

***Towards an enhanced evaluation
of rural development policy:
insights from EU and US
approaches***

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Outline

1. Context:

- Role of Evaluation, role of RD policy
- Practice of RD policy evaluation

2. Challenges, and insights from comparison:

- Understanding impacts
- Improving the usefulness of evaluations

3. Suggestions for improvement

Evidence base

- **EU / USA comparative seminars,** 2008-10, funded by USDA, convened by Blandford & Hill - *Wye, Paris (OECD), Brussels*
- EU study: **RuDI, 2008-10**
- *Understanding RD impacts and policy processes, including evaluation, EU-27*
- **Direct practitioner experience**



The role of evaluation

- **Policy learning:** to provide lessons on how well the programme is working and identify scope and ideas for improvement
- **Audit / accountability:** to demonstrate to taxpayers / stakeholders / the public, what the policy is achieving (or not)

‘Evaluation is a process by which society learns about itself’

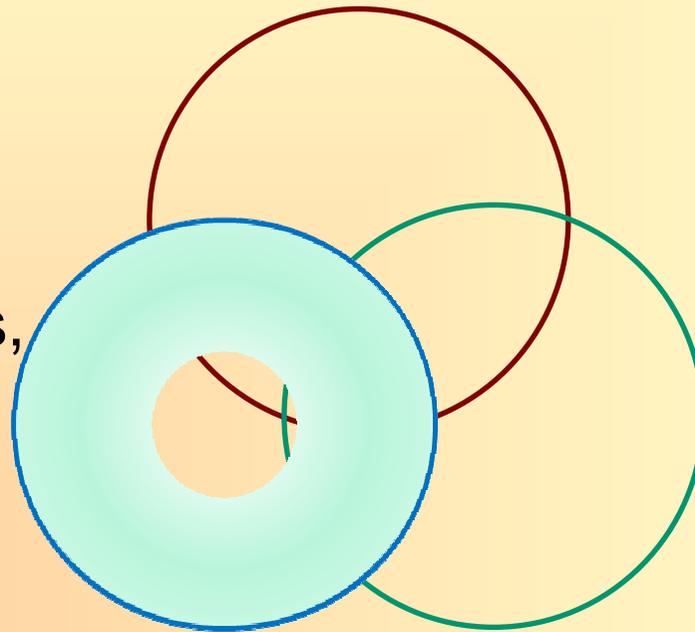
Cronbach, 1982

Rural Development policies

**EU
scope**

Land-based-sector economy

Rural services,
Non-farm rural
economy and
Quality of Life



(Agri-)
Environmental
land management

**US
scope**

Rural Development policies in context

Agri-sector funds

Land-based-sector economy

Rural services,
Non-farm rural
economy and
Quality of Life

(Agri-)
Environmental
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*US funds more
vulnerable to
cuts*

*EU Regional
development –
rural spend*

Evaluation practice

EU

- *Formally embedded in policy legislation*
- *Evaluate whole programmes*
- *CMEF – rules on process, copious guidance*
- *Quantitative and qualitative methods required*

US

- *More ad-hoc*
- *Evaluations by individual topic/package*
- *Wide variety of methods used*

RD Policy Evaluation in EU

Ten years of the CMEF, 2000-10

- A comprehensive & still evolving approach, *detailed guidance, ongoing evaluation, expert support*
- Emphasis upon quantification of indicators of impact – *deductive ‘intervention logic’ approach:*
Funding → **measure(s)** → *outputs, results, impacts*
- Implicit assumptions of:
 - *Simple, linear relations*
 - *Single measures with a common purpose / application*
 - *Somewhat context-independent behaviour*

‘The ultimate aim is that by standardising approaches across the EU, it will be possible to aggregate impacts to a much higher extent than is currently possible.’ EENRD, 2010

Experiences of CMEF (from RuDI)

Clearer & more workable than in 2000-06,
but also substantial criticism:

- *Common approach/indicators doesn't ensure common methods – similar measures may not be comparable; prescribed indicators may not be appropriate to measures in some RDPs*
- *For some goals, no impact indicators yet... (e.g. Quality of life, soil protection)*
- *Approaches to evaluation of some measures/goals (esp LEADER) were inadequate*
- *Emphasis upon quantification: distracts from a fuller appreciation of RDP effects*

*A highly positivistic approach, in which
governance doesn't matter (ENRD expert, 2011)*

