on to be the driving force. They delegate their responsibilities to local managers²⁰. The partnership principle implies the participation of local stakeholders in the design of the development strategy and its implementation.

In conferring on the LAG the status of collective actors, the LEADER approach shows itself to carry on decentralising public initiatives as far as possible. With this in mind, analysing the conditions under which the LAGs are formed, and examining their composition and ways of functioning become central to understanding the real impact of experimenting with the LEADER programme²¹. The learning process for this conception of local development raises a range of questions relating to the degree of involvement of the social actors. Social learning can take various forms: the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the adoption and implementation of new principles for action. It is not enough to comply with the directives enacted by central government; local communities have to build their own development. Based on participation, the LEADER approach requires the involvement of a large number of public and private stakeholders. Professional mayors, with their skills in local self-government, have been the main catalysts in this process²². A large number of parameters, which vary according to the local circumstances, come into play, which modifies the capacity for reception of the LEADER approach. The local context may have a specific impact on the implementation. In the conditions of a weak social capital in rural areas, will the experimental method of the LEADER approach be sufficient to re-awaken the capacity for initiative of local actors?

Assessing the transfer outcomes: emulation and copying as the prevailing effects

What are the outcomes of the LEADER Model experiment? This raises a number of questions relating to the conditions under which the reception of the LEADER model by local actors takes place, their capacity to mobilise, and the degree of involvement of the local society. To clarify it we examine the prevailing effects in terms of adaptation, emulation and transformation of the model.

- Does the model fit with the potential for action of the recipient rural communities?

¹⁹ On the field, the boundaries between these three groups are less clear-cut.

²⁰ In addition, some of them have acquired genuine experience in the conception of local development strategies.

²¹ Plésiat M. and Marty P. "Actors and partnerships in the LAGs: a new civic space? A Czech case study." Paper to the International Conference, Regional Studies, May 24-26th, Pécs, Hungary.

²² In most cases observed, the catalyst was the impetus given by a mayor, firmly based in his or her municipality within a network of local personalities at the micro-regional level. The typical profile of an initiator is a firmly established, "charismatic leader" heading a relatively large municipality, who has formed a network of patronage relations with his or her opposite numbers in neighbouring municipalities.

The bottom-up approach implies a change in the way people see and think about the development process. The mental legacy of the communist system, the passivity of citizens and the gap that had developed between the national political traditions and the principles of elective democracy, all these characteristics represent risks of incompatibility. The unsuitability of the institutional structures and of the cognitive matrices in relation to the presuppositions of the bottom-up approach may have an inhibiting effect on the reception of the LEADER model.²³ Finally, the lack of social capital, and more specifically the lack of entrepreneurs, the weak social links, the under-education of the rural population, and the demographic aging process, all serve to put a brake on the involvement of local actors. It is hard for local communities to adjust and to make good use of their skills. These elements help explain the context of the reception of the LEADER model. Most local officials are convinced of the interest to be involved in the LEADER programme. For them, this "manna" from the EU can help them build the infrastructure their municipalities need. This positive attitude is part of a new state of mind, which is not the least of the benefits of these operations. As the civic society is still weak, the network of stakeholders actually involved is small, made up of a few groups around elected officials or managers, who know and support each other [Halamska, 2009]. The activism of local political elites which play a dominant role contrasts with the passivity of the great majority of rural inhabitants.

- Will the methods used for the transfer of the LEADER programme lead to results that are in conformity with the original principles of the initiative? Or, on the contrary, will the context of their reception lead to a modification of those methods, with the risk that the original principles will be distorted?

With the new "project class"²⁴ runs the risk of copy-cat behaviour and of a uniform strategic thinking in rural communities. As elected officials comply with directives to meet eligibility criteria and enhance the chances of the LAG, the managers make use of conceptual window-dressing to transmit the local development approach. The LEADER rules are perceived as a new "grammar" that just has to be learnt. The unoriginal nature of some projects reflects a lack of critical thinking. The strategy documents are prepared by development "managers" or designed by consultancy offices and development agencies. The risk is to produce "turnkey" recipes for unoriginal, one-size-fits-all projects. In such cases, the real purpose of the LEADER approach, namely innovation in strategic thinking is missing [Dargan, Shucksmith, 2008]. Emulation or copying the LEADER recipes without adopting the philosophy of bottom-up approach seems to be the strongest form of transfer. Experimenting with the LEADER approach does not simply mean the imitation of a new approach to development.

²³ In spite of the institutional reconfigurations that have taken place on the local level, these factors are related to the legacy of the collectivist system which has left a lasting mark on the rural world through the continuing existence of the social structures and of interest networks linking the former leading figures who now have a new role, and due to the persistence of practices concerning bureaucratic control and the centralist tradition. The new forms of competition between the political parties have encouraged their survival through vote-catching practices (Meyer-Sahling, 2007).

²⁴ A young generation of local managers and design office consultants has surfaced as an active vector in transmitting the new LEADER thinking. They are designated as the "project class" [Kovach, Ku erova, 2006].

Conclusion

Transferring the LEADER Model should be seen as a collective learning process about a new, coordinated mode of governance²⁵. Because it links various levels of government (European, national and local), the LEADER approach enables us to comprehend the way in which the process of Europeanisation²⁶ penetrates new areas of public initiative, at a level appropriate for coordinating the initiatives of the actors. Based on a bottom-up approach, the LEADER programme has become a vehicle for disseminating a new model of collective action. In particular, such an approach is seen as an appropriate means for developing civil society, increasing the participation of local actors and changing local systems.

However, the potential for conflict in the process cannot be eliminated. Tensions can arise when the state attempts to take over the conception of the programme mechanism, and likewise at the level of local governments when they intend to control the practical details of local development. These kinds of interventions might insert distorting effects which can deprive the LEADER Model of its essential content and impact. At the end, we will emphasize the underlying contradiction inherent in implementing downwards (that is to say by agents outside the local communities) a public policy that tries to promote an endogenous model of development.

²⁵ The concept of governance emphasises the mechanisms for coordinating actors, networks and institutions, and the ways of overseeing the interplay of social groups and regulating conflicts, in order to achieve the objectives that have been discussed and defined collectively. This concept makes it possible to integrate the political, economic and social changes that occur at various levels, and to plan the transformations of the state and of public initiatives that ensue from this.

²⁶ The Europeanisation of the institutions, methods, and ways of financing appears to be an essential factor in the transformation, and operates by means of the transfer of public policies. The European pre-accession programmes, associative twinning, and the NGOs are the principal vehicles for this. The mechanisms for transferring public policies, instruments, and methods assume different operative forms (Bulmer *et al.*, 2007).

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