Using participatory video to evaluate community development

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A distinction can be made in evaluation practice between exogenous evaluation, which emphasises objective, analytic rigour and a culture of audit and accountability, and endogenous evaluation, which emphasises social learning, capacity building and integration with the development process. This paper examines the question of whether the two can ever be compatible through an examination of an evaluation methodology that sits firmly in the endogenous camp – the use of participatory video as an evaluation tool.

Participatory video can be defined as a tool for the facilitation of individual and group learning and communication, where participants use video making to share and make sense of their experiences and relationships. The methodology can evoke indigenous visual and social literacies to create a space for reflection, learning and action in rural development projects and programmes. This paper presents findings relating to two pilot studies in the use of participatory video for the evaluation of rural development. The first, in Hungary, used PV to facilitate a base-line evaluation at the LEADER+ programme level. The second, in Ireland, concerns the evaluation of a community planning tool. The paper concludes by discussing the comparability of the pilot studies with mainstream evaluation practice for rural development in Europe.

Introduction

As social researchers, investigating the socioeconomic effects of agricultural and rural policies over the past 10-15 years, we have had two basic experiences, related to evaluation. One concerns the role of evaluation in the policy making process. All EU and domestic policies, down to individual projects and the last invoice are audited and reviewed on one way or another. Nevertheless, these reviews mainly remain on a superficial, quantitative level and detailed evaluation of socio-economic effects is hardly ever undertaken. On top of this, acquired evaluation results are usually published in the form of large aggregated reports, often well after the finish of one programme period and the start of the next one. Therefore, evaluation can rarely give sufficient feedback for the improvement of planning or implementing development policies in general, let alone local development communities or individual projects. The other important experience has been that people on every level of the development system, from local practitioners to high level policy makers have always been keen to answer questions, devoting us sometimes substantial part of their busy time. Reasons for this may be manifold, nevertheless, it should be secure to say that this has not originated merely from their enthusiasm towards academic research, but rather we gave them an opportunity to think and react on what they have been doing. Development workers and bureaucrats are usually overburdened with work and giving account of it: writing reports, fulfilling evaluation and assessment tasks. Thus, participants of the 'development machinery'– people and organisations – hardly ever have time for self-reflection and the

appreciation of their inherent knowledge about their work – in other words for self-evaluation – which would be essential to develop their community and activities.

One can sense a serious dysfunction here: on one level the development system spends a lot of resources on acquiring information and makes insufficient use of it; and on another level there is a considerable lack of time, resources and information, impeding the improvement of the system. These problems are in line with others, discussed by various approaches and authors, such as neo-endogenous development (Ray 2000a), integrated rural development systems (Nemes 2004) or the 'project state' (Marsden and Sonino 2005). We decided to examine issues through evaluation, because previously published work has shown this is where institutional clash is v. strong in rural development practice in Europe (High and Nemes 2007). Here we argue, that different types of evaluation should play a crucial role in integrated development and a hybrid evaluation (integrating external and participative forms) should give an answer for the problems, described above. This paper shortly explores the function of various forms of evaluations and practices of the European rural development arena in this regard. Then we examine participatory video making as an innovative, new tool serving community development and self evaluation in rural development. To demonstrate this we present findings relating to two pilot studies in the use of participatory video for community building and the evaluation of rural development. The first, in Hungary, in 2006 July used PV to facilitate a base-line evaluation at the LEADER+ programme level. The second, in Ireland, in 2007 June concerned the evaluation of a community planning tool. Finally we will try to draw some conclusions and lessons on how PV could be used together with other tools in the framework of hybrid evaluation.

Evaluation in practice

The evaluation of rural development is concerned with establishing judgements on the effects and effectiveness of particular processes. While this can consist of broad studies of social and economic trends or of the wider effects of a policy, this article concerns evaluation as a practice within the delivery of projects and programmes. This is not a particularly unusual focus; if one follows Moseley's (2003) conception of rural development as a deliberate process, then it is not such a leap to turn quickly to evaluation as the 'evaluation of the programme' (Moseley 2003, pp. 194–195) or project. A project focus is reflected in the prevalence of definitions of evaluation in the literature such as 'a periodic assessment of the relevant performance, efficiency and impact of the project in the context of its stated objectives' (Casley and Kumar 1988, p. 12). This is perhaps an indication of the strength of what Marsden and Sonnino (2005, p. 28) call the project state: 'An acceptance that the only way to govern is through setting up more and more competitively organised "projects"'.

In this context, evaluation concerns that formation of judgements about the course and impact of projects and programmes in respect of their goals, and is intended to improve future decision-making and planning. The two main questions are 'will the project achieve its goals?', and 'how might project performance be improved in relation to its goals?' Without getting too tied down in a discussion of the distinctions between monitoring, evaluation and assessment (Gosling and Edwards 1995), it is worth noting that even in this goal-oriented form these are questions that might fruitfully be asked before or during a project, rather than merely at the end of it. In other words, evaluation can be a concurrent process in the development and delivery of projects and it is not relevant only during the latter stages of project management.

Note also that the questions point to something quite important that is not always recognised in practice – that if evaluation is an exercise in sense-making relative to given goals, then it is

fundamentally value-laden. That is, on the surface evaluation may seem to be about judgements of fact, but these are almost always intertwined with judgments of value (Checkland and Casar 1986). As Robson (1993) puts it, evaluation is not so much a research strategy as a purpose. The methods, assumptions and values that underpin a particular exercise in evaluation depend very much on the social and political context which has given rise to the need for judgments in the first place. Where multiple stakeholders are present, goals, purposes and understandings diverge. Even agreeing on the details of what has happened, never mind the consequences, is fraught with difficulties generated by differences in standpoint. *(High & Nemes, 2007)*

Divergence between standpoints is particularly significant in policy delivery in European rural development, because projects and programmes are delivered through multi-level governance; that is, a system of continuous negotiation among nested governmental and non-governmental actors at several territorial tiers (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Marks, 1993). This is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple stake-holders often with different definitions of the problem, working at different political levels (Murphy and Chataway 2005), and therefore a multiplicity of values and viewpoints become relevant. In the context of projects and programmes, it means that it cannot be assumed that values are aligned between and across levels. Any exercise in evaluation is likely to have political connotations, depending on the values and standards which it explicitly or implicitly measures against, and the nature of the evaluation process itself.

Evaluation and the LEADER programme

LEADER is a strand of European Union rural development funding, which has promoted rural development in territories across Europen (Moseley, 2003). The initiative aims to provide the conditions for innovative rural development actions to emerge that emphasise the engagement of indigenous financial and cultural resources to produce sustainable development. The result is a set of programmes which are said to have a disproportionately high beneficial impact relative to the resources committed to them, and which address issues of social cohesion induced by other development approaches (Farrell & Thirion, 2005). Thus LEADER represents a high point in the continued mainstreaming of participation and multi-level network governance within European policy practice. Given that LEADER is supposed to be about learning from innovation, there is a clear argument for making opportunities to reflect on the progress and outcomes of individual LEADER projects a central part of the approach. Even while recognising that there *are* other opportunities for rural policy actors to learn from one another's experiences of LEADER through the proportion of funding set aside for networking, Midmore (1998) makes a strong case for building evaluation processes into LEADER that incentivise learning within programmes and projects.

