



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

*No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.*

Athens University of Economics and Business, Athína, Greece  
caraveli@aueb.gr

## The LEADER Programme as a vehicle in promoting social capital in rural regions: a critical assessment and examples from the case of Greece<sup>1</sup>

---

***Abstract:** The ‘new rural paradigm’ in Europe, applied through the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), places at the centre of academic analysis and policy formation the concept of ‘territorial dynamics’ as an important vehicle for growth in rural regions. The term denotes “specific regional and local factors, structures and tendencies” which would facilitate the creation of ‘smart places’ among EU regions – according to the 2020 EU strategy terminology – competitive on a regional and global scale. As ‘social capital’ lies at the centre of the above intangible elements this paper critically examines the contribution of the LEADER axis in promoting it, through its bottom-up and place-based approach. After a brief presentation of the programme’s philosophy and methods of application, its relationship with social capital elements is established. A discussion follows on the lack of sufficient attention to social capital in conventional evaluation methods of LEADER. LEADER’s efficiency in stimulating aspects of social capital in rural regions is assessed with reference to case studies on Greece, which appears to be a good case for highlighting the difficulties in applying the bottom-up approach in rural regions but also the challenges that this process involves in inducing territorial/regional development. This is due to the country’s*

---

<sup>1</sup> A different version of the paper was presented at the Regional Studies Association (RSA) workshop on the EU Cohesion Policy: Focus on the Territorial Dimension, held in Lisbon on 5-6 November 2015.

*low overall level of social capital resulting from a number of structural/social characteristics. The paper concludes with pointing out the need for more in-depth research on this topic so that lessons for local strategies can be drawn.*

**Keywords:** *Rural Development Programmes, regional development in Greece.*

---

## Introduction

The ‘new rural paradigm’ in Europe, applied through the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), places at the centre of academic analysis and policy formation the concept of ‘territorial dynamics’ (versus the sectoral approach) as an important vehicle for growth in rural regions. The term denotes “specific regional and local elements, structures and tendencies” which include factors such as “entrepreneurial traditions, public and private networks, work ethics, regional identity, participation and attractiveness of the cultural and natural environment” which would facilitate the creation of ‘smart places’ among EU regions – according to the 2020 EU strategy terminology – competitive on a regional and global scale (Camagni and Capello, 2013; Go et al., 2013; Pollermann et al., 2013). Such intangible elements constitute ‘social capital’ which is considered of paramount importance in delivering the objectives of local development programmes in the endogenous approach.

The concept of endogenous development stresses the contribution of bottom-up initiatives, reflected in the mobilisation of local public and private actors, in creating networks and participating in the design, implementation and evaluation of local development programmes. Thus, attention is not restricted to an assessment of quantitative impacts of local programmes (e.g. RDPs), resulting from an application of top-down decisions of central administration and an influx of external funding, both aimed at regulating the redistribution of resources and minimising market imperfections. The endogenous philosophy on the contrary gives special merit to the cooperative processes involved in determining the means and goals of these programmes for the effective use of local physical and human – especially environmental and cultural – resources. The local actors involved in this type of processes, i.e. the formulation of horizontal relations (at the local level) and vertical relations (between local actors and high tier administration bodies at the regional, national and supranational levels), constitute in essence the area’s ‘social capital’. As these relationships are considered innovatory, ‘innovation’ – not in the traditional sense of technical advancement, but as the creation of new institutions of social organisation and new structures of multi-level governance which combine bottom-up and top-down initiatives to the formation of networks and partnerships - becomes a major source for development (Anon, 2009; Caraveli and Chardas, 2013).

In the first place, rural areas themselves are generally considered as rich in social capital, broadly understood as network cooperation based on trust and re-

gular face-to-face contact. This idea has been emphasised by Putnam (2000), who argues that urban areas have lower levels of social capital, as the small size of a community is better from a social capital point of view. OECD (2006) recognises social capital as “one of the few key assets of rural areas” (p. 3) and many writers acknowledge that, faced with difficulties of obtaining “a critical mass needed for effective public services, infrastructure and business development, rural areas are encouraged to focus on their existing assets, such as location, natural and cultural amenities and social capital” (Sorensen, 2012, p. 874). Secondly, the LEADER<sup>2</sup> approach of RDPs, whose “immaterial objectives” comprise “social attitude changes” (Pizani and Franceschetti, 2011), can be instrumental in promoting local development and hence overall regional cohesion through the promotion of social capital in rural areas.

