

The politics of rural governance

Case studies of rural partnerships in the Netherlands and Wales

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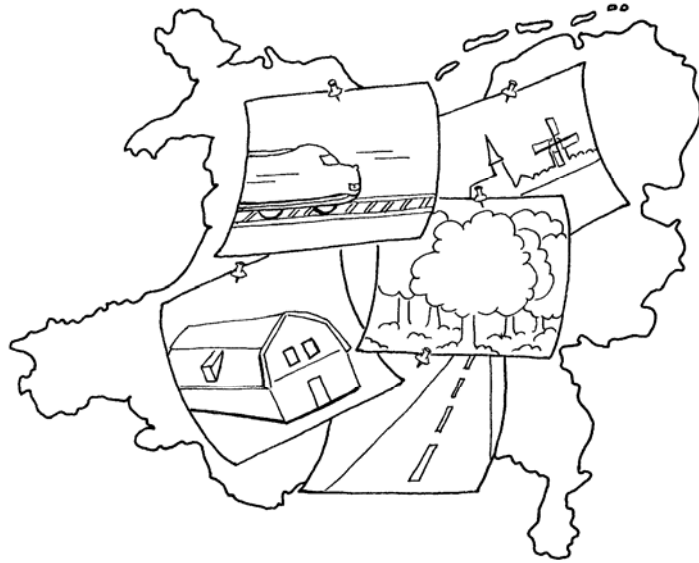
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Rural policy and partnership

All over Europe a 'partnership' approach to rural development has emerged in recent years. Rural policy is increasingly negotiated and delivered at a decentralised level in more or less formalised networks of relevant organisations that encompass governmental and societal actors. Such networks have become known as 'partnerships'. This development has largely been attributed to European policies for rural areas which emphasise the importance of partnerships (Westholm et al., 1999). Since the nineties, the partnership approach has been adopted as a means of furthering 'integrated rural development' (Declaration of Cork, 1996).

European policies for rural areas, which have only emerged quite recently, are broader than agricultural policies. For decades, European rural policy consisted solely of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a policy exclusively aimed at increasing agricultural production. The post-war establishment of a common European agricultural policy was not easy, given the heterogeneity of the national interests and farming contexts (Vihinen, 2001). Yet, the general principles agreed at the end of the fifties proved extremely durable. The original goals of raising productivity, adjusting the structure of family farms and modernising the sector through market and price policies remained intact, with only

modest reforms, pretty much until the end of the twentieth century. Within the price and market policies, "rural areas [did] not have any value of their own" (Vihinen, 2001: 65).

The ability of this narrow agricultural agenda to survive successive CAP reforms was a reflection of powerful agricultural policy communities and the significance of food policy within national agendas. In many European countries farmers' organisations developed a 'representational hegemony' in closed policy networks with the respective Ministries of Agriculture (Greer, 2005). For example, in the UK a stable and enduring policy-making relationship was institutionalised around the Annual Price Review between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the National Farmers' Union which "effectively encompassed the entire national rural space" (Murdoch, 2006: 173). The Review established the general economic conditions and prospects for the agricultural industry which were used as the basis for agreeing on the level and distribution of prices and production grants (Murdoch, 2006). Similarly, in the Netherlands, "the agricultural policy community was characterised by a solid corporatist structure" (Frouws and Van Tatenhove, 1993: 223). This close cooperation was embodied in the *Landbouwschap*, a statutory Board of Agriculture in which the national farmers' unions and agricultural trade unions became the official representatives of Dutch agriculture. In both countries, this representational hegemony was based on a hierarchical and elite structure of policy making in which farmers organisations offered a disciplined constituency in exchange for influence over political decisions at the national level (Frouws, 1994; Murdoch, 2006). Rural areas gradually came to be shaped in line with the structural economic 'facts' of the resultant agricultural modernisation discourse (Van der Ploeg, 1999: 260-295; Murdoch, 2006: 173).

The ways in which this 'productivist regime' maintained its dominance have been critically examined in depth elsewhere (Marsden et al., 1993; Frouws, 1994; Van der Ploeg, 1999). The success of the agricultural modernisation project gave rise to several unexpected negative aspects as increases in output and production intensity led to environmental, budgetary, trade and food quality problems (Murdoch, 2006). The agenda that was maintained by the strong alliance between governments and farming lobbies was challenged from different directions, through emerging awareness about its effect on trade, the environment and rural development. Although agricultural policy networks in several countries became more open during the nineties, effective change in Common Agricultural Policies was a slow process, not least because of the enduring separation of agricultural policy from other rural interests (Marsden et al., 1993: 94; Frouws, 1994; Murdoch, 2006).

While at the EU level the modest incremental reforms in agricultural policies did not allow for a broader rural remit until the mid-late 1990s, the reforms of the Structural Funds from 1988 onwards reflected a new approach from the European Commission. The EU publication *The Future of Rural Society* acknowledged the specificity of rural problems and the heterogeneity of rural contexts within the Union's territory (Ray, 1998; Ward and

McNicholas, 1998). This led to the acknowledgement that regional and local actors held important knowledge that could inform decision making over the implementation of structural funds. To accommodate the involvement of local actors, the principle of 'partnership' was introduced for Structural Funds with a rural remit such as Objectives 5b and 1 and later for communitarian initiatives such as LEADER and INTERREG. The partnership principle involved:

“close consultation between the Commission, the member states concerned and the competent authorities designated by the latter at national, regional or other level, with each party acting as a partner in pursuit of a common goal” (EEC Regulation 2052/88 cited in Olsson, 2003: 286).

The principle of partnership implied the introduction of a territorial rather than a sectoral approach and a more direct, decentralised relation between the European Commission, governments and other regional and local actors. The significance of the partnership approach was subsequently confirmed in the Governance White Paper (CEC, 2001; Berger, 2003) and in its use in the Rural Development Regulation (RDR or 'second pillar') of the CAP from the year 2000. The progressive increase of funding becoming available under the RDR in the current programming period and the mainstreaming of the bottom-up, participatory approach of the LEADER Initiative imply that more funding will be influenced by rural partnerships in the near future. It seems that the partnership approach, is here to stay. As such, there is a need for in-depth and inside knowledge about who is involved in these decision making platforms and how decisions are arrived at.