Another feature of LEADER, important for our paper is its participatory nature. LEADER supports the engagement of local stakeholders in the formulation and delivery of programmes and projects, and it focuses on local resources and recognises different cultural and institutional contexts. The significance of the participatory nature of LEADER is that classically, participation highlights the tensions between local and external actors in development activities, challenging notions of power and control (Blackburn & Holland, 1998; Pretty et al, 1995; Webber, 1994). The tensions between endogenous and exogenous development is particularly evident when programmatic performance across a spectrum of projects, localities and cultural contexts becomes important. The success of participatory initiatives depends on localised particularities which may be suppressed by the structural institutions which hold wide-scale programmes together. In the case of LEADER, as it grows

in importance and the scale of funding committed to it, there is considerable force behind demands for public accountability giving rise to the managerialist trends as a result of the need of the centre to ensure quality in public service, highlighted by Ray (2000b). LEADER with it's devolution of decision-making represents significant progress in the centralist facilitation of endogenous processes, perhaps because it enables an alignment of the interests of sub-national territories and the European Commission (Ray, 1999a). In terms of design and delivery at least, LEADER has a good claim to being a case of integrated rural development. However, a different story is revealed when considering how evaluation is institutionalised.

Exogenous evaluation of LEADER

When LEADER was initially established, evaluation of any kind was weak (Midmore, 1998), and there was little pressure to co-ordinate LEADER programmes with other modes of funding rural development. This has changed as the LEADER approach has become more established within European rural policy, and there has been a growing institutionalisation of evaluation within the programme as a whole. Indeed it is clear from the European Commission's guidelines (2002) and associated documentation that an important political agenda behind this increased focus on evaluation is a political project to defend the position the LEADER provides value for money, compared to other sources of funding for rural development. This requires an overall narrative that describes what the programme as a whole has achieved. The result is that achieving a standardised, exogenous evaluation has become more important as the share of rural development resources channelled through devolved LEADER and LEADER-like approaches has increased.

The primary framework for evaluation in LEADER is the European Commission guidelines on evaluation (European Commission, 1999) for all rural development initiatives supported through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. The resulting form of evaluation is exogenous – constructed in terms of the needs of the centre for accountability and transparency. LEADER+ evaluation takes on the form of an audit, requiring objectivity and independence from operational management of programmes, something that has been noted in the values underpinning evaluation in many other contexts (Estrella, 2000).

The development of the evaluation guidelines for LEADER has not solely been a straight-forward application of standard procedures. As Midmore (1998), Saraceno (1999) and others have pointed out, conventional European evaluation procedures (which tend to focus on standardised quantifiable measures) fail to measure much of the added value provided by the LEADER approach. Furthermore, there is a need to aggregating the results of individual programmes and projects developed in response to very different local conditions. These challenge informed the work on LEADER evaluation by those associated with the LEADER II European Observatory, which focussed on developing a more qualitative approach that could nonetheless aggregate information across different programmatic and national implementations of LEADER. The result was a set of evaluation guidelines (European Commission, 2002) for LEADER+ that supplement the general guidelines to the evaluation of rural development programmes. This augments the required quantitative measures of performance with a qualitative evaluation tool in the form of a standard set of questions which an evaluator should investigate.

The resulting framework relates outcomes to the overall objectives of LEADER, and gives guidance on the formulation of programme-specific evaluation questions, depending on the features that individual LEADER+ programmes have emphasised. This meets the challenge of providing evidence for added value, and a starting point for aggregating data across regional

and national boundaries. Thus the current evaluation arrangements represent significant progress the Moseley's (2003) criteria for improved *ex-post* evaluative tools in rural development, by providing a capacity to capture the less tangible outcomes of development initiatives.

What the current guidelines do not do, however, is to meet another of Moseley's requirements for better evaluation. He suggests that effective evaluation should aim to build capacity amongst local actors, and thus becoming part of the development process, rather than outside of it. An important difficulty is that in line with good audit practice, exogenous evaluation of LEADER+ is carried out by external consultants. This provides a degree of independence to the results, but removes evaluation and the opportunities for learning and improvement that arise within it from local view. Is an exogenous form of evaluation the only one possible within the framework of the LEADER programme?

Endogenous evaluation

Given the emphasis on endogenous development and the devolution of decision-making within LEADER, it seems a paradox that the institutional basis of programmatic evaluation is so exclusively exogenous. That is not to say that endogenous evaluation – evaluation based in local contexts and endogenous knowledge systems – does not occur. The existence and value of endogenous evaluation is sometimes recognised within the literature associated with LEADER (Midmore, 1998; Moseley, 2003; Saraceno, 1999), and it seems reasonable to assume that many local forms of social learning and evaluation go unrecognized, as Estrella (2000) notes elsewhere. However, even though there is a stated ambition not to preclude a "*bottom-up, integrated approach*" to evaluating the impact of LEADER+ in the guidelines (European Commission, 2002), the guidelines do not discuss endogenous evaluation in any detail, nor do anything to incentivise it.

This is a pity, because evaluation is potentially much more than an opportunity to demonstrate the value of an investment to exogenous founders of rural development. It is also an opportunity to foster social learning within rural development, and to demonstrate integrity between the values of the programme and the practices which it institutionalises. These points are all taken up in the literature on evaluation. Moseley, for example, argues that an appropriate methodology for evaluation of rural development programmes needs to be strongly participatory: '*…involving the stakeholders to both achieve some learning and developmental spin-off*' (Moseley, 2003 p. 198). Estrella (2000) suggests that good evaluation practice emphasises participation and learning, adding two other characteristics: negotiation and flexibility (both values that are present in the process of setting up a LEADER programme in a particular territory). For Patton, endogenous evaluation is an opportunity to highlight and build on local capacities and empower local project stakeholders, by avoiding *"…the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something done to people*" (Patton, 1990 p. 129). Failing to support endogenous evaluation gives a different message to the rest of the LEADER ethos, and further research into whether this undercuts the capacity-building element built into LEADER is therefore indicated.

It may be that the reason that endogenous evaluation does not play a more central role within the institutionalisation of evaluation in LEADER is a perception that it has no place within centrally supported rural development, or that it is too difficult to implement. However, outside of LEADER, there are well-established alternative traditions of participatory style of evaluation, which harks back to the 1970s (Wadsworth, 2001), and seeks to appreciate and integrate the knowledge of both insiders and outsiders (Davis-Case, 1990) and professionals and beneficiaries (Wadsworth, 2001). The result is an increasing number of resources and

toolboxes for practitioners interested in how to do participatory evaluation (Jackson & Kassam, 1998), and over 20 years of practical experience to draw on within the mainstream of development assistance organisations, including FAO, the world Bank and the Western donor agencies (Estrella, 2000).