This paper critically examines the significance of LEADER in this context. After a brief presentation of the programme’s philosophy and methods of application, its relationship with social capital elements is established. The lack of adequate attention to social capital in conventional evaluation methods and the need to incorporate this dimension are then discussed. Thereafter, LEADER’s efficiency in stimulating features of social capital is assessed for the case of Greece by referring to some studies’ findings. This country was chosen due to its overall low level of social capital, a very centralised governance model, the prevalence of a sectoral (vs. a holistic) approach to rural regions and intense regional imbalances largely stemming from unexploited resources in marginal regions. It then appears to be a good case for pointing out the difficulties of applying the LEADER approach but also the challenges that it involves in inducing territorial/regional growth by stimulating social capital elements. Social capital’s contribution in facilitating the shift from an agricultural-based development to a more integrative, place-based approach in rural regions (Horlings and Marsden, 2014) is emphasised in this context. Concluding remarks appear in the final section.

## **The LEADER programme and its contribution to social capital enhancement**

LEADER was set to be the basic vehicle to carry out the neo-endogenous approach in rural areas, which shifted the focus from the ‘agricultural sector’ to ‘rural territory’, a concept comprising both tangible and intangible elements, specific to each locality, such as entrepreneurial tradition and regional identity (Caraveli and Chardas 2013; Go et al., 2013; Pollermann et al., 2013). This approach, which came to be known as the ‘new rural paradigm’, was incarnated in the Rural Development Policy (RDP) – now officially the Second Pillar – of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), implemented through Rural Development Programmes – RDPs). Farmers within this context are considered producers of public goods who safeguard the environment, the landscape and the cultural heritage of their localities through integrated and multi-sectoral

<sup>2</sup> Now replaced by the multi-funded Community-Led Local Development approach.

actions (Arabatzis et al., 2010; Thoidou, 2011; Caraveli and Doukas, 2012). At the heart of the new philosophy lies the enhancement of capacity-building of local actors through the activation of social capital, a process corresponding to social innovation (Ray, 2000; Nardone et al., 2010; Pizani and Franceschetti, 2011; Christoforou and Pizani, 2015). The programme's innovative character lies in the novel methods of tackling local development problems, by "building new forms of partnerships and synergies (horizontal or vertical) and linking activities across various economic sectors, social groups and levels of governance" (Christoforou and Pizani 2015). Evidently, the new strategy requires changes of social attitudes and governance systems.

**Table 1. New Rural Paradigm**

	<b>Old approach</b>	<b>New approach</b>
Objectives	Equalisation, farm income, farm competitiveness	Competitiveness of rural areas, valorisation of local assets, exploitation of unused resources
Key target sector	Agriculture Sector-based policies	Various sectors of rural economies (e.g. rural tourism, manufacturing, ICT industry etc.)
Main tools	Subsidies	Investments
Key actors	National governments, farmers Top-down initiatives	All levels of government (supranational, national, regional and local) Various stakeholders (public, private, NGOs) Bottom-up initiatives

Source: OECD (2006).

Contrary to conventional rural development measures and objectives – which aim at achieving quantitative targets initially set, without addressing social factors, such as values, institutions, local identity, power relations and participatory processes – LEADER explicitly addresses the premise that performance directly depends on the collective organisation of stakeholders through the establishment of the proper mechanisms. It thus introduces elements of integration, participation, networking and local governance capacities as rural development objectives alongside the enhancement of conventional socio-economic indicators like income, employment and competitiveness (metis, 2010). Local partnerships are at the core of LEADER initiatives and directly attached them to the concept and measures of social capital. These characteristics make LEADER an 'approach' rather than a mere 'programme', whose contribution lies in building up the 'human and social infrastructure', apart from the physical and natural infrastructure of the locality, that can also be used in other European and national development-related programmes relying on the mobilisation and collaboration of local social forces, such as cultural activities, the enhancement of natural environment, rural tourism etc. OECD (2006) distinguishes the old from the new approach to rural areas on the basis of the criteria presented in Table 1.