Since the nineties, the emergence of a broad conception of 'integrated and sustainable rural development' led to "values about the active participation of stakeholders" coming to play a more prominent role than "the closed and exclusionary policy process in agriculture" (Greer, 2005: 120). "All of these approaches circumvented the top-down governmental approach associated with the traditional agricultural policy community" (Murdoch, 2006: 174). Hence, to a certain extent, the instrument of local rural partnership simultaneously facilitated the widening of the agricultural agenda for rural areas and the circumvention of powerful national agricultural alliances. This move from single sector to multi-sector and from national level to multi-level policy making has made the rural policy landscape more diffuse and more complex and has "opened up greater space for policy differentiation" (Greer, 2005: 65). The instrument of local partnership is in itself bound to undermine the very core of 'commonality' of European common agricultural policy, although the uniform European guidance seems to imply that partnerships across countries will exhibit many similar characteristics. Despite extensive literature on partnerships in the UK and the Netherlands, there are no comparative studies of rural partnerships in these two countries. By adopting a comparative analysis of partnerships in these two countries this thesis aims to deepen our understanding of what rural partnerships and broader, rural governance mean in practice.

1.2 Rural partnership and the governance debate

Partnerships are said to play a central role in the emergent culture of 'governance' that now receives much theoretical attention (Jones and Little, 2000). The governance debate of the last decade has much relevance for the social political organisation of the countryside in the Netherlands and the UK. Rural areas have been "deeply affected" by changes which are commonly seen as stemming from a shift from 'government to governance' (Goodwin, 1998: 6; Stoker, 1998).

"Generally, governance refers to the discussion of how to steer society and how to reach collective goals. As, however, governing the state and society is a contested process, the new perspectives and pressures on traditional forms of government are at the heart of governance" (Berger, 2003: 220).

Given the amount of attention the concept of governance has received, this shift has attracted interest from social and political scientists, although there is little consensus on what exactly the term governance entails (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998; Pierre, 2000; Heffen et al., 2000; Bang, 2003; Berger, 2003). Nevertheless, Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2004: 151-153) filter out a few implications of the term 'governance' from nine different bodies of literature, which seem to have much relevance for analysing the changes that are occurring in the social and political organisation of rural areas.

First of all, governance, they contend, indicates a *pluricentric* rather than a unicentric approach to governing which moves the analysis away from a state-centric approach. This pluricentric view is reflected in the policy network and multi-level governance studies (Rhodes, 1996; Heffen et al., 2000). In contrast to unicentric or hierarchical (state) and multicentric (market) forms, governance involves state actors working with a multitude of interest organisations in highly organised social subsystems that cut across policy areas and government levels (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004: 150). These reviews take the view that governments are losing their capacity to command and hence, looking for new tools and techniques to steer society (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 2000; Heffen et al., 2000).

Secondly, governance implies an increased importance of *networks* as the principle means for social coordination. Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2004: 152) argue that, "hierarchy or monocratic leadership is less important" in these networks. This is because there is an interdependency of power within the interorganisational constellation of the network. These networks are either seen as 'self-organising and autonomous', with the government as but one of the parties or they are steered and managed 'at a distance' by central government (Rhodes, 1996; Rhodes, 2000). There is a wide held belief that social co-ordination through policy networks can help governments to deal more effectively with increasing complexity and interdependency (Klijn et al., 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Goodwin, 1998; Bang, 2003; Murdoch, 2006). "Policy networks are probably the most prominent approach of contemporary governance debates in the social sciences" (Berger, 2003: 221, see also Rhodes 2000 for an overview).

Thirdly, the governance literature has put emphasis on *processes* that highlight the negotiation, accommodation, cooperation and formation of alliances that occur (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004). These processes are frequently studied from a meso level of analysis in which

“[n]etworks, communities, and other aggregations of interest organisations that surround policy areas are assumed to be in positions to either shape policy as they see fit, or to assist government in putting policies into effect” (Peters, 2000: 41).

These processes of negotiation and cooperation are seen in contrast to the traditional processes of coercion, command and control. The latter forms are seen as increasingly ineffective, because of the increased complexity and interdependency of organisations and government levels that have occurred through horizontal and vertical shifts in responsibilities (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004).

1.3 Problem orientation

The governance debate has clearly contributed to the identification of changes in government policies and strategies for the rural domain. In summary, the fragmentation of public power among different levels of government has become more evident. Second, the governance perspective has pointed to the emergent arrangements that encourage the formulation and implementation of policies at the regional or local level and third, it has highlighted the increased reliance on novel forms of consultation and methods of inclusion, such as networks and deliberation (Meehan, 2003: 2). Given these notions, “whatever definition is favoured, partnerships or networks between public, private and voluntary sectors are an important part of what constitutes novel forms of governance” (Jones and Little, 2000: 172). Partnerships directly reflect Stoker’s description (1998) of governance as a network of governmental and non-governmental organisations where the boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues can become blurred.

There are however a few major shortcomings in the existing theories of governance. First of all, the notion of governance has lost much of its analytical strength simply because it is now widely employed by governments (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 41; Bang, 2003, CEC, 2001). The concept of (‘good’) governance has been used by politicians as a tool for legitimating government policy, in an era where pressures on the traditional welfare state, declining participation in elections and new political cultures are ‘threatening’ the legitimacy of the representative democracy model (Berger, 2003; Meehan, 2003). Governance is therefore often used for “rhetorical rather than substantive reasons” (Stoker, 1998: 18). It has become synonym for a positive new way of doing things, such as involving societal actors, increasing bottom up engagement and decentralising responsibility (CEC, 2001). Partnerships have equally become something that is “undeniably good” (Jones and Little, 2000), part of a new ‘participatory’ language which can be widely found in British, Dutch and European rural policy documents (Frouws and Leroy, 1993: 93; Ward and McNicholas, 1998: 29).

Secondly, the aim of many studies in policy network and multi-level governance literature has been to question 'how the centre manages networks'. These studies, therefore, tended to focus on issues of efficiency and network management and on problems in policy delivery and implementation and lack a more political-democratic analysis (Klijn et al., 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Heffen et al., 2000). Through such separation, "aspects of democracy are often unproblematized" (Olsson, 2003: 284) and, as a result, "we lack research and understanding about how the policy-making and implementation of the EU function from a democratic point of view". The same argument can be made for national efforts to decentralise and work more in partnerships. It does not add anything to merely state that the 'new' governance or 'interactive processes' are incompatible with most notions of representative political democracy (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000: 110; Peters, 2000: 47). Despite concern over accountability and responsiveness, and hence over the democratic legitimacy and the quality of decision making in networks or partnerships, few studies address these issues *from within*. Such analysis, of the composition and dependencies, the relationships which come into play and the decision making processes over time, might provide new insights to help evaluate the legitimacy of these new forms of governance.