The scholarship surrounding this form of evaluation and the wider developmental paradigm behind it is both broad and deep. There is encouraging evidence that participatory forms of development are no more expensive than exogenous ones (Jackson & Kassam, 1998), that participatory evaluation can be used to inform policy (Estrella, 2000), and that ultimately the process effects of participation and social learning are ultimately more persistent than the immediate products (Bunch & Lòpez, 1996). At the same time, there is a well-established tradition of critique and academic debate about the path participatory practice has taken as its application scales up (eg Cooke & Kothari, 2002; Hickey & Mohan, 2005). Some of these critiques are highly relevant, such as the finding that participatory processes can favour non-marginal groups where society is stratified (Gupte, 2003). An important conceptual traps to avoid is the assumption that an internal/external dichotomy of knowledge is the whole picture, when in fact much 'local knowledge' represents a complex mosaic of different standpoints (Goebel, 1998; Guijt & Kaul Shah, 1998).

In summary, endogenous evaluation occurs within LEADER, but the scale, nature and impact of it is not clear, and there is no extant general review of evaluation practice across different European territories. By failing to institutionalise endogenous evaluation into the current LEADER+ evaluation arrangements, the evaluation process is out of step with the way that LEADER+ is planned and delivered, and there is a missed opportunity to build local capacity for social learning.

Towards hybrid evaluation

We have presented a short overview of how evaluation is institutionalised within LEADER+ and examines the issues that arise when the purpose of evaluation is considered. On the one hand, evaluation serves to demonstrate whether or not public resources are being spent well and whether LEADER and related initiatives can be improved. Evaluation as a demonstration of public value clearly has a role to play, and through maintaining the political capital of the LEADER approach supports a proven successful approach to rural development that seems in many ways to embody integrated rural development. On the other hand evaluation potentially forms an important part of the value delivered by LEADER, if it can be done in such a way as to valorise local social resources (Ray, 1999c) and increase endogenous institutional capacity (Farrell & Thirion, 2005). Can this potential be realised within the overall institutionalisation of evaluation in LEADER? The current difficulty is that when it comes to evaluation, the institutional logic of LEADER+ appears to favour one institutional logic over the other. But need the current lack of articulation between endogenous and exogenous learning persist? Or is it that endogenous and exogenous development cannot be reconciled? It is the case that there are significant differences in the worldviews that support them, and therefore in the practices that they engender. But can some kind of accommodation between them can be constructed?

The interest in endogenous and participatory evaluation in other contexts seems to indicate that some kind of synthesis is tenable. If it is possible to evaluate federal programmes in the United States (Lawrenz & Huffman, 2003), and international UN (OESP, 1997) and World Bank (Baker & Schuler, 2004) projects using participatory approaches, then this suggests that at the very least it seems a good research topic for rural development in Europe. Rather than placing endogenous and exogenous evaluation in opposition, it may be more useful to

consider evaluation in terms of the production of hybrid knowledge (Fraser & Lepofsky, 2004), where knowledge within participatory projects is considered in terms of the shared understanding that arises within the interactions facilitated within the project. Hybrid knowledge is negotiated and neither endogenous nor exogenous. Instead it arises at the interface between different institutional systems, mediated through brokers and boundary objects (Wenger, 1999). Given that hybridisation is achievable within the planning and management of LEADER, then perhaps it can be achieved within evaluation practice as well.

A hybrid evaluation would represent the extension of the neo-endogenous (Ray, 2000a) conception of integrated rural development (Nemes, 2005) to the practice of evaluation. It would require evaluation to be reconceived as concerned with the production of hybrid knowledge that is systemic and multi-layered. This would surely enrich LEADER evaluation as a whole, particularly if the difficulties of aggregation of participatory evaluation could be overcome. A hybrid evaluation would require attention be paid to the needs of different levels of governance, and the contradictions between the way that the values embedded at different scales and different contexts to be addressed. Given the depth of experience of multi-level governance within Europe, it is conceivable that a satisfactory hybrid between the current evaluation and more endogenously grounded approaches to evaluation could be institutionalised.

Achieving a hybrid evaluation requires work to reduce the contradictions between the current formal institutions of evaluation and the institutional settings out of which endogenous evaluation arise. It might also require a strengthening of the capacity for local evaluation and learning within LEADER, which would require the commitment of central resources to this area of management, just as happens with other management functions in LEADER. In other words, good endogenous evaluation feeds good exogenous evaluation. Surely institutionalising resources and incentives for endogenous evaluation is no more difficult than building in resources and incentives for endogenous planning and delivery. The additional resources required are defensible if the contribution to the quality of exogenous evaluation and to the endogenous institutional capacity that underpins the development processes itself can be demonstrated. Given LEADER's progressive profile, there is much reason for optimism that a hybrid evaluation system that reconciles endogenous and exogenous learning could become possible, and if it did, it would be a significant international model for others to follow.

As LEADER becomes more mainstream and spreads to less developed Central and Eastern European countries with varying socio-economic situation and rural realities, the adaptation of methodology and policy implementation becomes more important, thus there is also a growing importance of better and more qualitative evaluation and feedback into the policy making process. Burning questions are: how to turn all this into practice; how to promote endogenous evaluation centrally; how to aggregate results, and how to couple them with central assessments; on what ways can external and participative evaluations support each other; in other word what would make a good methodology (or methodologies) for hybrid evaluation? We can only raise these questions in this paper and start the journey for finding answers, based on two case studies, undertaken with a Hungarian and an Irish LEADER Action Group (LAG). In both cases we applied an evaluation methodology that sits firmly in the endogenous camp – the use of participatory video as an evaluation tool.

Participatory video

Participatory video can be defined as a tool for the facilitation of individual and group learning and communication, where participants use the creation of video materials to share

and make sense of their experiences and relationships. Making a film becomes a learning process for participants, and the camera becomes a mode for directing the attention of participants rather than (or as well as) an audience (High, 2005). Participants are thereby presented with the opportunity to become the subjects rather than objects of a social learning process, and the methodology thus fits naturally in a participatory action research frame. The methodology requires a skill set amongst facilitators and researchers that encompasses technical capabilities, yet emphasises social capabilities (High, 2005). It is therefore distinct from related applications of video to social issues, such as Harding's (2001) video activism, and to non-participatory applications of video in research.

As a practice, participatory video has a 35 year history, dating back to the advent of VCRs, video cameras and portable video production systems in the 1970s (Shaw & Robertson, 1997), and there are earlier antecedents based on the use of broadcast and film equipment (Crocker, 2003). In the UK by the late 1970s, an independent video sector grew up with strong links to the community arts movement. Since then, PV has found expression within social work, community development, therapy, participatory education and arts access (Shaw & Robertson, 1997). Internationally, PV has been used in a wide range of national and sectoral applications where social engagement and social learning is important; including natural resource management, project monitoring and evaluation, community development, participatory communication and advocacy, and the emancipation of disadvantaged social groups (see White, 2003).

