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## Participation of disadvantaged groups and governance in the LEADER and PRODER programmes in Andalucía, Spain

The involvement of disadvantaged groups in European Union neo-endogenous rural development programmes, such as the LEADER programme, must be a high priority. In this paper we study the profiles of the beneficiaries of LEADER and PRODER, the main Spanish example of mainstreaming the LEADER method, in the NUTS 2 region of Andalucía, Spain in the period 2002-2008, and of the decision makers in the Local Action Groups (LAGs). Using quantitative information provided by the regional administration and a questionnaire survey of managers of the LAGs, we show that there has been continuing underrepresentation of previously disadvantaged groups and territories, so contributing to uneven and selective empowerment and governance that favours the emergence of a project class. The groups that have benefited the most from LEADER investments have been entrepreneurs and 'town halls', in this order. Interviewed LAG managers felt that many mistakes had been made in the application of LEADER: excessive bureaucracy and interventionism by the regional administration, loss of the original philosophy, low participation of disadvantaged groups and lack of strategic vision. As was noted by one of the LAG managers, "LEADER has been a victim of its own success; the universalisation of its method has led to the elimination of its experimental nature as a real laboratory for the development of rural areas".

**Keywords:** neo-endogenous rural development, disadvantaged groups, participation, local development

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### Introduction

According to several authors (e.g. Esparcia *et al.*, 2000; Ray, 2006; Woods, 2011), the most important rural development initiative implemented by the European Union (EU) over the last 25 years has been the LEADER programme. In Spain, a similar programme for those rural areas not covered by LEADER itself was called PRODER (Esparcia and Noguera, 2004). In these two programmes, rural communities have been able to choose their own development paths through more appropriate and more rational use of endogenous resources.

As Ray (2006) explains, a model that focuses development on the needs, capacities and perspectives of the local population must also emphasise the principle and process of local participation in the design and implementation of the measures required to achieve these goals. Local governance is therefore one of the basic principles of this initiative. Governance is a broader concept than government in that it also includes elected political parties, individual actors, non-state organisations, companies etc. (Ward and McNicholas, 1998). It covers the transfer of power from the state to local communities, which as a result have more freedom but also more responsibility for controlling and managing their own development processes. Although great advances have been made in this field, in certain questions such as care and support for disadvantaged groups in rural areas (women, youth, immigrants, unemployed etc.), success has been more limited because of the unequal capacities of local communities and rural residents to participate successfully in endogenous development (Woods, 2011).

Promoting local participation in EU rural development programmes (RDP) has often been little more than 'rhetoric' (Midmore, 1998). Their structure and the funding conditions are imposed via a top-down approach, which means

that rural communities do not play the part they would like to play. As a result, LEADER, for example, has become "an instrument of political, social and economic power" (Esparcia *et al.*, 2000, p.97), in which relatively few members of the community are involved. These tend to be those with the time, resources and aspirations to engage, i.e. the local elites, while many other stakeholders, often from the most disadvantaged groups, are excluded from the development process, as are their needs and interests (Nardone *et al.*, 2010), so reinforcing existing power structures (Gardner, 2011).

Research on LEADER at the European level, and in particular regarding the implementation of neo-endogenous rural development, focuses mainly on issues relating to the creation of social capital and the governance processes caused by the creation of public-private partnerships. These studies have noted the lack of involvement and real participation of the local population (Böcher, 2008; Dargan and Shucksmith, 2008; Buciega, 2012; Esparcia and Escribano, 2012; Augustyn and Nemes, 2014; Bosworth *et al.*, 2015; Dax *et al.*, 2016) and the strengthening of power structures in favour of certain economic and political lobbies at the expense of other social groups (Shortall, 2008; Nardone *et al.*, 2010; Gardner, 2011). In short, the unequal distribution of power in Local Action Groups (LAGs) promotes a 'class for projects' and an excluded underclass. At the same time the administration, especially at the regional level, has bureaucratised the management of these LAGs in a bid to control local decision-making (Navarro *et al.*, 2016).