Thirdly, the governance literature has paid little attention to the possible tensions between the *inherent* political nature of decision making processes (Mouffe, 2000) *viz a viz* the explicit consensus building rationality for partnerships in (rural) policies (Westholm et al., 1999). Politics and power are inherent aspects of partnerships that are composed of a range of actors with different interests, preferences and values. Yet, an important aim of introducing the partnership principle (at both EU and national levels) was to promote strategies of consensus and co-operation in "an attempt to legitimize regional development policy through formally including subnational actors" (Olsson, 2003: 286). Berger also identifies the absence of any acknowledgement of power issues in the European Governance White Paper (Berger, 2003). In addition the meso level at which analysis of policy network studies has been conducted means that "there is little conceptual space to consider the political struggles inherent in the *production* of networks" (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999: 512, emphasis in original).

Neglect of the political aspect of decision making has created a situation whereby "issues of partnership have been to some extent "black-boxed" within considerations of governance, and thus these need to be opened up as part of any detailed engagement with governance" (Jones and Little, 2000: 172). Appeals to rationality and moral consensus can easily become exclusionary mechanisms through which powerful actors secure consent (Mouffe, 2000). Hence, the power relations between the actors now included in these new forms of governance need to be taken into account, because "even when opening up the policy-making process to a wider array of institutions and societal actors there will still exist a different distribution of power among them (Berger, 2003: 222). The analysis of governance processes, therefore, should be broadened to the

politics of the micro level embedded in macro level contexts in order to complement governance studies from the meso level (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999).

1.4 Research aims and questions

The governance debate needs to be extended with other, more critical, concepts to study these 'new' social phenomena (Goodwin, 1998; Bang, 2003; Berger, 2003). To achieve this we need concepts that are sensitive to the political nature of the instrument of partnership.

What then is meant here as 'political' or 'politics'? The debate about what can be understood as 'political' is broader than institutional definitions in which politics merely involves the activities of official state institutions but is more a conception of the 'political' as potentially everywhere; "politics is a phenomenon found in and between all groups, institutions and societies, cutting across public and private life" (Held, 2006: 270; Bang, 2003). Seeing politics in this broader sense is valid because activities such as cooperation, negotiation and struggles over the use of resources are also expressions of politics. Such views hold politics as more or less equated with power or with the struggle for power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Held, 2006). Feminist theorists have objected to this tendency to see "politics as only power, and power as only domination" (Mansbridge, 1998: 149, see Lukes 2005 for such a definition of power). Although they do not object to the connection between power and politics as such, they do object to seeing politics as a zero-sum game, as such a conception fails to explain that politics can also be informed by other non-selfish objectives, such as equality, freedom and justice (Hawkesworth, 2006).

Thus, it is not only power that counts, and that should be examined when analysing politics, but the objectives pursued and the arguments and values on which they are based are also relevant and of interest. Following Pitkin, power informs politics, as do arguments and values, and these aspects are inextricably intertwined in the 'political moment' (Pitkin, 1967: 212). The political moment is situated in the – temporary – settlement of 'difference'¹. Difference and distinction are fundamental to policy communities and imply the permanence of conflict and antagonism which can be settled through decisions and consensus, but never in a non-exclusionary way as decisions cannot be wholly impartial and rational. Claims of impartiality and rational consensus are always a hegemonic construction imposing the 'truth' under the guise of neutrality (Mouffe, 2000).

Bang argues that politics describes "every activity, however remotely related to difference and struggles over the making and implementation of decisions that require acceptance and recognition if they are to be settled" (Bang, 2003: 8). From this view, a few elements can be extracted that are applicable to partnerships. First, partnerships are based on the possibility of collective agreement about issues that incorporate some kind of public interest. Second, partnerships are composed of different organisations which inevitably have different values and interests relating to rural development and its implementation.

From this it follows that when potentially incommensurable values or interests meet, there will always be political choices involved and struggles over these (Mouffe, 2000). Since some degree of decision making or priority setting is the core of partnership work, partnerships are intimately tied up with politics.

The objective of this study then is to explore the policy instrument of 'partnership' for rural policies in the Netherlands and Wales *from a political perspective*. The objective led to two broad exploratory questions which guided the research in this thesis:

In what ways does the study of rural partnerships as political phenomena contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary practice of rural governance in the Netherlands and Wales? And why do we need to study them in context across different countries?

The exploration of these questions took place in a continuous iterative process of empirical work and theoretical reflection through which the political perspective was gradually operationalised into concepts which were 'put to work empirically' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In line with the outlined omissions in the governance debate, the political perspective was elaborated along two different angles.

First, the relationship between the partnerships and democratic legitimacy was explored. The democratic legitimacy of rural partnerships that involve what, at first sight, seems like an arbitrary range of people has been seen as problematic by some scholars. The relationship of partnerships with local government, whose legitimacy is founded on their representative democracy gives grounds for concern since "partnerships of dubious democratic legitimacy (...) exist alongside local government" (Shortall, 2004; 109, see also Edwards et al., 2001; Fletcher, 2003; Woods and Goodwin, 2003). There is also concern about whether effective partnerships at the local level that "genuinely enable participants to 'govern' themselves" (Murdoch and Abram, 1998:42) might not challenge the primacy of the national level public interest. This is related to the political nature of partnerships, and the way in which they fit with and relate to established democratic institutions. Yet, such perspective so far received little explicit attention in the literature (Edwards et al., 2001; Olsson, 2003; Fletcher, 2003; Davies et al., 2005).

Democratic legitimacy is a complex, multi-layered and contested concept. In this thesis I am concerned with the access and openness of partnerships and with the quality of the decision making process in terms of the possibilities for participation and the representations of wider audiences. Hence the question of democratic legitimacy was directed more at the processes of input and throughput and less at the legitimacy of outcomes and results (Engelen and Sie Dhian Ho, 2004).