While much of this development has happened outside of academia, falling equipment costs and ease of access to filming and editing facilities has recently revived academic interest in visual methodologies in general (Pink, 2001). At the same time, there has been a surge of scholarly interest in the study and application of participatory research methods and approaches (Fuller & Kitchen, 2004; Kesby et al, 2004; Pain, 2004), with human geography and other disciplines following a lead established by scholars of development studies (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Chambers, 1994). As a result there is growing interest in participatory video within development studies, social geography, anthropology, sociology, management and organisational learning, and science and technology studies. White (2003),for example, lists a wide range of projects from the use of video in PRA (Participatory Research and Action – see Chambers & Conway, 1991) in Africa, to dissipating tensions between Inuit hunters and conservation officials in Arctic Canada.

Participatory-focused academics seek to work in bottom-up ways with the goal of actively engaging and benefiting groups outside academia so that traditional barriers between 'expert researcher' and 'researched community' are broken down. A key ethical tenet of their work might be not just to do no harm, but to do good in the sense urged by Flyvbjerg (2001) in his call for a *phronetic* social science. Participatory video is particularly strong in drawing research stakeholders into sense-making and analysis within research and as both a broad and a deep mode of dissemination, drawing on its foundations in visual and oral literacies (High, 2005).

As with PRA and other participatory approaches (Chambers, 1997; Berardi, 2002), an important focus in participatory video is on the re-orientation of professional skills required it to work. The need for such a shift in what is incentivised within professional life has been raised elsewhere, notably in Goleman's (1996) notion of EQ (or emotional intelligence). His idea is that successful people succeed not just because they're intelligent in the traditional psychological sense, but through their inter- and intra-personal skills. In participatory video, and indeed in any tradition of thinking and practice where lay and expert knowledge come into contact, paying attention to social skills becomes of critical importance, the wellspring of successful programmes and initiatives. Hard competencies are still important, but many

professionals struggle with the tension induced between the competencies that their training and worldview tells them are the heart of the job, and the requirement to deal skilfully with Schön's (1991) swampy lowlands where " …*messy, confusing problems defy technical solutions.*" But as Schön says, the practitioner needs to choose, and the choice is whether to stay on the technical high ground or "…*descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?*"

For some skilful practitioners dealing with soft issues is accomplished by re-orienting what they conceive the profession is about. But this is ultimately a value shift and often neither personally nor professionally comfortable. It does not help that the issues of what is or is not core to professional competency is often strongly institutionalised within organisations – think not just about job descriptions, but what's measured in annual reviews, what it takes to gain the respect of peers, and so on. In most communities of practice, there are a broad range of formal and informal institutions saying what the job is and what good performance entails. Whatever a individual's personal values, if the organisational and institutional setting of their practice runs counter to the demands of competency in the egg white, it can be unrewarding and even very difficult to be skilled at dealing with non-technical issues.

Participatory video as a learning process

In participatory video, making a film is not an end in itself, and instead the focus is on the learning of the participants. But while learning technical skills can be part of this, the primary benefits are social. In good practice, the technology becomes a mode for directing the attention of participants, rather than an audience, and activities revolve around "…*the needs of the participants. Video is used to develop their confidence and self-esteem, to encourage them to express themselves creatively, to develop a critical awareness and to provide a means for them to communicate with others*" (Shaw & Robertson, 1997).

Given that most film-makers are habituated to the need to make good quality films (and academics to address their constituencies with what looks like good quality research) there is often a tension between technical and social competencies, which is expressed in the literature on participatory video in terms of discussions about product and process. Both White (2003) and Shaw & Robertson (1997) discuss the use of video with groups in terms of whether they are process or product led, saying both are important. However, there is a strong sense that while the product is important, it is process that is primary. For Shaw & Robertson, for example, participation is distinguished from non-participation by technical focus, and non-participatory video arises when the quality of a production becomes an over-riding concern at the expense of interaction with participants.

An important claim concerning PV is that it draws people into active roles with respect to film and television, dominant cultural forms in most societies. For Shaw & Robertson (1997: 14), much of the potential of participatory video arises because of this activation of participants as social and cultural actors. As White (2003: 64-6) points out, we are conditioned by TV to accept video as a medium in which we are passive. Participatory video enables self-expression, and can bypass some of the formal institutionalisations of knowledge that prevent the expression of participant's needs and thinking. The claim here rests on the idea that individuals are drawn into a form of expression they are familiar with, drawing on their inherent visual literacy. When working with research stakeholders or non-expert participants in evaluation, for example, PV allows people to express themselves in cultural forms with which they're intimate rather than through the formality of an interview, workshop or questionnaire. Some of the claimed benefits of the methodology are summarise below in Table 1, which draws on Shaw & Robertson (1997: 20-6).

Table 1: Benefits of participatory video (based on Shaw & Robertson, 1997)	
Active Participation	"*In order to generate meaningful participation, development work cannot simply be imposed form above on passive recipients. It is crucial that people take an active part in decisions affecting their development.*"
Individual development	"*Recording their experiences and ideas on tape assists a process of self-definition. Video acts as a mirror. Playing back the recorded material can promote reflection and develop a sense of self.*"
Communication	"*Video can stimulate two-way communication. The presence of the equipment generates discussion by giving a reason for talking about issues.*"
Community building	"*Working with video equipment can in itself encourage co-operation. Video is a team activity. Participants have to work together to attain a worthwhile result, involving joint planning and decision-making.*"
Social Learning	"*Agreeing on a topic for a video or a message to convey can increase a group's understanding of what it thinks about an issue…The shared strength can motivate people to continue working together to bring about improvements.*"
Increasing institutional capacity	"*From the very beginning of a project, the group are all required to make decisions, and as their planning skills grow, there is a shifting of responsibility for the direction of the project from the workers to the group's members.*"
Self-advocacy	"*As a project progresses, the group's desire to say something to a wider audience often increases.*"
Empowerment	"*…the group can progress with an increased strength and power to use video as a means to participate in divisions affecting their lives, to communicate with and influence the prevailing power structures, and to bring about changes on an organisational, environmental or political level.*"

Participatory video and evaluation

High & Nemes (2007) have outlined the need for forms of evaluation for rural development in Europe that allow local people engage in social learning and participatory sense-making.

Participatory forms of evaluation exist, harking back to the 1970s (Wadsworth, 2001), and generally the aim is to appreciate and integrate the knowledge of both insiders and outsiders (Davis-Case, 1990) and professionals and beneficiaries (Wadsworth, 2001). In practice, a spectrum of engagement can be observed, from evaluation where efforts are made to include a wider range of stakeholders to evaluation that is led by lay stakeholders who take a substantive part in designing and enacting opportunities for project actors, funders and gatekeepers to learn about the project (Davis-Case, 1990; Wadsworth, 2001). The common thread is that endogenous knowledge is valued, and social learning is facilitated.

The benefits claimed for PV (table 1) suggest that it has a strong potential to meet both the informational aspects of evaluation, as well as the developmental aspects – both social learning and social development. There are a range of specific methods and exercises in Shaw & Robertson (1997) and Lunch & Lunch (2006), and in table 2 the film-making process is decomposed into example tasks, together with their general application in PV and notes on how this applies to evaluation in particular.