LEADER is implemented through state or private local organisations (representing many types of local actors), the so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs),

“a consortium of public and private partners (local authorities, chambers, non-profit organisations, associations, rural cooperative and private entities), who design a common strategy and innovative actions for RD” (Arabatzis et al., 2010, p. 303). LAGs represent structural social capital, i.e. a new kind of socio-economic relationships of a private and public nature. The co-operation and networks features of the LEADER approach express the relational social capital, i.e. relations based on mutual trust and a social recognition of the LAG inside a network. The possibility of the LAGs to promote projects through different interventions expresses the capacity of individual/groups to co-operate with actors of different socio-economic sectors and the innovative character of the initiatives. This is bridging social capital. The involvement of local population of rural areas in LEADER initiatives can testify different types of social participation, expressing bonding social capital. Finally, the capacity of drawing resources from formal institutions is considered as linking social capital (Pizani and Franceschetti, 2011).

LEADER I, introduced in 1991 as a pilot programme for a three-year period, was considered as the first application of the new approach in rural areas. Aiming at stimulating small-scale innovative actions at the local level in disadvantaged areas of Europe through the bottom-up approach, the programme went beyond simple quantitative development criteria (as for example those expressed in the Lisbon Strategy) to include qualitative ones, as discussed above. The LEADERs that followed, i.e. LEADER II, LEADER+, LEADER 2000-06, LEADER 2007-13, as well as the current 2014-20 programme, consolidated and strengthened the neo-endogenous approach, reinforcing the local identity. Since the first LEADER, the programme has changed in emphasis and scope, eventually extending to all European rural areas, including the economically developed ones. Undoubtedly, the new approach became a model for rural development policies in Europe.

Caution should be given to LEADER mainstreaming which could alter its innovative and bottom-up character by what might be termed a ‘banalisation’ of projects. Dax et al. (2016) support that while LEADER’s status has been upgraded by its integration into the RDPs as the fourth axis in the period 2007-2013, increased complexity of the scheme and a slowing down in its delivery have been witnessed, resulting from more EU regulation. Thus, many of the strategic priorities of LEADER in the previous period lost relevance and more ‘standard’ agricultural measures were applied. Furthermore, the reduced autonomy of LAGs, due to the rise in the level of bureaucracy, constrained their ability to respond to particular local needs, distancing the programme from its ‘area-based’ content.

### **Social capital in the evaluation process**

LEADER’s contribution in the enhancement of social capital that supports further the programme’s overall objectives should be appraised in the evaluation processes. In particular, evaluations should stress the ‘process’ aspect of

local development methods as opposed to strictly tangible and quantitatively measurable targets. The following criteria should then be set (EC, 2010): (i) building local governance capacities; (ii) adopting an area-based and bottom-up approach; (iii) mobilising local action groups; (iv) implementing an integrated (multi-sectoral) pilot (innovative) strategy to rural development; (v) promoting cooperation and networking between local actors across various groups and communities.

It is widely recognised that evaluation reports of ‘conventional’ rural development programmes focus solely on quantitative objectives, namely the increase in incomes and employment, the diversification of the rural economy and the improvement of the natural environment (metis, 2010; Pizani and Franceschetti, 2011; Papadopoulou et al., 2011, 2012). Problems with such reports might include: “insufficient tools for evaluating the dimension and context of social capital, such as intangible inputs/outputs of cooperation and participation; disproportionate focus on outputs (competitiveness, growth, employment) compared to processes (social innovation, cooperative networks, participatory and multilevel governance structures); weaknesses in institutional dynamics – power structures; marginalised groups” (Christoforou and Pizani, 2015).

Some reports however recognise the social capital aspects of LEADER. For example, metis (2010), adopting Bourdieu’s (1980, 1986) definition of social capital, sees it as the basis for local economic development and incorporates it in the evaluation matrix. The report relates social capital to ‘soft’ actions which encourage trust and reciprocity among local people and attempts to assess it through changes in the mindsets and behaviours of key local stakeholders that are connected with each other by bonding, bridging and linking ties. This classical distinction of social capital originates from the writings of Woolcock (1998) and Putnam (2000). Bonding social capital is conceived here as the strengthening of local identity and coherence with a focus on the beneficiaries or project owners; bridging social capital refers to networking and openness particularly in the formation of regional networks across local LAGs; and linking social capital covers the coordination between different levels of governance and the quality of governance.