On the other hand, other studies note the unequal territorial distribution of investments. As demonstrated in several NUTS 2 regions of Spain, such as Castilla y León (Gordo, 2011, p.19) where "most RDP investments have been concentrated in a few places (...), which showed greater capacity to attract investment", and Andalucía (Cejudo and Navarro, 2012), LEADER and PRODER Programmes have tended to penalise *deep rural* villages with problems of depopulation and social and economic decline.

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This subject is important for several reasons, in addition to the fact that to learn the lessons of past experience an accurate assessment of earlier programming periods is required to enable us to identify both positive contributions and mistakes. Recent studies have tried to explain the factors that make rural areas more resilient (defined as the ability to respond to or cope with economic crises) and have highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships, such as those established in LAGs (Martínez *et al.*, 2015), effective management of rural development funds, institutional capacity and leadership (Sánchez *et al.*, 2014).

In this paper we study the profile of the beneficiaries of LEADER and PRODER in the region of Andalucía in the period 2002–2008, and of the decision makers in the LAGs. With a population of over 8.4 million inhabitants, Andalucía is the most populous NUTS 2 region in Spain and, with an area of 87,268 km<sup>2</sup>, is second in size only to Castilla y León. It has several specific characteristics that have traditionally held back its development, including its peripheral location with regard to the EU's, and indeed Spain's, political and economic decision-making centres, and its predominantly rural nature (over 90 per cent of the territory of Andalucía is rural). Its high unemployment rate has a large chronic component whereby there is a high seasonal demand for labour on the land at certain busy times that provides employment for large sections of the population who for the rest of the year live on state benefits. There is also a high diversity of ruralities, from *deep rural* villages in the mountains of Andalucía, where the rural exodus continues, to *agrocities*, market towns and county towns. Finally, per capita incomes and living standards are lower than the national and EU averages (Navarro *et al.*, 2016).

For the current EU programming period (2014–2020), European Council Regulation 1303/2013<sup>4</sup> sets out as one of three priority challenges for local development strategies within LEADER the improvement of public services and the quality of life, to mitigate the lack of opportunities compared to urban areas, with special attention to the disadvantaged and those at risk of exclusion. This implicitly covers social inclusion and the fight against poverty. Most previous papers have not analysed in sufficient detail the question of exactly how RDP funds are distributed. They offer general comments that in most cases are not based on empirical testing in the field. They lack concrete data, measurements and specific analyses of what has really happened, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Previous researchers have also focused on the unequal participation in decision-making, while paying less attention to the unequal distribution of EU funds.

Distribution of funds and programme participation are the two topics of our study. Andalucía has 696 rural municipalities which are home to nearly 3.7 million inhabitants, including large numbers of people belonging to marginalised groups. Our research is based on the hypothesis that there are inequalities in the distribution of grants and in terms of

participation according to the social, economic and territorial status of the beneficiaries. Priority is given to those with financial solvency while already disadvantaged groups are marginalised. The governance and empowerment resulting from these programmes has been selective and partial, exacerbating social inequalities. Our purpose is therefore to identify, in more detail than in previously published research, who are the beneficiaries of the LEADER and PRODER programmes, who the decision-makers in the LAGs in Andalucía really are, and how traditionally excluded groups participate.

## Methodology

We used two main sources of information. The first is the list of projects implemented in Andalucía during the period 2002–2008 that was provided by the Regional Government of Andalucía. This list includes all the projects supported and, for every one of them, all the specific information, so the available level of detail is the highest. Data to 2013 are not yet available because the regional administration only finished the application of LEADER in the 2007–2013 programming period at the end of 2015. Our research focused on the projects carried out by private entrepreneurs under LEADER + and PRODER II. The data have been processed to reveal parameters such as total investment, grants, private investment and jobs created and consolidated and differentiates between men, women and young people (under 30 years old), type of beneficiary, the town in which the project was executed and so on. A total of 8,221 projects were carried out, of which 1,471 extended over various municipalities while the remaining 6,750 were implemented within single towns. The total investment was EUR 928 million, of which EUR 347.6 came from public subsidies.