Table 2: Tasks in the film-making process and their application within PV		
Task	**General application**	**Participatory Evaluation**
Pre-production		
Production planning	Group planning skills and empowerment. Institutional capacity building.	Baseline evaluation and buy-in of participants
Scripting	Collective sense-making, advocacy	Selection of case studies and evaluative decisions about positive and negative experiences
Research	Active social learning and capacity building.	'Sweeping in' of excluded stakeholders, exposure of participants to other viewpoints.
Negotiating access	Capacity building, building up of relational skills	Exposure of participants to other viewpoints.
Production		
Filming	Individual development and team working	Empowerment
Interviewing	Empowerment	Exposure of participants to other viewpoints.
Production management	Capacity building.	Empowerment
Post-production		
Editing	Collective sense-making	Collective sense-making
Public showing	Empowerment, advocacy	Advocacy, triangulation
Publicity	Advocacy	Advocacy, empowerment

This paper has considered participatory video as a process tool, and mapped claimed benefits of the PV process to application in evaluation. Pilot work in Sumeg, Hungary and in Ballyhoura, Ireland, has demonstrated in practice some of the benefits of PV in terms of communication, team building, social learning and social activation. In terms of the research agenda laid out in High & Nemes (2007), the next step is to develop the methodology as a more rigorous evaluation methodology and to pay attention to the politics of negotiating such social learning processes.

The base-line evaluation of a Hungarian LAG with PV

Our first pilot study using PV in rural development evaluation took place in and around Sümeg – a small market town in mid-west Hungary, in early July, 2007. Our main aim was to do an innovative experiment on how and what for can PV be used in the context of local rural development and self evaluation. The project in this sense was focused on action research, but at the same time it concentrated on evaluation, community development and, at the end of the day, also on producing a film or some sort of presentation material. The research team was very diverse, with members from various backgrounds and nationalities. The project was organised by two sociologists (one from the UK, one from Hungary) and was assisted by a German PhD student. They brought knowledge on rural development, evaluation, group dynamics and on Hungarian rurality into the project, but had at the time little or no practical

experience with PV. They were complemented by an English PV expert, whose main expertise is in making community videos with local groups of young people, but had some experience of doing the same with development organisations in Third World countries. The team was joined by a Hungarian cameraman (normally doing sport videos) and a translator, who is also a professional photographer. It was the first time that this group worked together in an experimental project, never done before by anyone, in an environment of which we knew hardly anything, thus the project promised to be an exciting flight in the dark.

Background

The current LEADER Programme in Hungary was first advertised in autumn 2005, successful LAGs were selected in March, next year. This meant that at the time of our project there were little tangible results of LEADER. Nevertheless, the run-up for LEADER funding, participative planning and the organisation of local development institutions presumed the existence of strong local community and a history of participative action. The Sümeg LAG (in Hungarian: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlődéséért Akciócsoport) contains 22 settlements with some 22 thousand inhabitants, two third of that living in only two settlements, Sümeg and Devecser. This region is one of the most disadvantaged ones in Western Hungary with low population density (58 inhabitants/ km^2). There is very little industry, a relatively high level of unemployment and agricultural employment, a high level of disadvantaged Roma minority and a very scattered settlement system, with a weak availability of services and bad communication. Sümeg is the main market town of the region and as a former city it has a long history of being a cultural and economic centre. It has a fortified castle, a bishop's palace, a number of churches and a nice baroque high street. Its centre position could be symbolised by those eight, many kilometres long ancient roads, which are coming from directions all around and meet in the imaginary centre of the city.

Our main partner in the project was the Famulus, a civil association, including mainly young local professionals and craftsman (potters, artists, small entrepreneurs, teachers, public servants, engineers, lawyers etc.) and was organised and led by a young lady, working in rural and regional development for many years in the region. Famulus was only established in 2005 April, however, gathering lots of enthusiasm, human resources and contacts, soon grew to be an important player of the local political arena and successfully acquired the position of the LEADER management organisation in the micro-region. Famulus proved to be a strong group of young, committed, enthusiastic people with a strong will to build a better future for themselves. Their leader was very competent, with lots of experience, good connections and with an appealing and charismatic personality. Being the management organisation for Sümeg LAG, they had some facilities (an office with computers, some paid staff), which was a great advantage for our project.

Our original connection to the Sümeg LAG was quite a positive one. One of the Hungarian members of the research team, as a central expert during the capacity building phase of the current LEADER programme was working with this LAG, giving them training and helping to write their finally successful LEADER proposal. When he made a request to the LAG for running a pilot PV project, he got a positive answer, in spite of that LAG members and development practitioners were overburdened with work during the period, planned for the project.

The process

The preparation for the project meant some telephone conversations and a two hours interview with the leaders of Famulus, then a short presentation of our plans to the members of the association on one of their regular meetings, by our Hungarian expert. What we asked for at the beginning, was:

- Some space for editing, meetings, etc.;
- Some people (2 or 3) who would become part of our team and would work with us throughout the project;
- One or two occasions at the beginning where we have as many members of the community for giving them a workshop and writing a script together;
- Another evening at the very end for the final show and a party.

What we offered was:

- A possibility for self-reflection and social learning – so to say, self-evaluation;
- A training for community building and the raise of self-consciousness for the members and for the association as a whole;
- Improving the communication of the group to their area and to the outside world through the film making process and the resulting presentation material;
- Empowerment and capacity building for the group and for its individual members.

The project took place within a week, and required really intense and co-operative work from every members of the research group. We arrived to Sümeg on a late Monday morning, had a short discussion with the Famulus staff and then went to an official information day, organised for prospective LEADER project holders, at the end of which we held a short video workshop. Tuesday morning we started shooting with three Famulus staff, doing interviews with various members of the community (entrepreneurs, artists, craftsman). Later on other community members joined in, several 'filming troops' were formed, all equipped with cameras, microphones and accompanied by at least one of the research group, and the shooting went on during the following three days, producing better and better material. Tuesday afternoon and evening we had a five hours script-writing workshop with the participation of some15 members of the community, composed of a brain storming session, long discussions on the work of Famulus and a community writing exercise. Retrospectively this event became a crucial one for the whole project, for clearing out misconceptions and from the viewpoint of evaluation and community development. Editing also started Tuesday afternoon with a workshop involving community members and continued until the last moment of the project. During the evenings and some mornings of the project the research team had long discussions about what had happened and what was to be done the next day. A large part of the editing was also done during these brakes. The project-week finished Saturday night with an open show combined with a garden party, on which some 70-80 people participated, everyone was very touched and we had to show the film four times in a row.