For example



SW England, Smart soils initiative: Measures 121, 111

Objectives: water quality, climate change mitigation

CMEF indicators: labour productivity, economic growth

= Low 'impact': poor VFM? NO

Consider less 'extreme' cases, for 121

Q. How is the investment targeted and packaged?

- *Business size thresholds*
- *Open counter, or ranking of proposals?*
- *Offered with free extension support and promotion, or farmers have to find this for themselves?*
- If these things differ, then ***economic impacts*** can be totally different (e.g. for distribution, structural change)
- Also, their implications for ***rural society and environment*** will differ
 - **These contrasts are critical for EU goals**

Learning from US examples

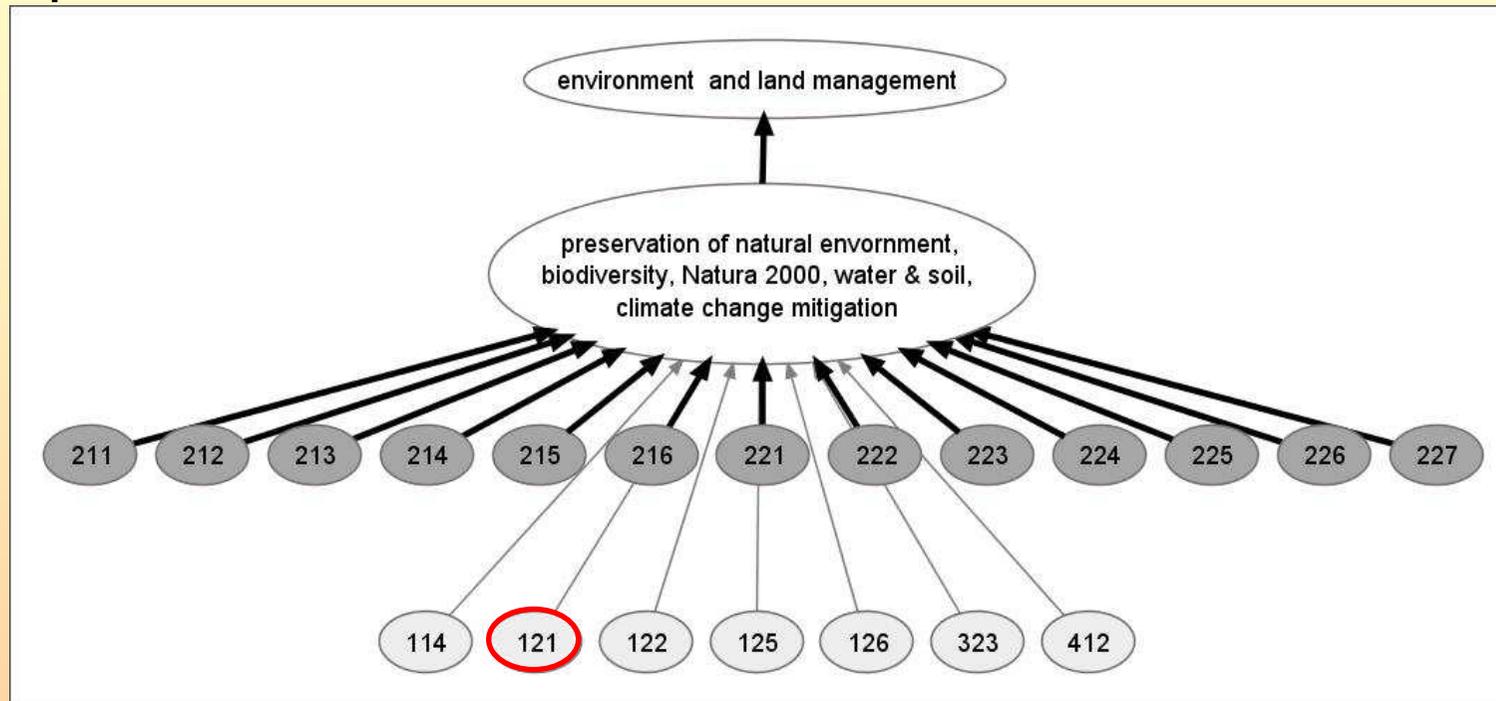
Where we seek broad impact measurements across RDPs, to avoid misleading summation – build a consistent, whole territory model?