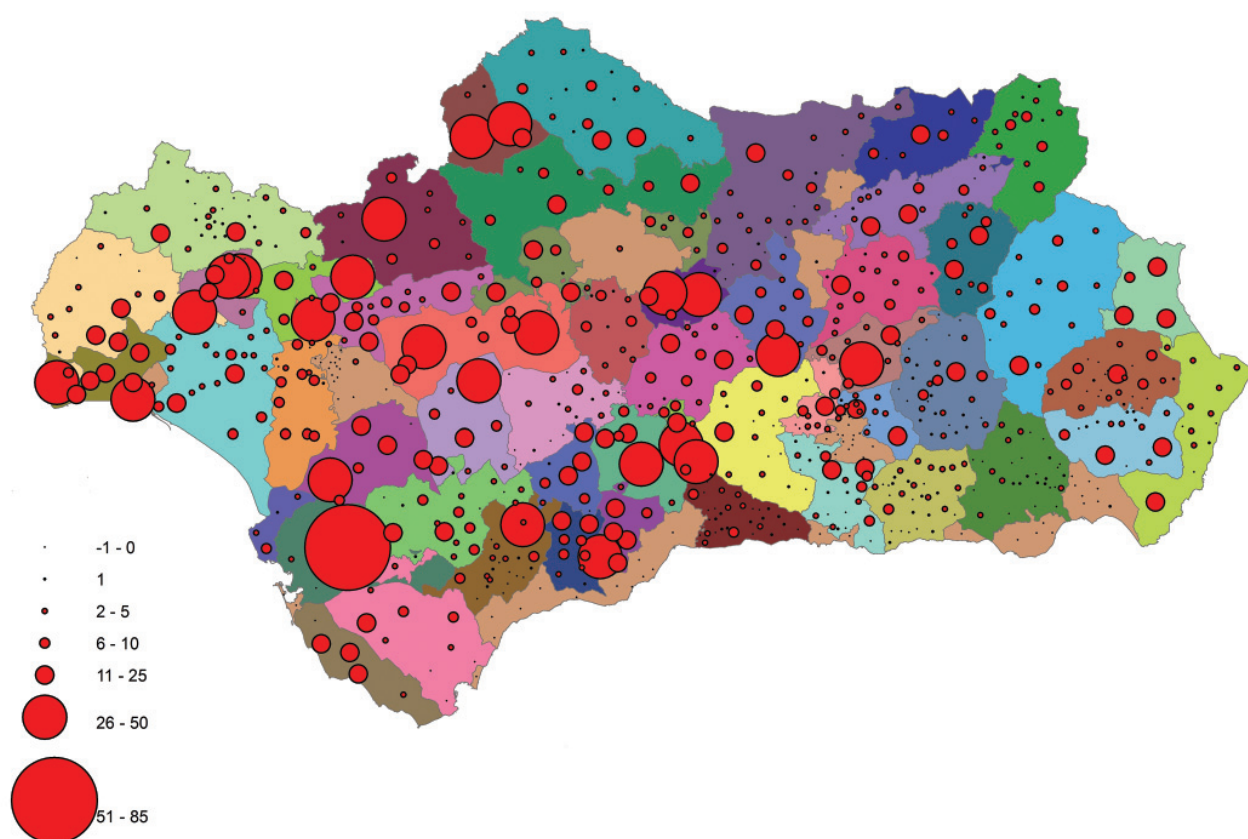
The second source of information is a questionnaire sent to the managers of the 52 Andalusian LAGs in 2014. We wanted to find out what these experts and field workers think about matters such as the participation of disadvantaged groups and the need to include new stakeholders, as well as their personal opinions of the programmes. The information from the interviews complemented and illustrated the data obtained from the database of projects. In line with the principles and recommendations set out in AEIDL (1999), a questionnaire with nine questions was elaborated, two with closed answers, six with semi-closed answers and one with an open answer, generating both quantitative and qualitative information. It was answered by managers of 32 of the LAGs (i.e. 61.5 per cent), distributed across the region, making it highly representative in both statistical and territorial terms.

## Results

### Statistical findings

The Regional Government of Andalucía has already warned of excessive focalisation of funds in territories with greater economic dynamism. Most of the successful projects, i.e. those supported with funding, were located in places in

<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.