Nevertheless, to arrive to the euphoric moment of the final show, a range of difficulties and misunderstandings had to be overcome. The first, and most important one concerned the buy-in of the leader and the members of the community and clearing out misconceptions about participation. In our culture everyone is familiar with films, nevertheless, being filmed is quite unusual for most people and making a film is a queer situation for almost everyone. Famulus

members participating in the project at start did not understand the concept of participation in film-making, could not imagine managing the equipment, etc. Being aware of this possibility, we tried to make clear well in advance of the project that the film was not to be made *about* Famulus. Our team would only provide technical equipment, show how to use it and assist the process all the way, but the film about their community and work was to be designed and made by themselves. Still, when we arrived to Sümeg Monday morning, a week long shooting schedule was waiting for us, with interviews organised and almost no time for workshops, discussion or editing. This was a difficult moment, when we had to start clearing things up and reinventing the whole process. There were three major circumstances helping us to overcome these difficulties. First, the leader of Famulus started to understand very quickly (Tuesday afternoon, during the script writing workshop) the concept and its possible advantages. She is a flexible and very easily learning person, she could adapt to the situation and help us to gradually convince the rest of the core community members. Second, the Hungarian LEADER programme was delayed, and the launch of the local application process was postponed with two weeks, giving some free time to the locals for working with us. Third, some community members, who had not been very active before, became very much attracted to the project and devoted substantial time and energy to it. Nevertheless, at the end of the day we managed to overcome most difficulties, achieve full attention and commitment of the community. Without this we would not have had a chance to do a successful project.

Observations, constraints, lessons, concerning PV methodology

Achieving real participation

It seems that in a rural development environment to achieve a clear understanding of the meaning of participation in PV at an early stage of the project is both crucial and very difficult. We spent a great deal of our time and energy to achieve this even at the price of neglecting other objectives and braking our timetable, since without that success would have been impossible. It can be assumed for future projects that whatever explanation we try to give about PV, people can only become aware of the meaning of participation and the whole process during the project. In the case of a one week exercise this can easily undermine the results. Several options could be considered to overcome this possibility. One would be to make the project longer, or to make it in two phases, first to teach the method and clear out misunderstandings – almost like doing a 'dry run' – then doing the project for real. Nevertheless, this solution can be seriously constrained by time and financial resources. Another possibility could be not to finish a film within the course of a week, but leaving editing and post-production to some local professionals. However, in this case the final euphoria, the feeling of achievement is lost, and there is a great danger or never having a final product, whatever successful the process seemed to be, which can create great disappointment. If there is a possibility, it might be better to involve local professionals video-makers in editing and other parts of the production process to free time and energy on the side of the core research-facilitator team. Nevertheless, to find the appropriate local people for this is very difficult and requires preparation and luck[1]. A third possibility could be not to promise to make a proper film, only some presentation material, or sell the idea as community

[1] During the Irish project, for example, we met a local family, with lots of community involvement, experience in film making and photography and a properly equipped home video studio. Moreover, they were running a small rural tourism business, where we all could have stayed, therefore their farm would have been the perfect setting for the project. Nevertheless, we had no chance to learn about all this beforehand…

development or some sort of training. This would allow us to concentrate on the evaluation and community development side and not to do lots of editing and technical work during the project. Nevertheless, we have had bad experiences about this in a later pilot project in Ireland, where lacking the magic allurement of making a film it was much more difficult to win the full support and enthusiasm of local people. Thus we do not have an answer to the problem yet, nevertheless, careful preparation and clearing misunderstandings very early on is essential, and insisting on a video workshop and on a script writing exercise with a wide participation can also help a lot.

Participation within the research team

Conducting a participatory research process includes that major decisions about the way the project is conducted should be the outcome of negotiations. The results of these negotiations set the frame within which the project will then be developed conjointly. Every member of the research team has to be informed about the outcomes of these negotiations and decision-making processes to be able to contribute to the project. This **contextual information needs to be updated frequently**; otherwise, the team can not develop its full potential and will loose the flexibility to respond to participants accordantly (as a team). The great potential of our team was its diversity in regard to the different abilities, interests, knowledge. Combining and negotiating these among us (and then with the participants) to facilitate a complex participatory project created this unique resource we had to offer to Famulus. It meant that every day some hours (in the morning or evening) were needed for this negotiation but I think it worked successfully and is reflected in the creative and flexible way how the project was finally conducted. Nevertheless, communication within the group did not work perfectly all the time and for everybody. Part of the problem was the language barrier (see below), another part the lack of time and conscious planning, since some team members for practical reasons could not participate on the morning and evening discussions. During the course of the project it also became clear that team-members have to trust in the competences of the other and to be able to give up responsibilities (step back). However, working in a team also requires that the group acknowledges its specific power-hierarchies so that in the need of making an ad-hoc decision it will be possible to (re-)act.

Time constraints

The one week we spent with the project was ideal on the one hand, and very short on the other. If the local group become as involved and enthusiastic as in Sümeg, than a week of such intense common work and togetherness can be a very positive and elevating, but at the same time very tiring experience. If it was a lot longer than emotion and dynamism, giving the hart of our project in Hungary could have broken down, undermining positive result. It is also difficult to imagine that professionals (of the research team or of the local community) could devote much longer time to such a project. On the other hand, to reinforce the community, build capacities, realize self reflection and evaluation and produce a film at the same time was a very difficult task. There was a real danger that for being able to make a good quality film we would have to sacrifice a lot on the side of participation, community development and self reflection. At the end the opposite happened. The film produced by the project is interesting and enjoyable, it presents some of the history and the work of Famulus, the landscape and built environment of the region and a number of interesting projects, applying for LEADER funding. Nonetheless, it has little to do with the script, written by the community. According to that they wanted to present a much more complex picture of their association and their LEADER programme, but to make that film, together with everything else we wanted to achieve, was impossible in the course of a week.

Translation

The language barrier was quite a serious one during the project, since most of the local people (including the leader of Famulus) had no common language with the non-Hungarian members of the research team (including the main PV expert). Difficulties emerged from that: non Hungarian speaker members of the research team were not always aware of what was happening, had problems in participating in workshops and discussions, had limited ability to help or modify the process in general. Editing was also difficult as a consequence of limited understanding. The core Hungarian member of the team was overburdened, he had to run workshops, follow group dynamics, deal with practical organisation and do a lot of translation at the same time. We had a translator as part of the research team, without her help the project would not have been manageable.

Nevertheless, working with translation can also have advantages. Well organised and used in a sensible way it can even enhance the transparency and efficiency of conversations as it is connected with an increasing sensibility in regard to formulations/expressions. It helps everybody involved to reflect more on what they want to say (and/or aim for) and how things should/could be formulated to transport these messages/aims accurately. Furthermore, the language used becomes more explanatory and therewith the risk of misunderstandings can be minimised. Strength of translation can be that you become more aware of body-languages, the way people talk to each other/ relationship as you are put in an observer position. However, doing this over a longer period of time can also make you less sensitive as you run the risk to think "I don't understand anything anyway". It is important that translators should be part of the team so that they know about the aims of the project. This enables them to answer questions during the process and minimises the risk to get stuck in translating everything. This could be achieved through involving translators in main team meetings and in giving them information before hand.