Pizani and Franceschetti (2011) point to the lack of a simple and standardised index for measuring social capital promotion in different RDPs measures and they propose the Relative Index of Social Capital Promotion (RISCP), an output index based on the different dimensions of social capital. Papadopoulou et al. (2012) stress the fact that while evaluation criteria became stricter in the 2007-2013 period and a more effective system of RDP assessment was introduced, this process is still inadequate, regarding its ability to “capture less obvious and less tangible effects of RDPs, especially when synergies among measure objectives are concerned”. The latter could probably be measured through a number of qualitative indicators. They support, in particular, that as rural development is becoming more ‘participatory’ at all stages – with LEADER’s bottom-up approach the most prominent example – a participatory evaluation

system is required, meaning “an endogenous evaluation...based on the participation of local institutions and indigenous knowledge systems, providing an opportunity for the enhancement of local society and experience” (ibid.). They then propose the use of “mixed-method approaches to the assessment of social dimensions of development projects, because these methods combine the qualitative and the quantitative, the individual and the structural, the economic and non-economic means and ends to the development process” (ibid.).

A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is also proposed by other authors. Nardone et al. (2010) point to problems caused by the systematic use of qualitative methods in case-studies of different localities, namely, the difficulty in considering “the findings representative, comparable and generalisable”. Bambege et al. (2010) emphasise the significance of ‘mixed methods’ in evaluating the role of social capital in local development programmes and in assessing the neo-endogenous approach. According to these authors, such methods correspond to a ‘process analysis’, which “looks at the internal organisational procedures through which the project is implemented”, without however dismissing external factors, such as “political pressures to provide benefits to non-eligible groups or problems within partner agencies that can affect the provision of certain services”.

## **LEADER and social capital in Greece**

### *Social capital in Greece*

Greece, along with other southern European countries, is widely considered poor in social capital and thus in strength of civil society. This is due to its centralised, but simultaneously weak, central state structure, which constitute its primary characteristics. The latter reflect: economic and political instability prevailing in most of the country’s modern history, including the post-dictatorship period; a strong tradition of authoritarian statism with a dominant role of political parties and interference of special-interest groups, leading to patron-client relationships and widespread corruption (Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos, 2002; Christoforou, 2005). The country’s social capital index, measured by membership in associations has been estimated to be the lowest among the EU-15 Member States. This, according to recent World Bank reports, reflects the low quality of institutions (relative to other EU Member States) and a strong perception of corruption, leading to a low degree of trust and confidence in public institutions, which has become a dominant feature of public life. Greece’s tradition of strong, nuclear, family ties and/or hierarchical clientelistic networks have been considered basic obstacles to social capital-building. The latter has, in turn, been considered the main factor blocking reform in the long-term (Christoforou, 2005, 2011; Featherstone and Papadimitriou, 2015). Combating clientelistic practices and establishing impersonal procedures, for example, evaluations, competitive examinations etc. would constitute a step toward modernisation and social capital creation (Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos, 2002).



Social capital elements (e.g. trust, culture and joint decision-making) are equally weak in rural areas (see, for example, Thoidou, 2011; Karelakis et al., 2013). There, the old-type ‘sectoral’ (vs. the holistic development) approach continues to dominate agricultural policy, while local decisions have traditionally been dominated by the central state, with subnational actors lacking the opportunity to participate in RDPs in their localities. This is reflected in the reluctance of actors involved (representing vested interests in agricultural lobbying) to abandon the ‘old’ approach to rural development, while the regulations and initiatives of these programmes have been more used for distributing financial help to eligible holdings rather than as a tool for developing a strategy (Papadopoulos and Liarikos, 2007; Karanikolas and Hatzipanteli, 2010).

It can then be assumed that the LEADER approach, if adopted after overcoming some of the above obstacles, could prove instrumental to stimulating social capital in establishing a more territorial-based decision-making. This could in turn lead to the revival of a number of rural areas and the amelioration of internal cohesion problems.

I now turn to the examination of LEADER’s contribution to social capital-building in Greek rural regions, based on a number of studies that have explicitly or implicitly addressed the topic. Where explicit analyses do not exist, I attempt to draw some conclusions on social capital enhancement from implicit references on RDPs’ impacts.