The second angle that developed from the political perspective was a focus on how power relations shape partnership processes and how power struggles develop over time. Although much has been written about power and partnerships, relatively little is known

about how power relations evolve *over time within* partnerships (McAreavey, 2006; Berger, 2003; Woods and Goodwin, 2003). In line with the concept of the political outlined above, I conceptualised power in relational terms. It was not taken as external to a situation but was seen as shaping the situation through the relationships which evolved in situations and processes, such as partnerships. Power therefore was not seen as a dispositional concept that can be quantified just by measuring the relative strength and resources of those involved but was taken as “a relational effect of social interaction” (Allen, 2003: 2). Such a relational perspective does not ignore the importance of resources for the modes of power that come into play, but contends that the mediated nature of power cannot solely be analysed in terms of resources. Taking a relational perspective involves seeing how various modes of power have different effects, and this goes beyond the idea of seeing power solely in terms of a domination – resistance dichotomy. It is also sensitive to the interaction needed for power to make itself present, and for including the ‘receiving end’ of power into the analysis. For example, the authority of professionalism, which can serve as symbolic power resource, needs recognition and compliance by others to become effective. Power is therefore not structurally given but built into the interaction and interplay of actors. Figure 1.1 (below) summarises the key concepts in this thesis.

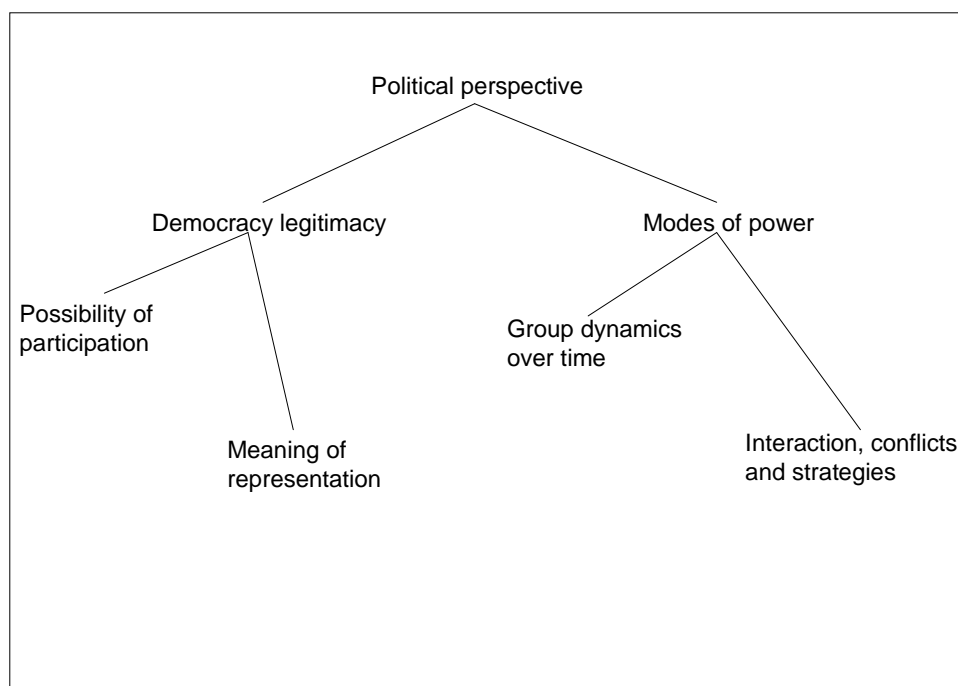


Figure 1.1 Summary of research approach

Figure 1.1 shows, in abstract terms, the lines of thought which developed during this thesis. The iterative cycle of empirical work and theoretical reflection led me to apply

these abstract concepts to specific case studies in the Netherlands and Wales. The following section, takes the reader through this iterative process to show how the five papers that make up this thesis developed as they did and why they are presented in this particular sequence.

1.5 Unfolding of the research

The entry point for the empirical work was my participation, at the start of my PhD project, in a research project on women's access to and participation in rural partnerships for Reconstruction Policy in the Provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel (Bock et al., 2004; Bock and Derkzen, 2006; Bock and Derkzen, 2008). Research had shown the obstacles for women's participation in traditional politics and there was an expectation that more women might participate in these new forms of rural governance (Paxton et al., 2007). This was not only because the partnership instrument would include more stakeholders and local groups but also because the political culture was aimed at consensus and inclusion. "Both characteristics should weaken the effect of two other well known obstacles to women's participation: the gender-biased recruitment methods traditionally employed to select members of political bodies and the highly competitive 'male' culture of traditional politics" (Bock and Derkzen, 2006: 225).

In the province of Gelderland the average rate of female participation in the three studied partnerships was only 16%. However, this average ranged from 0% to one third in the Achterhoek regional partnerships. This later figure could be explained by a successful campaign from local rural women who lobbied for the inclusion of community representatives in the rural partnerships. Their pressure led to a position representing 'quality of life' issues, which was subsequently added to all the rural partnerships in the Province of Gelderland². In the other partnerships this seat was left vacant or was taken up by a health care organisation, in the Achterhoek region it came to be occupied by local rural women in three of the four rural partnerships. Backed up by an informal group of rural women, they took their places in the rural partnerships on their own initiative to represent citizens in the area, rather than being delegated to an organisationally-determined position, like the other partnership members.

I decided to follow these women as they participated in the rural partnerships in Achterhoek during 2003 and 2004. I soon came to realise that inclusion was only the first step to meaningful participation in the decision making processes. I saw that once community representatives had gained access they often lacked the many resources needed to participate and influence in these partnership processes, a phenomenon often noted in the literature. However, the longer I observed the rural partnerships the more diversity I saw within the often dichotomised categories between 'community representatives' and 'the rest' that are used in the literature. I saw that knowledge was indeed a key resource, but not all knowledge was valued equally. Moreover, those members who had the capacity to align themselves with the dominant discourses and knowledge in the rural partnerships could access the symbolic power available from

having or acquiring the 'right kind of identity'. The first paper, **Chapter 3**, addresses this question: of how professional identity and knowledge shape participation in the rural partnership of Achterhoek

During the fieldwork in the Netherlands I saw that the rural partnerships in the Achterhoek were far less 'participatory', 'inclusive' and 'bottom-up' than expected. This raised the question of the democratic legitimacy of rural partnerships. If it was not a matter of decision making of *all* those directly affected by the policies discussed within the partnership, nor a matter of politicians with an electoral mandate, nor a matter of rational or enlightened deliberation (Held, 2006) then how could the decisions made by the arbitrary range of people in the partnerships be legitimised? During interviews with the partnership members in Achterhoek it turned out, that they themselves were struggling with their legitimacy too, exemplified in discussions over their responsibility and accountability as representatives.