Achievements

We were trying to document continuously what happened during the project and at the end of the week we made (and filmed) a group interview about the achievements. Additionally, one year later (late spring 2007) we conducted a follow up interview about the longer term impacts of the PV exercise, with special regard to its evaluation function. It seems that in the short run (during and straight after the project) the most important outcome was a very strong development of the local community, an experience of empowerment and the strength of co-operative work for a good and achievable objective. They congruently stated that their *'community developed more within a week than during the year of its previous existence'*. Usually they only talk about practical, urgent to do matters. Now they had time and occasion to talk about all that is behind everyday work, values, motivation, vision, desires, which helped to know much better one another within the core of the association, meaning some 10-15 members. The strongest the effect was amongst the paid stuff of the association (the leader and two managers). At the same time the core team now had the possibility of visiting members and project holders who they had hardly ever met before. This provided them with much information, and vice versa, made them far more and better known within their region than any time before. Personal relationships, friendships were also made and reinforced within the group, as a result of the project. It seems that the strong feel of community and empowerment persisted and was decoupled with a will for doing volunteer work for the common good. During the last year the Sümeg LAG, and especially the members of Famulus had a number of common activities. This is not to say that this all is the result or the consequence of the PV project. Famulus had been a strong and rapidly developing community

already before our pilot, nevertheless, PV greatly reinforced and strengthened their development. Self-reflection, group activities and even using facilitation in this also became part of their institutional culture[2].

Self-reflection and evaluation was also important from the very beginning. During the project, the main occasion for this was the script-writing workshop. During this some 15 core members of the association created common knowledge about their activities, motivations, past and future objectives. This was reinforced by a number of interviews made and filmed by themselves and with each other during the week, and again during editing. To be able to present their work and people they first had to know what to say, bringing lots of tacit knowledge to a conscious level. The film was only one little part of the result in this context, there was much more to it happening in people's minds and souls during the process, liberating lots of positive energy and having a strong empowering effect.

All this became very important during the year, following the PV project. In the Hungarian LEADER programme there is no qualitative evaluation of socio-economic effects whatsoever. LAGs have to give account of the money they have spent, and have to write a quarterly report on their activities, but only listing what was done and how much it cost. Therefore, there are virtually no objective indicators to measure which group is good and which is not. The main thing is how groups can present themselves, how active and empowered they are, what events they organise and attend, how they lobby and contribute to the ongoing organisation of the Hungarian rural development arena. Today the Sümeg LAG is considered as one of the best ones in the country, and the PV project definitely provided important assistance to achieve this status. The film produced during the project was put on the homepage of the Hungarian LEADER Observatory, and was shown on many occasions all over the country, as a good example of a LEADER co-operation. During the last year many people have contacted the Sümeg LAG as a result of this. Members of Famulus and the Sümeg LAG became more self contained and able to represent the group. Since the PV project they organised an international LEADER conference, a number of domestic events, were invited and attended virtually every big gatherings and exhibitions concerning LEADER and local development in the Hungarian rural development arena. Again, all this was not simply the consequence of the PV project, far from it, but helped to realise latent capacities, raise consciousness and create a community culture in this regard.

We could confidently say that the PV project, from the viewpoint of the LAG achieved the set objectives – and more. Even though the film did not finally meet the original expectations, we proved that PV has a great value as a functional tool within LEADER and the European rural development context. On the other hand, as a research team we had some other objectives, such as to learn about PV in a European local-rural development environment, concerning methodological constraints and advantages, evaluation value, possible connections with other participative methods and central evaluation in order to move towards the formulation of a hybrid evaluation methodology. We have to admit that the project was somewhat less successful in achieving these objectives. We checked the methodology in a real life experience, nevertheless, to give answers to some burning questions we should have run a separate (non-PV) participative evaluation, based on interviews, focus groups and participative observation with the same LAG. Of course, we had no time/and resources to do this. During the course of the project week neither we had time and energy to properly document group dynamics and other circumstances, which somewhat reduced the social

[2] Early spring 2007 they had a community development and communication training, with the participation of many members, and they are willing to have more of this kind if financial constraints make it possible.

science value of the pilot study. There have also been some objective circumstances hindering our work, such as the luck of central evaluation of LEADER in Hungary did not allow us to make any detailed comparison or conclusion concerning hybrid evaluation. We can say though that PV helped to build evaluation capacities, presentation skills, produced marketable presentation material and raised the consciousness of community action and the importance of giving account of it. We also combined PV with other participative methods (creative writing, brain storming, etc.) and documented that these methods were mutually reinforcing each other and could achieve spectacular results in community involvement, creative thinking and capacity building.

Second Pilot study in PV for evaluation: Ireland

To take forward our experience in PV and evaluation of rural development, we designed a second pilot project, which for objective reasons have not taken place until the finalisation of this study. Nevertheless, as an addition to this study, we would like to share the design of the second pilot to show those improvements in methodology, which we consider to be essential for PV becoming an established tool for hybrid evaluation in the future.

The second pilot study is taking place in the south-west of Ireland, at the Ballyhoura Development Ltd, which is one of the most prestigious and well known LEADER LAGs of Ireland. They work in a very large agricultural area, with low population density, bad communication and relatively week service provision. The region is rich in nature, nice typically Irish hilly green landscapes, and has a long tradition in community and development work. It is also one of the two Irish LAGs belonging to various regions and local authorities, which all have distinct regulations for planning, public service provision, etc., making the formulation of a coherent local development system within the territory of the LAG even more difficult than usual.

Our initial connection to the LAG comes from an international network of local development groups. The preparation for the second pilot study was similar to the first one, consisted of writing and improving proposals and a trip to the LAG to clear out some details of the project. Originally we also planned a half day video workshop with the prospective participants of the project to let them have a taste of what is to come and thus overcome misunderstandings, which were hindering our work in the previous project. Nevertheless, finally the workshop did not take place for financial and time constraints. The design of the second pilot project is as follows:

> ***Introduction***
>
> This is the draft of a proposal for an evaluation process that would contribute to the ongoing LEADER+ process managed by Ballyhoura Development Limited. We want a project that is based on genuine co-operation between researchers, evaluation specialists and the local LEADER+ programme team in Ballyhoura Country. Therefore there is a lot of flexibility to change the proposal to fit the needs of the organisation, and the details of the project will depend on the capacity and willingness of the local programme team and other LEADER+ stakeholders to engage with the project within the time frame available to the research team. A robust conversation about what sort of process is possible and desirable is required before the project can go ahead, and we welcome the invitation to meet face-to-face to discuss this proposal.

The project would require the sustained attention of at least two members of the Ballyhoura LEADER+ team over that period. Additional input from other members of the programme team, members of the LAG group and project beneficiaries is also desirable, but there is scope for individuals to take part in the process at the times that are most convenient for them. We have secured funding to support our time, travel and equipment costs for the pilot project, but request support from Ballyhoura Development Limited for accommodation and transport during the project.

We propose two parallel strands within the evaluation: evaluation using participatory video, and participatory qualitative evaluation. The project team start from the point of view that the programme team are highly experienced professionals with considerable knowledge of facilitating rural development in Ireland. The project is therefore as much about sharing experience of what works as about learning a particular method or approach. Having said that, we plan to ensure there are significant opportunities to learn built into the project for everyone who takes part, and therefore seek to identify learning outcomes in advance which participants value.