**Figure 1:** Number of private entrepreneurs benefited from the LEADER and PRODER programmes by municipality and LAG in the period 2002-2008.

Source: Government of Andalucía

which there was already an established business network, such as *agrocities*, subregional centres and towns that supply goods and services with greater added value and economies of scale. The LEADER and PRODER programmes have tended to bypass *deep rural* villages with problems of depopulation and social and economic decline. In general terms, there is a clear difference between mountain and upland municipalities and those in river valleys (Figure 1).

One of the main problems identified by our survey of 8,221 projects is the uneven territorial distribution of funds, especially on the basis of population size (Table 1). Only 13.4 per cent of the 3,924 private entrepreneurs who received funding from LEADER and PRODER projects lived in municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Although it could be argued that, in terms of the number of private beneficiaries per capita, the villages with fewer than 2,000

inhabitants performed better (one beneficiary for every 503 inhabitants) than those with 5,000 or more (one beneficiary for every 1211 inhabitants), such an assessment would mask the more basic problem of territorial involvement in the programme. Of the 696 municipalities, 117 had no private beneficiaries at all. Of these, 93 were villages with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants and only six were towns with more than 5,000 people. Of villages with fewer than 500 inhabitants, 42 per cent had no beneficiary private entrepreneurs, and there was also a high percentage (35 per cent) in the group with 500-999 inhabitants.

Most of the business recipients of LEADER and PRODER funding were either self-employed entrepreneurs or limited companies (18.6 and 18.5 per cent respectively of all projects). Males over 30 years old accounted for 45.8 per cent of beneficiaries, females over 30 years represented 30.8

**Table 1:** Distribution according to municipality population size of private entrepreneurs who benefited from the LEADER and PRODER programmes in 2002-2008.

Population size	Municipalities			Beneficiaries	No. beneficiaries per successful municipality
	Number	Total inhabitants (in 2006)	No. with no private beneficiaries	Number	
0-499	96	30,796	40	90	1.6
500-999	92	66,790	33	129	2.2
1,000-1,999	116	166,588	20	306	3.3
2,000-4,999	196	613,175	18	1,074	6.0
5,000-9,999	99	674,645	4	931	9.8
10,000-19,999	59	846,062	0	646	10.9
20,000+	38	1,294,845	2	748	20.8
Total	696	3,692,901	117	3,924	6.8

Data source: Government of Andalucía



**Table 2:** Investment and employment in the LEADER and PRODER programmes by type of beneficiary in Andalucía (2002-2008).

Type of beneficiary			Projects, investment and grant				Total employment
			Number of projects	Investment/project (EUR)	Grant/investment (per cent)	Investment/employment (EUR)	
Self-employed	Women	Over 30	471	110,145	26.8	50,350	1,030
		Young	136	64,071	28.3	39,689	220
	Men	Over 30	701	111,487	25.3	42,656	1,832
		Young	223	84,058	26.2	39,693	472
Town hall			2,066	55,003	64.4	59,716	1,903
Coops	Others		226	181,752	25.2	23,269	1,765
	Young		23	150,445	23.8	22,040	157
	Women		31	126,770	30.9	1,128	350
Limited companies	Others		1,206	233,639	22.7	29,279	9,623
	Young		267	258,885	22.2	39,024	1,771
	Young women		49	207,566	21.6	29,169	349
Worker-owned companies			290	177,345	21.7	24,593	2,091
LAG			1,355	77,117	85.1	168,119	622
LAG and association	Assoc	Others	679	65,551	51.8	50,971	873
		Young	6	4,031	78.0	0	0
		Women	63	35,374	44.3	21,124	106
Other entities	Others		374	104,072	34.7	38,907	1,000
	Young		16	135,833	24.7	38,129	57
	Women		39	94,397	32.5	12,294	299
TOTAL			8,221	112,896	37.5	37,849	24,521

Data source: Government of Andalucía

per cent, men under 30 years old made up 14.6 per cent, and only 8.9 per cent were women under 30 years old (Table 2). Although, according to Municipal Census data from 2006, 48.5 per cent of the population in the 20-64 years age group were women, just 39.7 per cent of the self-employed entrepreneurs supported by the LEADER and PRODER programmes were female. To a lesser extent this underrepresentation can also be noted with age: 25.2 per cent of the inhabitants were aged between 20 and 29 years but young people (i.e. aged 30 or under) only made up 23.5 per cent of the supported entrepreneurs.