### *Case study findings*

Different case studies concerning LEADER’s success in social capital building lead to different, often contradictory, conclusions. Efstratoglou and Mavridou (2003) used five evaluation criteria to assess LEADER II, namely: the territorial dimension, the bottom-up approach, the innovative character, transnational co-operation, and networking and financing. They concluded that the programme had an overall positive impact on Greek rural areas, bringing about substantial progress in rural development processes, especially in declining or depopulated areas, through changes in mentalities and attitudes, establishing an alternative to the top-down approach to rural development (ibid.). Its innovative character was evident in the “the effective partnership of local actors”, already introduced by LEADER I, which was largely due to the “homogeneous designated area that allowed for a thematic integrated approach (based on tourism and culture) and competent LAGs that mobilised local population” (ibid., p. 310). This innovative programme was not always welcome by the local population, which showed lack of trust and willingness to respond, due to the LAGs’ lack of experience in bottom-up approaches as up to then only top-down approaches existed. Obstacles to the bottom-up approach were in some cases the outcome of LAGs’ efforts to use the available funding for promoting projects with short-term tangible results (e.g. an increase in employment), rather than encouraging local actors to engage in long-term strategic and multi-sectoral planning. Despite dif-

difficulties, overall the implementation of the programme by 56 LAGs in Greece had a learning effect, as “the LAG proved to be a necessary and innovative instrument that contributes to sustainable rural development, in a centralised administrative context with long tradition in top-down policy delivery” (ibid.).

Examining the implementation of LEADER projects in Lake Plastiras (a designated ‘less favoured area’ in central Greece) in Greece, Koutsouris (2008) concluded that only bottom-up processes, in which local stake-holders participate in the construction of strategies and solutions for the area, can lead to sustainable development, as opposed to a local development approach based on top-down expert and managerial knowledge. Agri-tourism and various forms of alternative/soft tourism that go hand-in-hand with other productive local activities - mainly primary production – emerged as the only way for reversing the declining socio-economic trends and became a major investment outlet for local authorities and private businessmen, who took advantage from EU and national funding (ibid.). With its innovative and multi-sectoral character, manifested in the promotion of “co-operation and self-government” by the LAG, LEADER was recognised as the best programme to promote sustainable development strategies (ibid.). This approach and the kind of knowledge it adds to the area “runs contrary to the ‘old’ approach of using EU funding to set businesses for short-term profit without quality considerations (like taverns or ‘rooms to let’) or organisational, management and marketing skills” which “lack a spirit of co-operation” (ibid.). The latter inevitably leads to erosion of the area’s social capital.

Arabatzis et al. (2010) evaluated the implementation of LEADER+ in mountainous, disadvantaged and insular areas of Greece characterised by severe developmental problems. Using data on the budgets per measure and intervention area pertaining to each LAG, they concluded that LEADER+, just like the previous programmes, “conveyed a new form of governance to rural areas, by bringing together many different types of local stakeholders at each level and between various levels of decision-making, in combination with strategic planning and the management of natural, cultural and agricultural resources ... Integrated rural development [was then] achieved through the participatory cooperation of rural stakeholders at all levels of rural life” (ibid.).

Greek MAs generally share the above views. LEADER+, in particular, was believed to have “addressed a large number of needs of rural areas, serving as an important complement to mainstream policies and agencies and contributing to economic diversification, quality of life and preservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment”. It has done so, by “promoting sensitivity to local needs and small scale, potentials considered unreachable by larger and more traditionally run organisations”. This is what has “distinguished LEADER from other governmental structures ...”. Furthermore, “the implementation of the LEADER method promoted multi-sectoral and integrated development and contributed to strengthening local economy and social capital in rural areas. Mobilisation of entrepreneurs was a key success factor...” (metis, 2010, p. 15).

Generally positive results from LEADER implementation were also found in a case study conducted in south-eastern Peloponnese (the southern peninsula of Greece) by Caraveli and Chardas (2013), where they examine this programme's chances of success in promoting localised development through bottom-up approaches. They draw on information from published documents and personal communication with local actors, represented by the Regional Development Company of Parnonas Mountain (RDC) – the local LAG – concerning the implementation of LEADER+ (2000-06) and LEADER (2007-2013). In these reports, the programmes' achievements were assessed by comparing strategic targets to tangible results, such as the degree of: (i) local diversification through rural tourism - measured by the number of investments in this sector; and (ii) bottom-up encouragement, assessed by the number of people responding to calls for 'demonstrative actions' by LAGs - i.e. actions that inform the population of the prospective investment opportunities (Caraveli and Chardas 2013). These activities could be interpreted as bringing about: (i) increased interaction among actors (through, for example, collective investments) inducing a sense of place and community ties; (ii) improved economic performance through co-operation; (iii) enhanced actors' capacity to identify and take-up new innovative ideas and actions (Christoforou and Pizani, 2015). They could then be considered to be satisfying the evaluation criteria for social capital enhancement. In particular, (i) and (ii) provide evidence for bonding social capital, i.e. of strengthening local identity and coherence. As these can be considered innovative, in the sense that they differ from traditional strategies, they also contribute to criterion (iii). No strong evidence is on the other hand provided for bridging social capital through networking and openness, or linking social capital which would bring about "flows of finance and knowledge" (ibid.).