The extensive partnership literature, mainly coming from the UK, contains very few studies that address such political-democratic questions. I decided to do a second period of fieldwork, this time in the UK, to focus more on this question and to gain better understanding of the Dutch situation by studying a comparative one. With a place available at Cardiff University, Wales became the focus of my second period of fieldwork. As in the Netherlands, Welsh government guidelines legitimate the participation of particular people in rural partnerships by describing them as being *representatives* of organisations or groups. Thus the concept of representation and the meaning this concept had for partnership members became key themes within the interviews with rural partnership members in the Vale of Glamorgan, Conwy and Carmarthenshire. This work forms the basis of **Chapter 4**, which analyses the questions how the concept of representation is used in rural partnerships and how partnership members in the three case studies in Wales gave meaning to their representative role.

Whereas the first chapters (3 and 4) take the individual partnership member as the primary level of analysis, the next two chapters (5 and 6) take the partnership-as-a-group as their level of analysis. Before going to Wales, I had been observing the rural partnerships in the Achterhoek for two years. This made me sensitive to the politics and power of constantly changing group dynamics in these partnerships. I doubted whether I could grasp the same type of processes in Wales as the fieldwork period was much shorter. It turned out, however, to be much more intensive, with more contacts and visits in a shorter period. One of the case study areas, Carmarthenshire, gave very good opportunities for access to people, meetings and documents. This partnership was widely recognised as a success and the members I interviewed assured me that this was primarily due to the group dynamics (meaning power dynamics and politics) of the partnership. They reflected on the processes of the partnership without greatly mentioning the conflicts that these group dynamics gave rise to. I had access to an extensive range of documents, including all the minutes of the partnership meetings,

complemented with interview transcripts and my observations. Together these painted a longitudinal story of a struggle within the partnership struggle that nonetheless led to remarkable rural development results. I therefore used this rural partnership to analyse the partnerships' politics over time and the different modes of power that prove decisive in structuring relationships and outcomes. **Chapter 5** analyses the question of how different modes of power shaped social interaction in the rural partnership of Carmarthenshire.

From Welsh rural partnership group dynamics I then turned to the Dutch group dynamics. The choice for cross country comparison was twofold: to gain more substantive understanding of what a 'partnership' is, and to increase the visibility of the peculiarities of Dutch rural governance. On my return, I could not but conclude that the politics of Dutch rural partnerships were radically different from those in Wales. Looking at the Dutch empirical material with more of a detached eye I became aware of the extensive focus on land reform and spatial planning and the high level of intervention in planning decisions assumed when establishing the partnerships. Coming back from a Welsh perspective, enforced farm relocation decided by a partnership seemed an odd infringement of property rights and farming autonomy. Yet in contrast to Wales, Dutch farming land was subject to pressures from other land use claims, expressed through different sectoral policies. Dutch rural partnership politics evolved around a highly sectoral approach to land use planning and the partnerships were a way to seek to integrate these competing sectoral objectives at a regional level, rather than to impose national top-down solutions. In other words, the partnership struggle in the Netherlands was all about the politics of 'sectoring' in which sectoral players tried to maintain and advance their sectoral agenda rather than negotiating away any of their policy objectives and land use claims. **Chapter 6**, analyses the meaning of 'integrated rural policy' in the rural partnership of Achterhoek and the strategies that were used within the politics of integration.

The comparative analysis of the individual case studies in the two countries revealed significant differences in the composition and organisation of rural partnerships, indicating that the rural partnerships in these two countries were working from different rationalities. The composition and organisation of the rural partnerships appeared to reflect the dominance of a particular and differing policy discourses. In order to understand these differences, the literature for the relevant policy context was reviewed. This led to four major factors being identified that linked the emergence of the partnership approach to both European policies and to the move towards more decentralised territorial governance in each of the two countries. **Chapter 7** analyses the specific composition and organisation of rural partnerships in the Netherlands and Wales and seeks to explain these differences in terms of the policy contexts.

The five papers presented in chapters 3 to 7 constitute the core of this thesis. The next chapter 2 explains the methodology adopted in this research, while the last chapter draws out the general discussion and conclusions of this thesis.

Notes

¹ The acknowledgement of difference points to the philosophical position of value pluralism which “describes the condition in which concepts of desirable social states are plural *and* in which the realization of these concepts mutually exclude each other” (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 21 emphasis in original) see also Chapter two.

² In the three other provinces, this position was not questioned and hence, in these provinces there were no community representatives in the Reconstruction Partnerships.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Interpretative research

This thesis combines the disciplines of sociology and political science into a socio-political study of the phenomenon of 'rural partnership'. An interpretative perspective was taken as an overall approach and this determined which questions were asked, what research methods were adopted and how the results were presented. Methodologies are specific to particular epistemic communities. The interpretative perspective and methodology is more accepted in sociology than in political sciences and its implications are therefore explained here (Bevir et al., 2003; Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

In contrast to positivism, an interpretative approach departs from an epistemological position that we do not have access to the world in a pure form and cannot objectively know the world. From a positivist perspective, inputs from data and observation are not seen as problematic (Hajer and Wagenenaar, 2003: 16; see Hawkesworth, 2006 for comparison and critique). From an interpretative point of view, however, the relation between words and objects is intrinsically problematic. The philosophical basis for interpretative research, hermeneutics, pragmatism and phenomenology depart from the conviction that we can never have pure facts but that facts are always constructed using our theories, knowledge and beliefs. This is because all ideas have a history and a tradition of thought (Hajer and Wagenenaar, 2003; Bevir, 2004; Bevir and Rhodes, 2005;

Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Words and models can only represent reality, they are never reality itself. In this view concepts and categories, are seen as embodying and reflecting the point of view of their creators (Yanow, 2006).

Taken to the extreme then, such epistemology might lead to the ontological position that we have no reason to think that there is something materially independent of us, outside our constructed categories. However, within the interpretative approach there is a wide range of ontological positions and such an extreme position is also contested (Hawkesworth, 2006). The premise that we do not have *access* to the world in a pure form does not imply that there is not a reality out there, of a material world consisting of objects. It is acknowledged that the material world and objects have essences and that these are subject to different interpretations (Bevir and Rhodes, 2005). However, social reality and the social concepts and categories we use, do not, according to the moderate ontological position (adopted here) have essences. Everyday life and its action and practices and how we make sense of these is based on our socially constructed categories, which are unique to individuals and are specific in time and place. Hence, the interpretative approach emphasises the contingency of social definitions. "How we interpret social reality (...) is to a large extent guided by the social rules that constitute social practices; rules we have internalized in long processes of habituation and socialization." (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 17). Those categories become the truth as they become natural and we therefore act upon them accordingly. It is the task of the social scientist to uncover the 'taken-for-granted' categories and to show that 'objective' social concepts can be viewed differently. This ultimately gives space for alternative action and practices.