In terms of the amounts invested, there were even greater differences according to the sex and age of the promoters. Self-employed men over 30 risked an average of EUR 111,487 per project, while self-employed young women invested only EUR 64,071 (Table 2). These differences by age and sex could be observed in all the different types of company (including self-employed entrepreneurs, cooperatives, limited companies and worker-owned companies). However, in terms of the percentages of grants/investment, it seems that the LAGs did not take sex and age into consideration. While in the case of self-employed beneficiaries there may have been a slight positive discrimination towards young people and women, the difference between men over 30 and young women was only 3 per cent. By contrast, for companies, the percentages of public funding for projects led by young women (21.6 per cent) were slightly lower than for men or women over 30 (22.7 per cent).

Fewer women-led projects and lower investment by women lead to fewer jobs created for women than for men: they held only 1,250 (35.2 per cent) of the jobs created by self-employed people. This shortcoming also occurred among young self-employed people (31.8 per cent for women and 68.2 per cent for men) and in limited companies.

Across the 8,221 projects, 70.9 per cent (approximately EUR 928 million) of the investment was concentrated on

three measures or submeasures: 1305 *Basic services for the rural economy and population* (EUR 224 million, 26.1 per cent); 1307 *Diversification of agrarian activities* (EUR 217 million, 25.0 per cent) and 16 *Support to SMEs and craft enterprises* (EUR 164 million, 19.9 per cent) (Table 3).

Similarly, 85.5 per cent of the projects implemented by the self-employed beneficiaries came under these three measures, and with the same order of importance. Although these three measures accounted for 91.9 per cent of projects implemented by both men and women under 30 years of age, there were clear differences between the sexes in terms of individual measures. Whereas 52.2 per cent (i.e. 71 out of 136) of the projects implemented by young women came under measure 1305 (cf. 44 per cent in the case of young men), 21.5 per cent of projects implemented by young men came under measure 1307 (cf. just 13.2 per cent in the case of young women). So, young women entrepreneurs focused more on non-agricultural activities whereas young men placed more emphasis on diversification of agrarian activities.

In terms of financial investment per project, in general, women invested more than men in the diversification of agrarian activities: EUR 145,799 cf. EUR 133,209 per project. Women over 30 invested heavily in diversification and complementary income, perhaps because they were part of a family unit where the husband worked in a farm enterprise, this being the resource that allowed them to take the risk of investing in bigger projects. By contrast, many younger women, possibly remote from farming, opted for other kinds of projects with less money, maybe because they lack family/economic support. In particular, among projects related to measure 16, women over 30 invested almost double that of young women (EUR 83,623 cf. EUR 56,266 per project).

Finally, the measures related to tourism (1310 and 17) accounted for almost 13 per cent of all investment by the self-employed beneficiaries. Among younger beneficiaries there are no major gender-based differences in relation to

**Table 3:** Total investment and investment by the self-employed beneficiaries in the LEADER and PRODER programmes in Andalucía by measure (2002-2008).