The inadequate support, let alone the obstacles raised by the State in the adoption of new strategies, which contradicts the innovative and risky character of LEADER, has been pointed out by almost all researchers. According to Koutsouris (2008, p. 245), though "the State provides the institutional framework for the implementation of the programmes, its main purpose is to absorb the available EU funding" as it creates disincentives for LAGs and potential investors through bureaucratic rules; and despite its rhetoric on SD, it does not have a fully articulated development strategy for LFAs". Thoidou (2011, p. 9) further remarks: "a diminished territorial dimension of structural programmes characterises each of the successive CSFs", which implied "a more bureaucratic and complicated decision making process, with a more limited role of local governments" (ibid., p. 11). This is so, despite the basic aim of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) of the fourth period, "to strengthen the competitiveness of regional economies with sustainable development, taking into consideration the lack of sufficient social and human capital in most of the country's regions" (ibid., p. 10). The limited positive impacts of LEADER to just a few areas with a greater access to external funding used to mobilise the endogenous/local resources, underlined by the absence of a state-supported local strategy was also remarked by Caraveli and Chardas (2013).

**Table 2. Summary of case study results of LEADER programmes in Greece: Impact on rural development processes through social capital building**

Approaches (qualitative –questionnaires/ interviews/ published documents) Evaluation criteria	LEADER I (applied in LFAs)	LEADER II (applied in LFAs)	LEADER + (2000-2006) (applied in LFAs)	LEADER IV (2007-13) (applied in all areas)	Obstacles to all LEADERS
Territorial (integrated, multisectoral actions based on rural tourism) -new forms of governance	Positive	Positive (adding value to LEADER I)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● bureaucracy (disincentives for LAGs)</li> <li>● state centralisation/ clientelism</li> <li>● prevalence of old sectoral approach in RD and agri-tourist services: using EU funding without quality considerations; lack of ‘local’ or ‘traditional’ character; lack of synergies and cooperation</li> <li>● lack of national strategy for RD and agri-tourism in particular</li> </ul>
Bottom-up		Positive: mobilisation of local population, changes in attitudes, cooperation (bonding social capital)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● lack of trust and willingness to respond by local actors</li> <li>● emphasis in quantitative results (e.g. no. of persons, no. of investments) rather than attitude change in LAGs’ reports</li> </ul>
Innovative character	Positive (effective partnership of local actors)	Positive (effective partnership of local actors)	Positive (effective partnership of local actors)	Positive (effective partnership of local actors)	Emphasis on quantitative results
Transnational cooperation & networking	Positive	Positive in some cases, extra-local networks by young entrepreneurs engaged in quality production or tourism (bridging social capital)	Positive but with no strong evidence	Positive but with no strong evidence	lack of trust and willingness to respond by local actors
Funding	Positive	Positive in some cases (linking social capital)	Positive but with no strong evidence	Positive but with no strong evidence	

Source: own composition.

The state's indifference in the significant area of agro-tourism, manifested in the lack of local strategies for this sector, is stressed by Kizos and Losifides (2007), who warn about the risks of relying on agro-tourism and actions supporting it as the major drive for diversification in rural areas. By making comparisons among a number of countries, the authors find that "the trajectory of agro-tourism in Greece does not comply with the theoretical framework of contemporary rural development practices" (ibid., p. 60). They point to some general reasons for this failure, which highlight the state's role: the lack of a 'local' or 'traditional' character of agro-tourist services; the lack of activities related to farming or the natural environment and the cultural heritage; the lack of synergies and cooperation with other holdings and of local networking which would assist rural development in general.

Table 2 attempts to summarise the impacts from the application of LEADER on social capital building and through it on local growth on the basis of the above case studies. The last column lists the major obstacles that the bottom-up approach, the most manifested social capital measure, faces at the local level. Future research must focus on these impediments to the change in attitudes and types of governance and define possible ways to overcome them. This in turn requires the establishment of the proper mix of analytical methods (quantitative and qualitative) and the construction of the most appropriate indicators which would be applied to the areas most in need for the new approach.