Potential benefits include the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the work of the Ballyhoura LEADER+ programme on local rural development, and on its success in presenting its successes to other stakeholders: project beneficiaries, local and national policymakers, and the national and European funders of LEADER+. There will also be an opportunity to explore new approaches to integrating participatory and standard methods of evaluation and to stakeholder engagement in rural development practice. From the research team's point of view, we anticipate submitting a European-level research bid on evaluating LEADER+ within the next year, and the pilot project will be an important source of learning and relationship-building to support such a proposal. The purpose of the proposed research is to initiate a reform agenda for the way that LEADER is evaluated.

Outline of process

The evaluation process is designed to take place over 4-6 days depending on participant's professional and personal obligations, as well as the logistics of assembling an international project team. Once again it is important to emphasise that the design is flexible, and that adequate reasons to participate need to built into it for all participants. The activities described below fall into two strands: participatory video and qualitative evaluation. The way in which these are integrated will depend on the number of participants and their individual interests.

We propose that participants take part in a series of workshops and facilitated investigations, resulting in the production of a film about the work of LEADER+ in Ballyhoura Country at the programme level, and a written report presenting the data from the qualitative assessment. An alternative approach would be evaluate the development outcomes of an individual project, and to investigate the ways in which the LEADER+ programme enabled or disabled effective action. The report and film will be produced by the project participants themselves, with support from the project team where required.

The outputs will be carefully designed to present what has worked well in Ballyhoura Country, and what is required for any improvements that the LEADER+ programme team feel are necessary. They are intended to be useful for the LEADER+ programme team in communicating what they do to other LEADER+ stakeholders, and an important part of the overall process will be thinking about who such stakeholders are, and how the project results might be communicated to them. It is anticipated that one or more research publications are produced describing the process and outcomes of the project. However, it is anticipated that the primary benefit of the pilot project will be the personal and organisational opportunities for learning and development that arise from taking part.

The following activities are proposed, subject to review:

Pre-project preparation: Along with the proposed meeting between a representative of the project team and the LEADER+ team in Ireland, we expect that the project team will meet in

England prior to travelling to Ireland, in order to co-ordinate and plan their activities. It would be desirable for 1-2 of the LEADER+ programme team to travel to England to take part in this preparation. While this is not necessary for the project to go ahead, it would greatly improve the chances of a satisfactory outcome from the Irish point of view. We would be happy to provide accommodation and in-country travel for the Irish representatives, if they took up this offer.

Evening meals: We suggest that the project team, local participants and other relevant stakeholders should have a meal together on the first and last evenings. This will provide opportunity to get to know one another socially, and also to pick up important themes that are difficult to discuss in a workshop or project setting.

Initial workshop: This workshop will bring together all participants in the project to discuss what is wanted from the project and to negotiate a process that respects the needs of all those involved. The core of the workshop will be a practical introduction to the techniques that we propose to use. The primary output of the workshop will be a robust plan for the week – agreement on what is possible and how it is to be achieved – and an introduction to the skills that will be required to undertake the plan.

Participatory video: A group of 2-10 LEADER+ team members and other local stakeholders will work together over the week to produce a film about LEADER+ in Ballyhoura Country. They will script a video, decide who else needs to be involved, film interviews and other material and prepare the video for editing. The video experts will facilitate this, but will support rather than direct activities. Up to 2 teams of up to 5 participants will work together on the film, and we suggest that another group could work with local musicians to produce a soundtrack based in local culture. A daily review session will help to keep the process focused and the team co-ordinated. The film will be edited to a professional standard if appropriate, if it would be useful as a publicity tool for LEADER+ in Ballyhoura.

Qualitative evaluation: The qualitative evaluation will run in parallel to the participatory video exercise, and will require the involvement of 1-5 LEADER+ team members. This group will take responsibility for managing an evaluation process that assesses the impact of LEADER+ on rural development in Ballyhoura. The evaluators will consider what sort of evidence might be available to decide how well LEADER+ is being delivered in Ballyhoura Country, and how this evidence may be gathered and assessed. The evaluation process might therefore include the review of existing evaluations, as well as planning and conducting interviews, focus groups and participatory workshops. The group will also work on developing best practice guidelines for presenting the results of evaluations so as to benefit local rural development activity.

Convergence: Initial findings from the filming and research will be brought together and the group will discuss the relevance and validity of the film clips and individual items of qualitative evidence such as interview quotes, and compare the findings of the two evaluation strands. Based on this, a rough edit of a film and a rough outline of a report structure will be developed, after which participants and research team members will produce copies of the film and the report.

Public presentation: The finalé of the week will be a public presentation of the results to LEADER+ beneficiaries such as the local action group, local politicians and other interested parties. The audience will be asked for responses, and these may be filmed and incorporated into the final product. This will provide a focus to the week and healthy pressure in terms of deadlines and quality.

Potential benefits

We argue that the following benefits are likely to arise from the process outlined above

Learning opportunities:

- The primary purpose of the project is to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on the achievements of LEADER+ locally and to learn things of practical relevance to improving the impact of LEADER+ in Ireland and elsewhere.
- The process will be designed to provide an opportunity for participants to investigate different viewpoints, and test one another's assumptions about the aims and operation of LEADER+.
- The project is an opportunity to share information on the requirements of the centralised LEADER+ evaluation requirements, and to develop ideas about best practice for representing the added value of LEADER+ at the local level.
- Local stakeholders may benefit from an increased awareness of the work of the LEADER+ programme team, enabling them to make better use of the services on offer.
- The research team will benefit from the chance to ground their ideas in a practical context, and to assess the effectiveness of different approaches to evaluating LEADER+.

Capacity building:

- The pilot project will develop participants' familiarity with different evaluation methodologies, and build on their ability to integrate evaluation with the social learning processes they already employ to work with other LEADER stakeholders.
- The evaluation should enrich the group's capacity to respond positively to central evaluation, and decrease the burden on the LEADER+ programme team when the next evaluation is due.
- Participants will gain enough experience in using participatory video for rural development to understand what the process might be used for and how it might be integrated with their own facilitation and community animation practice, if they wish to do so. Advice on commissioning film-makers and buying equipment for similar exercise a will be available if required.

Products:

- The process outcomes of the project will be augmented by a report and a video that will help to communicate the project findings to other LEADER+ stakeholders.
- The video will be suitable for use in networking with other LEADER groups and rural development specialists. The facilitation of networking with UK or Hungarian LEADER groups is a distinctly possible outcome of the project if desired.
- A series of video clips, still images and quotes will also be generated than can be used in presentations and reports.

Research benefits

- The research team will benefit from the opportunity to test out different evaluation techniques in a practical rural development environment.
- In particular the research team will have the opportunity to consider stratagems for handling the tension between participatory evaluation and EU-mandated centralised evaluation.
- The outputs of the pilot study will enrich and strengthen a research proposal for a European research project into evaluating LEADER+, next year.

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