Measure*	Total		Self-employed beneficiaries							
	No. projects	Investment (EUR)	Men over 30		Women over 30		Young men		Young women	
			No. projects	Investment/project (EUR)	No. projects	Investment/project (EUR)	No. projects	Investment/project (EUR)	No. projects	Investment/project (EUR)
11	297	58,310,404	21	89,396	23	106,563	3	174,158	3	116,043
12	6	572,038	1	111,562	1	16,619	0	0	0	0
1303**	1	111,434	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1304	214	13,734,394	2	21,767	4	41,002	0	0	3	67,909
1305	2,374	224,287,602	206	85,883	138	68,236	99	49,200	71	38,264
1306	1,223	74,428,439	20	110,450	3	21,752	2	389,095	0	0
1307	1,618	217,036,630	211	140,786	159	146,319	48	133,209	18	141,201
1309	97	7,082,397	24	28,696	3	74,917	2	600,058	0	0
1310	111	200,087,853	8	411,863	9	303,444	3	200,831	0	0
1311	1	41,671	1	41,671	0	0	0	0	0	0
1312	30	2,938,275	0	0	0	0	1	99,715	0	0
16	1,225	164,430,801	175	94,349	90	83,623	58	72,151	36	56,266
17	336	67,381,527	28	196,144	36	161,981	7	167,481	5	175,585
21	13	370,415	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	49	13,700,001	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	156	2,819,295	0	0	2	34,046	0	0	0	0
24	40	1,274,567	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	16	330,906	0	0	1	81,842	0	0	0	0
31	1	59,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	80	4,066,287	2	58,804	1	34,644	0	0	0	0
33	8	1,117,479	0	183,727	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	79	9,002,183	0	0	1	2,301	0	0	0	0
41	109	9,478,074	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
51	137	47,785,308	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8,221	928,117,078	701	11,487	471	110,145	223	84,058	136	64,071

\* 11 Agriculture; 12 Forest use; 1303 Creating replacement services on farms, and support services management; 1304 Commercialisation of quality agricultural products; 1305 Basic services for the rural economy and population; 1306 Renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of rural heritage; 1307 Diversification of agricultural activities and nearby to it, to create multiple activities or additional incomes; 1309 Development and improvement of infrastructure related to the development of agriculture; 1310 Incentives for tourism activities; 1311 Support for crafts on farms; 1312 Environmental protection in relation to the soil, forestry, landscape conservation and animal welfare; 16 Support for SMEs and craft enterprises; 17 Tourism; 21 Labour market policy; 22 Social integration; 23 Promoting education and professional training not linked to a specific sector; 24 Adaptability, entrepreneurship and innovation, information and communication technologies; 25 Measures in favour of women in the labour market; 31 Road infrastructure; 32 ICT, services and applications for citizens and businesses; 33 Renewable energies; 35 Protection and recovery natural and cultural heritage; 41 Technical assistance and innovative measures; 51 Operational costs

\*\* 1303-1312 are submeasures of measure 13 Promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas

Data source: Government of Andalucía

investment in this area. However, the investment by men was lower than that of those aged over 30 of both sexes: the average investment per project was EUR 300,000 (almost EUR 200,000 for those undertaken by young people) being an argument to explain their lower participation. But the share of the investments made by men was 16.5 per cent, cf. 12.2 per cent for women. The average investment per project was higher for men over 30 (EUR 411,863 and EUR 196,144 per project under measures 1310 and 17 respectively in a total of 36 projects) than for women over 30 (EUR 303,444 and EUR 161,981 respectively in a total of 45 projects).

### The managers' viewpoint

In order to get a broader perspective on these results, we sought the opinions of the managers of the LAGs. When asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, which groups had benefited most from the programmes, they gave the highest score (4.3) to entrepreneurs, which could be due to a predominantly economic approach. In second place were 'town halls' (3.7), which was due to the huge influence of the public sector in project control and decision making. In third place came

**Table 4:** Which social groups have benefited more by LEADER and PRODER investments?

	Average	Standard deviation
Farmers	2.8	1.2
Non agricultural professionals	3.4	1.2
Entrepreneurs	4.3	0.8
Retired and unemployed people	2.2	1.1
Young people	3.0	1.1
Women	3.3	0.9
Cooperatives	3.1	1.1
Associations	3.0	1.0
Town halls	3.7	0.9

1 = not at all, 5 = significantly

Source: own data

women and young people (3.3 and 3.0, respectively) and in fourth, farmers (2.8), which may be a sign of the lack of an integrated, strategic approach. Finally, in fifth place, retired and unemployed people seem to have benefited little (2.2) (Table 4).