The consequences for conducting research from such an interpretative approach are twofold. First, a central goal for the researcher is to understand human meaning-making.

"We act; we have intentions about our actions; we interpret others' actions; we (attempt to) make sense of the world: We are meaning-making creatures. Our institutions, our policies, our language, our ceremonies are human creations, not objects independent of us" (Yanow, 2006: 9).

Human meaning-making is treated in a holistic way. The view that meaning is constitutive of action implies that meaning and action cannot be separated and treated independently of each other or be correlated as independent variables (Bevir and Rhodes, 2005). A hermeneutic understanding of meaning implies that the analyst needs to play attention to the wider "web of beliefs" (Bevir, 2004; Yanow, 2006). For example, "words of social reality such as 'labour', (...) can be understood only through a deep appreciation of the complex cultural dispositions and habits in which such terms are embedded. (...) exactly how you construct meanings out of a cluster of behavioural dispositions is undecided by the behavioural dispositions themselves" (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 17). The analysis is therefore not conclusively determined as objective truth but is made valid through its consistency with the background understandings and theories¹.

Secondly, from this it follows that an interpretative approach is sympathetic to idiographic research and a more micro level of analysis (Yanow, 2003; Bevir and Rhodes, 2005). Qualitative methods are mostly used to study complex phenomena in a holistic way and are also used to study the actor's point of view (Wester and Hak, 2003). The sympathy for the micro level stems from the contingency of social definitions, which point to the importance of context and situation specific explanations. The aim of interpretative research and the qualitative data generation on which it generally relies is "to "understand" the shared meanings of practitioners and draw insights that could not be gained with "hard" data only" (Numagami, 1998: 3). 'Understanding' in the sense of Weber's '*verstehen*' "denotes the intentional ferreting out by another person of that mental framework – the framework that "stands under" the individual's actions" and therefore is a "proactive, intentional, willed effort to understand *from within*" (Yanow, 2006: 11). Levels of aggregation can be adopted but they need to be cautiously embedded in a historical understanding (Bevir, 2004). Moreover, this also implies that the researcher is not independent from the system she investigates (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

2.2 The value of a case study strategy

Within the interpretative approach there are specific research traditions such as, bibliography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study research (Schwartz-Shea, 2006). In this study, the case study is chosen as research strategy. Case study research has a number of advantages when the objective is to study complex social phenomena in their context and in a holistic way. The case study and the use of multiple sources of data are pivotal in real life situations where conditions cannot be held constant, as in an experiment (Yin, 1994). Multiple sources of data and attention to their coherence enable deeper insights into the phenomenon under study and contribute to the internal validity of the research results. Moreover, the case study approach enables the researcher to follow a unit of observation over a relatively long period of time (Numagami, 1998). The case study, therefore, is useful in analysing changes over time. Third, the case study strategy enables the researcher to pay attention to social interactions and the actors' points of view.

Despite the usefulness of the qualitative case study strategy and the interpretative approach it stems from, doubts about its validity persist. There is the allegation that researchers working from an interpretative approach have no criteria for judging the quality of their work (Schwartz-Shea, 2006). The imperfections attributed to interpretative research and to interpretative case study research concern the criteria of internal validity, external validity/ generalisability and reliability/ replicability. We quickly recognise here the criteria of quantitative research strategies or as Schwartz-Shea calls it the "'variables gestalt" which encompass, among other things, a commitment to measurement, hypothesis testing, and causal analysis" (2006: 90).

Two counterarguments emerged in the literature as a response to the 'scientific' doubts cast upon the interpretative case study approach. The first parallels traditional positivist criteria (for example Miles and Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994; Swanborn, 1996) and the other argues that the quality of interpretative research deserves attention in its own right and therefore rejects parallelism on philosophical grounds (Numagami, 1998; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Bevir and Rhodes, 2005; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). In the following paragraphs I briefly summarise the interpretative responses to classical scientific criteria and introduce the most important techniques that were adopted here to ensure research quality.

I start with the criteria of external validity and reliability, which are usually seen as giving scientific 'rigour' to the analysis. However, from an interpretative point of view it has been argued that neither external validity nor reliability are relevant to interpretative research *in the way that they are understood in positivist research*. Contrary to the point of departure of interpretative research, the reliability criterion in the positivist sense assumes that meanings can be controlled and made identical in successive applications of a question (Schwartz-Shea, 2006). However, the premise that meanings are negotiated and constructed and that our social practices are contingent suggests that "human sciences rely on a distinctive form of explanation (...) we rely on a concept of choice and on criteria of reasonableness that have no place in natural science" (Bever and Rhodes, 2005: 177; Yanow, 2006). Indeed, external validity and reliability are only relevant when the research would aim at finding a "universal law over a variety of groups or an invariant law over space" (Numagami, 1998: 3). Indeed, the very possibility that there are such social laws independent of human knowledge in social phenomena has been questioned (Numagami, 1998)².

Hence, reliability, or trustworthiness from an interpretative point of view, is understood in this research as making the analysis consistent with (historical) background understandings and theories. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide sufficient 'thick description' so that the detailed account is generating enough trustworthiness as analysis. This also means that sufficient detail allows the reader to assess how plausible it is to transfer findings from a given research study to another setting (Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Thus, rather than using the criterion of external validity, the acknowledgement of a limited generalisability of context-specific knowledge points to possible transferability as an alternative criterion for a kind of 'social external validity'. This transferability is based on analogous reasoning in which the reader (and not the researcher) makes the link between the investigated case and his or her own situation (Boonstra, 2004: 34).