### Concluding remarks

Place-based strategies, underlining the bottom-up processes promoted by LEADER programmes, lie at the heart of the 'new rural paradigm' in the EU, reflecting the endogenous or neo-endogenous development approach. The latter emphasises the contribution of local public and private actors in designing and implementing development strategies in their territories, making also the best use of external assistance (e.g. funding) stemming from top-down decisions. Bottom-up methods involve a substantial role for social capital, expressed in the building of networks of the bonding, bridging and linking type to enable a wider segment of the local/rural population to actively and collectively participate in local management processes. Accordingly, the success of local development programmes, such as the LEADER of RDPs, should be assessed on the basis of their ability to apply this broader development approach, which comprises qualitative with quantitative targets. Evaluation reports should then use indicators that go beyond the assessment of narrowly-defined economic targets of territorial competitiveness, employment or financial management, resulting from an application of top-down decisions. This is often not the case, as many such reports across the EU lack any clear 'social capital' dimension. As social capital is difficult to measure directly, in many studies proxies are used. Alternatively, the means and results of measureable targets are interpreted as resulting from social capital enhancement. Obstacles to the adoption of the bottom-up strategy in rural areas and the recognition of social capital's significance, can be posed by the institutional setting, i.e. the state, but also by

the lack of willingness on the part of local actors at all levels to adopt it. These factors should also be given sufficient consideration in evaluation reports and other studies along with the proposed means to overcome them.

The findings of case studies and evaluation reports on the application of LEADER in designated areas of Greece reveal positive impacts in generating local growth through the promotion of a number of social capital features. Establishing a new type of local governance based on bottom-up initiatives is particularly important for a country with low levels of social capital, weak subnational representation and the prevalence of a top-down approach to rural regions. These characteristics inhibit the successful application of the LEADER approach in most of the presented cases, but pose a challenge for the programmes' managing authorities and social actors at all levels. Future research must focus on the ways to deal with these issues both at the policy-making and the implementation levels.

## References

- Anon., 2009. *Social Capital and Cohesion: Towards a Common Good*. Policy implications of SOCCOH, an EU-funded research project involving eight institutions led by the London School of Economics and Political Science, European Policy Brief, June 2009.
- Arabatzis, G., Aggelopoulos, S., Tsiantikoudis, S., 2010. *Rural Development and LEADER+ in Greece: Evaluation of Local Action Groups*. *Journal of Food, Agriculture & Environment* 8(1), 302-307.
- Bambeger, M., Vijayendra, R., Woolcock, M., 2010. *Using Mixed Methods in Monitoring and Evaluation – Experiences from International Development*. Policy Research Working Paper 5245, The World Bank Development Research Group, Poverty and Inequality Team, March 2010.
- Bourdieu, P., 1980. *Le capital social, notes provisoires* [Social capital, provisional notes]: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 31, 2-3.
- Bourdieu, P., 1986. *The forms of capital*, in J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York NY: Greenwood: 241-258.
- Camagni, R., Capello, R., 2013. *Regional Competitiveness and Territorial Capital: A Conceptual Approach and Empirical Evidence from the European Union*. *Regional Studies* 47(9), 1383-1401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2012.681640>
- Caraveli, H., Doukas, J., 2012. *Rural Development Policy: an alternative development strategy for the case of Greece*. *Region and Periphery* 2, 21-36 (in Greek).
- Caraveli, H., Chardas, A., 2013. *Rural Development Policy and Local Governance: Implementing the LEADER Axis in South-Eastern Peloponnese-Greece*. Discussion Paper 15. Athens: Athens University of Economics and Business.