Respondents also noted that the LAGs had contributed 'quite significantly' (3.9) to increasing the representation of women in local decision-making. In terms of individual

responses, half of the respondents felt that the LAGs helped to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups in local decision-making. Most said that women, young people, immigrants and unemployed people had been integrated through local decision-making councils, associations and/or projects. Only 34.4 per cent thought that LAGs had not increased the participation of these groups. When asked whether LAG activities had had a negative impact on the involvement of different groups in local decision-making, 17 out of 32 replied 'No', implying that they thought that they had had a positive impact, while 11 out of 32 replied 'Yes' and four did not answer.

When asked whether they thought that additional local partners should be included in the LAGs, answers were divided: No (53.1 per cent) and Yes (37.5 per cent). The reasons that they offered for answering 'No' were: "we think that all the social and economic partners are already represented"; "we represent a broad section of society, what is needed is a greater involvement of individual stakeholders, and thus the decisions taken will have higher support"; "higher involvement of the private sector and farmers has proven impossible"; "this could always be improved"; and "maybe some specific actors, such as national parks, environmentalists and the boards controlling the quality of local food products". The 'Yes' answers claimed that a higher participation of the following groups was required: young people, women, entrepreneurs, small businesses, private sector, voluntary organisations, public sector organisations, young farmers, social associations, new residents, education agents, culture and sports agents, and groups at risk of social exclusion. Their specific observations included: "those who really want to participate"; "I think that there should be inclusions and exclusions: include those groups of people with special characteristics, and exclude those groups/entities that do not participate"; greater participation "is always necessary"; "it is necessary to increase the area's internal and external relational capital". Greater flexibility in the LAGs participation was also required.

We asked the managers of the LAGs about the extent to which they have helped female employment opportunities, for which the average score was 3.8, i.e. between 3 ('to some extent') and 4 ('quite significantly'). A substantial number of new women entrepreneurs have emerged in rural areas in recent years thanks largely to the programmes, something which just a few decades ago was unthinkable. In Andalucía, these programmes have often helped female entrepreneurs and workers to escape from the informal economy. The general lack of businesswomen and their low participation in LEADER and PRODER has gradually been corrected over successive programming periods. Although this was the opinion of the LAG managers, the quantitative data reported above suggest that women still participate less as beneficiaries, and receive less financial support than men.

Finally, when asked about their opinion of LEADER and PRODER, most of the LAG managers, 25 out of 32 respondents, acknowledged that mistakes have been made in their implementation. All of these pointed directly or indirectly to the impact on disadvantaged groups. Only four of them thought that no mistakes had been made. The main problems they observed were: "excessive bureaucracy", a recurring

complaint in the LAGs (18 of them); and "loss of the specific features and philosophy of LEADER" (5), i.e. the bottom-up approach and local decision-making. Other problems they identified included a lack of participation by disadvantaged social groups, limited strategic planning and long-term vision, and low funding: "limited access for disadvantaged groups", "uneven geographical assignment and territorial distribution", "financial problems and delays" and "limited economic and financial contribution". The most popular solutions offered were: "reduce bureaucracy and complexity, mainly of the regional administration" (22); give "the LAGs greater autonomy in local decision-making" (15); and "return to the original principles of LEADER, recovering its specific values" (6).

For all these reasons, most of the LAG managers (28 of them) said they would change the way in which they work with the programmes, as was noted in a comment by one respondent: "LEADER has been a victim of its own success; the universalisation of its method has led to the elimination of its experimental nature as a real laboratory for the development of rural areas".

In conclusion, the surveyed managers thought that many mistakes had been made in the application of the LEADER initiative: excessive bureaucracy and interventionism by the regional administration, loss of the original philosophy, low participation of disadvantaged groups and lack of strategic vision. Therefore, given the opportunity, LAGs would change the way in which LEADER and PRODER function: improving the bottom-up approach and local decision-making and returning to the origins of LEADER.

## Discussion

By considering all the projects supported, this study represents the most detailed analysis yet of the implementation of LEADER and PRODER in Andalucía. It shows clear imbalances. Firstly, in a territorial way, implementation has excluded a significant part of the Andalusian *deep rural* (no funding was secured by private entrepreneurs in over 30 per cent of municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants). Confirming the findings of Gordo (2011) and Cejudo and Navarro (2012), some parts of the *deep rural* in Andalucía have been marginalised by these programmes, despite the fact that small, more remote municipalities should be a priority for economic and technical support, together with a range of policies to encourage people to stay or to settle in these areas. This shows the need to reinforce efforts to revitalise these less populated areas. Higher participation of people coming from small, marginalised municipalities could help to improve their benefits and situation.