The criterion of internal validity, sometimes discussed in terms of 'credibility' or 'authenticity' has received a lot of attention in case study design and a number of interpretative techniques for meeting this criterion have been developed. The internal validity of a case study can be addressed through a combination of 'thick description', 'prolonged engagement in the field', 'triangulation' and 'reflexivity' (Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

All four techniques were applied in this study to varying extents. With regard to the second, it was my intention to spend a considerable amount of time in the field. An important feature of an extensive and participative fieldwork period is to gradually build confidence in the collected material as the researcher starts to 'get a feel for' how things go. In the Netherlands this amounted to almost two years studying three rural partnerships in the same area, but in Wales the time for fieldwork was much more limited, four months of fieldwork spread across three different areas. Given the time constrained stay in Wales, the research there was carried out simultaneously in three partnerships in three different areas instead of in only one to prevent single case bias in an unknown cultural setting. Using three cases in Wales made it possible to compare and evaluate the material against similar material before comparing it with a different country. While all three of the areas provided data for this study, more extensive fieldwork was undertaken in one of the cases (see 2.4)

Triangulation has come to be understood as a way of dealing with the implications of multidimensionality. Triangulation can be used in various ways (Patton, 1990: 60). In this research methodological triangulation was used through a combination of interviews, documentary analysis and observation. Moreover, data triangulation was used through studying the partnership processes in different countries and different areas.

In line with the epistemological position explained in section 2.1, reflexivity on the role of the researcher herself is important, since the researcher is not independent of the situation she investigates and because the meanings of language and actions are not self-evident. Moreover, theoretical construction and practical research interpenetrate each other, giving rise to the need of keeping track of thoughts and actions through self-reflection. This was done in a research diary, which was used to reflect on the evolution of ideas. Following the implications of the interpretative perspective, the researcher is neither independent of her own social background nor from her enculturation in her profession or specific epistemic community (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Maintaining awareness of possible biases that these influences give rise to needs to be part of any ongoing sociological analysis (see section 2.5).

2.2.1 The value of a comparative perspective

The choice of adopting a comparative perspective, through the study of rural partnerships in two countries, fits with the interpretative methodology set out above. In order to uncover the taken-for-granted categories of socially constructed concepts, the researcher needs to develop an 'understanding from within' but also a 'stranger's eye' which provides sensitivity to these taken-for-granted and widely shared 'rules' for acting.

"As the social scientist is herself embedded in that social reality, the analytic problem is to extricate herself sufficiently from that unspoken common sense in order to render it "uncommon," reflect on it, and make sense of it" (Yanow, 2006: 12).

One way to do this is to confront oneself with a similar phenomenon in a radically different setting. Hence, throwing myself into the Welsh rural governance context, opened my eyes to those taken-for-granted features of Dutch rural governance.. For example, the relative importance of spatial planning and the history of land re-adjustment intervention in the Netherlands could only be appreciated through the absence of such issues in the Welsh context. Equally, the relative importance of the instrument of partnership as a general feature of policy implementation in Wales (beyond the rural domain), became visible through the Dutch context.

The comparative perspective adopted in this research, therefore, was aimed at learning from other situations, starting the research from my own cultural setting. It was meant to be comparative in a broad sense:

“(..) a study is held to be cross-national and comparative, when individuals or teams set out to examine particular issues or phenomena in two or more countries with the express intention of comparing their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings (institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, lifestyles, language, thought patterns), using the same research instruments either to carry out secondary analysis of national data or to conduct new empirical work” (Hantrais, 1995: 2).

2.3 Case selection, the Achterhoek partnerships

The process of case selection in the Netherlands and Wales developed quite differently (see also chapter 1, section 1.5). For the study of rural partnerships in the Netherlands, the Reconstruction Policy became a point of entry. I participated in a research project focused on partnerships for Reconstruction Policy in the province of Gelderland. The Achterhoek region was selected as an ‘extreme case’ within the partnerships; some loosely organised citizens had gained access to the partnerships there that elsewhere were exclusively based on organisational representation. In Achterhoek, there were four partnerships organised in a hierarchy (regional and sub-regional). The main and two sub-regional level partnerships were studied and the participation of these ‘community representatives’ was closely followed.

2.3.1 Selection process in Wales

In Wales, the partnerships and study areas were selected using criterion sampling (Patton, 1990: 56), which was adopted for two reasons. First, to select relevant partnerships out of the estimated 2000 ‘loosely defined’ partnerships operating in Wales (Bristow et al., 2003). Second, to choose partnerships that shared at least some characteristics with those studied in the Netherlands.

The following criteria were used. Partnerships had to:

- be initiated by a government level, therefore being statutory bodies
- have a representative brief
- be involved in decision making over funding
- contain rural objectives and organisations
- operate at the Unitary Authority level.³

For further selection, the national rural policy scheme was taken as a filter. I chose to study partnerships operating under the Rural Community Action Scheme of the Welsh Assembly. Participation in this scheme met the criteria for partnership selection as the partnerships had a rural remit, operated at the local level, had a statutory position and needed a mix of representatives to contain a broad cross-section of people and organisations (WAG, 2002). An additional benefit of this choice was that the scheme had to be implemented, where possible, through existing rural partnerships. This meant that either existing partnerships had to take Rural Community Action (RCA) on board on top of their original objective or new partnerships had to be formed where this was impossible. A variety of partnerships therefore implemented RCA, from brand new partnerships to long-existing partnerships, mainly based on European funding. This provided a range of heterogenous case studies, an important consideration in a new and unknown cultural setting.

The final choice of case studies, from the eleven RCA partnerships was made on the basis of a document and internet analysis, followed by a series of ten telephone interviews with key informants of the lead bodies. This analysis led to two further selection criteria being derived, first whether the leading body for RCA was the Unitary Authority or a community development agency and second whether the partnership was newly set up or long existing. Apparent willingness to co-operate also played a role in selection. The final choice of partnerships is shown in Table 2.1:

Partnership in area	Lead body to LA - Other	Long – Short existing
The vale of Glamorgan	LA	Short
Carmarthenshire	Other	Long
Conwy	LA	Long

Table 2.1 Partnership selection

2.4 Research process

The process of data generation and analysis in this research can be characterised as inductive, open and creative (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Data generation and analysis were part of an iterative cycle of perception, analysis and reflection in which I learned, struggled with and improved research techniques and continually developed my conceptual understanding while conducting the research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea,

2006). Generated data was first structured per method after which cross-cutting themes and patterns were sought across all data, starting with interview data. For the Dutch material this was done by hand, for the Welsh material the qualitative software Atlasti was used. This software made it easier to structure and select data in multiple ways. And its memory tool made it easier to register thoughts, links and emergent ideas while coding and structuring the data. The principal methods drawn upon were interviews, document analysis and observation and the way in which they were used is explained briefly below.