- Christoforou, A., 2005. *On the Determinants of Social Capital in Greece Compared to Countries of the European Union*. The Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei Note di Lavoro Series Index, <http://www.feem.it/Feem/Pub/Publications/WPapers/default.htm>
- Christoforou, A., 2011. *Social Capital across European Countries: Individual and Aggregate Determinants of Group Membership*. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70(3), 699-728. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2011.00793.x>
- Christoforou, A., Pisani, E., 2015. *Social Capital and Rural Development in Southern European Regions: The Case of EU-funded LEADER Projects*. Presentation, First World Congress of Comparative Economics, Rome, 25-27 June 2015.
- Dax, T., Strahl, W., Kirwan, J., Maye, D., 2016. *The Leader programme 2007-2013: Enabling or disabling social innovation and neo-endogenous development? Insights from Austria and Ireland*. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23(1), 56-68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776413490425>
- Efstratoglou, S., Mavridou, S., 2003. *Geographical Report on Greece, Ex-post Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER II, Final Report*. Brussels: European Commission.
- EC, 2010. *European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (ENRD), Working Paper on Capturing Impacts of LEADER and of Measures to Improve the Quality of Life in Rural Areas*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Featherstone, K., Papadimitriou, D., 2015. *Prime Ministers in Greece: The Paradox of Power*. OUP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717171.001.0001>
- Go, F.M., Trunfio, M., della Lucia, M., 2013. *Social Capital and governance for sustainable rural development*. *Studies in Agricultural Economics* 115, 104-110. <https://doi.org/10.7896/j.1220>
- Horlings, L., Marsden T., 2014. *Exploring the 'New Rural Paradigm' in Europe: Eco-economic strategies as a counterforce to the global competitiveness agenda*. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 21(1), 4-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776412441934>
- Karanikolas P., Hatzipanteli, S., 2010. *The decentralisation process of rural development policy in Greece*. *European Planning Studies* 18(3), 411-434.
- Karelakis, C., Zafeiriou, E., Galanopoulos, K., Koutroumanidis, T., 2013. *Natural Resources in Regional and Rural Development: Moving from Public Perceptions to Policy Action*. *New Medit N.*, 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310903497710>
- Kizos, Th. and Losifides, Th., 2007. *The Contradictions of Agrotourism Development in Greece: Evidence from Three Case Studies*. *South European Society and Politics* 12(1), 59-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608740601155443>
- Koutsouris, A., 2008. *The Battlefield for (Sustainable) Rural Development: The Case of Lake Plastiras, Central Greece*. *Sociologia Ruralis* 48(3), 240-256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2008.00465.x>
- Lyberaki, A., Paraskevopoulos, C., 2002. *Social Capital Measurement in Greece*. OECD-ONS International Conference on Social Capital Measurement, London, UK, 25-27 September 2002.

- Nardone, G., Sisto, R., Lopolito, A., 2010. *Social Capital in the LEADER Initiative: a methodological approach*. Journal of Rural Studies 26, 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2009.09.001>
- OECD, 2006. *The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance*. Paris: OECD.
- Papadopoulos, A., Liarikos, C., 2007. *Dissecting changing rural development networks*. Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy 25, 291-313. <https://doi.org/10.1068/c0509j>
- Papadopoulou, E., Hasaganas, N., Harvey D., 2011. *Analysis of rural development policy networks in Greece: Is LEADER really different?* Land Use Policy 28, 663-673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2010.11.005>
- Papadopoulou, E., Papalexiou, C., Hasaganas, N., 2012. *Participatory Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes: A Qualitative Approach in the Case of Modernization of Agricultural Holdings in Greece*. Regional Science Inquiry Journal IV(1), 81-94.
- Pizani, E., Franceschetti, G., 2011. *Evaluation of social capital promotion in rural development programmes: a methodological approach*. Paper presented at the 122<sup>nd</sup> EAAE Seminar 'Evidence-based agricultural and rural policy making: Methodological and empirical challenges of policy evaluation', Ancona, Italy, 17-18 February 2011.
- Pollermann, K., Raue, P., Schnaut, G., 2013. *Rural Development Experiences in Germany: opportunities and obstacles in fostering smart places through LEADER*. Studies in Agricultural Economics 115, 111-117. <https://doi.org/10.7896/j.1228>
- Putnam, R.D., 2000. *Bowling alone: The Collapse and Survival of American Community*. New York NY: Simon & Schuster. <https://doi.org/10.1145/358916.361990>
- Ray, C., 2000. *The EU LEADER Programme: Rural Development Laboratory*. Sociologia Ruralis 40(2), 163-171. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00138>
- Sorensen, J., 2012. *Testing the Hypothesis of Higher Social Capital in Rural Areas: The Case of Denmark*. Regional Studies 46(7), 873-891. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2012.669471>
- Thoidou, E., 2011. *The Territorial Approach to EU Cohesion Policy: Current Issues and Evidence from Greece*. SPATIUM International Review 25, 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.2298/spat1125007t>
- Woolcock, M., 1998. *Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework*. Theory and Society 72(2), 151-208. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006884930135>