Secondly, in a social way, 46 per cent of private entrepreneurs supported were males over 30 years old. This finding is supported by the experiences of the interviewed LAG managers, who noted imbalances in LEADER investments between different groups. It must be recognised that, thanks to LEADER, a large number of new women entrepreneurs have emerged in rural areas of Andalucía (39.7 per cent of the entrepreneurs supported were women). But although our results indicate a significant presence of women as promot-

ers, which is to be applauded, they are still not sufficiently supported financially. The same applies to young people. These differences in terms of sex and age are greater if the participation of women in different kinds of companies is analysed, in which those led by men over 30 made the highest investment per project and created most jobs. In terms of total investment and average investment per project, especially in the case of young women, the differences are intensified. On the other hand, in terms of grant/investment, the differences in between men and women, and recipients over and under 30 were very small.

The data show that there has been some specialisation by age and sex in the different areas of investment. While the projects promoted by men over 30 cover a wide range of goods and services, women over 30 focus on more tourism. Young men have a more balanced profile in terms of the activities in which they invest, and young women opt for basic services (e.g. child and geriatric care) for the rural population.

There are a variety of reasons for this uneven participation. Firstly, the fact that promoters are obliged to start their projects with their own funds, as grant applications take time to process. This obstacle has prevented the participation of groups that are normally excluded from economic development, i.e. those with little capital. Banks are not prepared to back projects which they believe are of high economic and 'social' risk, and tend to reject those led by people from disadvantaged groups.

Secondly, by including experience and financial solvency as criteria in the selection of projects, the programmes have greatly limited access to funds for many young people and women. "The lack of confidence on the part of the family to invest and the lack of own funds" (Langreo, 2000, p.25) also reduces the presence of these groups. In addition to promoting training for women and young people, LAGs have to be facilitators of public funds and bank finance. It is necessary to further adapt the financial engineering of banking institutions (venture capital funds, microcredit programmes etc.) to the specific case and functioning of LEADER and PRODER programmes, a task in which the LAGs must play a greater role. A sufficient, readily available supply of financial capital is a basic prerequisite for the endogenous development of rural areas.

Thirdly, our survey of the LAG managers has indicated that several groups have been insufficiently involved in LEADER and PRODER in Andalucía. For example, there has been little participation from farmers. This group, which is often neglected in classical models of economic development, has probably not received a viable alternative or a real opportunity to support the EU strategy for rural development. It is clear that farmers are not a priority group of potential beneficiaries in LEADER. Similarly, involving the unemployed has not been a priority. This is worrying given the structural unemployment problem in rural Andalucía. The LAGs do organise training courses, but they tend to have a general approach with little specific orientation towards the job market.

Finally, in the opinion of the LAG managers, the excessive interventionism and control by government, especially at a regional level, has prevented the LAGs from opening

up to wider public participation. Local elites have controlled and participated more actively in LEADER and PRODER, while other less advantaged stakeholders have been excluded from the development process.

A basic task during the 2014-2020 programming period must be to revitalise and re-engage the entire population in a renewed commitment to LEADER. Faced with the apathy shown by many of these disadvantaged groups, work must be done to regain their confidence and their involvement. The participation of local stakeholders and civil society must be encouraged. The bottom-up, participatory approach must be re-established so that its benefits can be enjoyed by disadvantaged groups in rural areas, and in terms of territorial cohesion, given the limited scope and impact of LEADER on the *deep rural*. Governance and empowerment has been limited and selective in both social and territorial terms, benefiting local economic elites at the expense of traditionally disadvantaged rural groups.

In future research on the social impact of LEADER and PRODER, all the characteristics of the entrepreneur profile (such as age and geographical location (immigrant or not)) should be considered in greater detail in the evaluation indicators.

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