- **USA: SEBAS** – *regional SAMs to calculate employment and growth impacts (ex-ante and ex-post applications, sub-state calibration)*
- **EU: CAPRI-RD study**
 - *Seeks a similar approach but methodological challenges much greater : work in progress.....*



Other issues – causal relations

Improving the environment and the countryside – not just the preserve of axis 2 measures



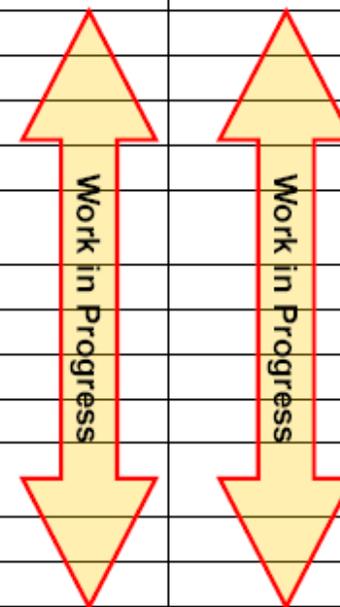
- these can all work together to enhanced effect, if so designed : how to capture this?
- how to attribute causality, if impact indicators show change?

LEADER and QoL impacts

The framework of reference



Category	EQ Guidance Note B	Judgement Criteria	Impact specific EQ	Indicator
Liveability	321/1-3	Improved access to infrastructures and services		
	311-313/4	Improved work-life balance and job environment		
Livelihoods	331/1-3; 341/1-3	Enhanced human capital		
	311-313/4	Valorisation of socio-economic performance		
Environmental well-being	323/1-3	Improved environmental assets and their perception		
	322-323/1-3	Enhanced and improved involvement of the population in environmental management		
Cultural capital	321-322/1-3	Enriched cultural rural amenities		
	311-313/4; 322/1-3	Valorisation of rural assets		
Social Capital	322-323/1-3; 331/1-3	Strengthening local identity and coherence		
	331/1-3; 421/1-2	Fostering networking and openness		
Local gov. & Institutional capital	331/1-3; 341/1-3; 41/1-4; 421/1-2; 431/1-2	Local actors' empowerment and involvement		
	41/1-4; 421/1-2; 431/1-2	Partnership composition & capacity		
Multi-level governance	41/1-4; 421/1-2; 431/1-2	Level of decentralisation and subsidiarity		
	41/1-4; 421/1-2; 431/1-2	LEADER fitness of the programme		



**8 CEQ,
20 possible
Indicators
(EENRD,
July 2010)**

20 May 2010

Leader Sub-Committee

Source: Weinspach, EENRD, 2010

Learning from US – *considering balance and methods in evaluation*

- The distinction: ‘**process**’ and ‘**outcome**’ evaluation; is helpful in maintaining balance
- Both are needed in evaluations; for policy learning AND accountability
- The EU approach (*in practice*) places over-emphasis upon metrics – processes are insufficiently analysed / understood
- Process is not so time-constrained: potential value of *ongoing evaluation* but the current experience is very mixed!

Insights from practice (1)

- Policy tools' impacts are rarely separable from one another, or from the operational context
- Cause and effect can be extremely difficult to link atomistically (*measure by measure, axis by axis, even programme by programme*)
- Measuring strength of impacts is only a small part of assessing policy performance:
 - *How to calibrate performance? RDP targets are not helpful or comparable*
 - *Diagnostics (understanding why) are essential*

Insights from practice (2)

Policy impacts are integrated, so an integrated, systemic approach to evaluation is essential, to understand what is happening:

- *integrating across axes and measures*
- *integrated analysis of whole systems, in environmental and business / socio-economic terms*

Mixed methods are necessary and useful, and (almost) all sources can offer some information of value – *the key is knowing how to weight it, which comes from understanding the socio-eco-political systems that you are working with*

RuDI case studies – *lessons from practice*

Territorial analysis can show causal chains more clearly

Stakeholder views – especially understanding views of beneficiaries – are central to evaluation



There are interesting techniques for ‘process-effects’ comparisons (*e.g. network analyses, reflexive audit*)

Triangulation of sources, & iteration, in constructing understanding, are key elements for a good quality evaluation

Suggestions for an enhanced evaluation framework

- Keep the 'data game' in proportion, develop an equal focus upon process analysis, avoid misleading aggregations
- Facilitate policy learning: reflexive practice, stakeholder involvement, many and novel methods, more robust steer for *ongoing evaluation and dissemination of findings*
- Establish longer-term, multi-period 'impact' measurement or 'state of the rural world' monitoring
- Use thematic, longitudinal or territorial studies (case-study & wider) to clarify causal inter-linkages
- Democratised the evaluation process; simplify the burden of monitoring and engage with the data-gatherers, to agree what is truly feasible and worthwhile