2.4.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in different ways, ranging from informal talks to semi-structured formal interviews in which a list of guiding questions was used (Patton, 1990). During field visits, such as partnership meetings, consultation meetings and project visits and interviews, informal talks also occurred, and these were registered as field notes. The formal interviews were conducted with the partnership members and civil servants connected with the rural partnerships in this study.

Dutch cases	Number of respondents
Part of study of women's participation in Gelderland	9
Exploratory interviews outside Achterhoek	5
Interviews with the main partnership Achterhoek	13
Additional interviews in Achterhoek	11

Table 2.2 Dutch cases

Welsh cases	Number of respondents
Exploratory telephone interviews	10
Interviews in Conwy ⁴	7
Interviews in Carmarthenshire	12
Interviews in the Vale of Glamorgan	9
Additional interviews outside study areas	3

Table 2.3 Welsh cases

A benefit of having a general interview guide was that the same topics could be covered with all respondents while allowing for a conversation style of interviewing. The formal interviews, therefore, were not identical in their coverage of topics and differed considerably in length. This method provided considerable freedom to explore avenues that came up during the talk. All the formal interviews in both countries were taped in full. Although the interviewee's anxiety over being taped is recognised as possible major disadvantage, taping was deemed necessary for two reasons. It allows the interviewer to be fully 'present' and listen and also to encourage elaboration, clarification and reflection by the respondent. Moreover, in Wales interviews were not in the researcher's mother tongue and some were only transcribed upon return to the Netherlands. To accommodate any concerns the respondents may have had over their identities being disclosed, individual anonymity was guaranteed.

2.4.2 Observation

The aim of observation was to understand the setting of the research, to 'feel' what it is like to be part of the process (Patton, 1990: 75). Interviews and observations are independent complementary approaches, but they are also fully integrated; observation always takes place during an interview and informal interviews took place during observations. The purpose of observation in this study was to understand the practice of partnership working, more specifically the interactions of partnership members before, during and after partnership meetings. Observation took place in a participant and non-participant way. In Wales, I was frequently introduced to the partnership members by the chairman and had a seat around the table in between partnership members, although without saying anything during the meetings. In the Netherlands this happened only in closed meetings, but the majority of the partnership meetings were open to the public, of which I was a part.

Other observations were more participant based. In Wales, these were project visits and meetings that involved splitting up into small discussion groups, which I was joined. There were more field visits and informal talks in Carmarthenshire than in the other two areas and through these I got a much better overall picture of what was going on. In the Netherlands the participant observation involved attending community representative meetings where preparations were being made for the formal partnership meetings. During the observations, field notes were taken, consisting of direct quotes and details of the situation.

2.4.3 Documents

Documentary analysis was an important method in this thesis, especially to sustain the analysis of changes over time. When I started to explore the rural partnership processes in the Netherlands, I collected everything written I could lay my hands on with the idea that it might all be important. Hence, the data generated for the Dutch case study – although classically focussed only on written text – ranged from media coverage in magazines and newspapers, official (and historical) policy documents from different government levels, documentation of organisations, research reports used by partnership members, secondary studies of this type of partnership, the stacks of papers that partnership members received, planning documents in the partnerships, minutes of the meetings, newsletters, websites and free papers. Access to documents varied greatly in Wales, far more documents were collected from the Carmarthenshire area than from the other two areas. Hence, I shipped back a great deal of similar documents after the fieldwork period.

2.5 Reflection

In a sense doing PhD research is about learning the craft of scientific research. Learning takes place through the experience of conducting research in a particular epistemic community. Much of this learning results in tacit knowledge, which is personal, context-specific and therefore hard to formalise and communicate. However, learning from

experience can be particularly powerful when we see the consequences of our actions, which requires making one's experiences explicit for oneself (see section 2.2). The purpose of keeping a research diary, therefore, was to facilitate critical reflection regarding the assumptions and biases that I inevitably made or bought with me. "Critical reflection cannot become an integral element in the immediate action process, but requires a hiatus in which to reassess one's meaning perspectives and, if necessary, to transform them" (Van Woerkom 2003: 43). Thus, the diaries later became a useful source of information about how the political perspective evolved over time.

I started my PhD after two years of research experience at a research institute in (agricultural) education and lifelong learning. The concepts about learning that were used there implied that learning is unpredictable and that learning processes lead to unanticipated outcomes. We thought that learning was key to, for example, policy processes, but this learning was highly dependent on the conditions under which such policy processes took place. This perspective fitted well with the rural sociology group in which I came to work. First, it assumed the possibility of agency and adopting an actor perspective, which was a natural perspective in the chair group. And second it celebrated the need for a diversity of people to be involved in policy processes in order to enhance the possibility of innovation through unpredictable learning. This related well to the grassroots rural development through local participation which was a major focus in the chair group. I started empirical work with an implicit norm of inclusion and the equal participation of all. Hence, the limited access of rural women and other local groups in Achterhoek was a disappointment and led me to study what participation means in democratic theories. I struggled with ambiguous feelings towards models of participatory and deliberative policy making. Ideals appealed but were hard to relate to practice. Besides the issues of access and inclusion, the concept of representation emerged as a key concept for understanding the composition and the way of working of rural partnerships.

The search for the democratic legitimacy of the Reconstruction Policy Partnerships initially also related to my own agricultural background. I felt that Reconstruction Policy was an unjust policy for farmers as it interfered with the autonomy of some farmers who would have to move just because policy identified them as being at the wrong spot. This bias towards agricultural interests weakened over time. Deconstructing the roles of professional and citizen helped me to see how the strategy of the underdog was played out professionally by agricultural interests. Moreover, the Welsh experience helped to show how intense the struggle for land in the Netherlands is. Through this contrast I came to see Reconstruction Policy more as a clash between minority and majority wishes: individual property rights that were counterweighted by different public interests.

From the beginning I had questioned the rural partnerships from the classical political science questions: asking questions such as who is included, who not and why and who wins and loses. I focused on these political questions without labeling them as political

and without making the related power perspective explicit. In my diary I wrote that a 'process based on deliberation and learning was not realistic given the power relations in the rural partnership'. This indicates that in my mind, there was only place for either one or the other view, much in line with theories on deliberative and participatory policy making. However, this tension gradually faded once I made the political perspective explicit. Starting with an idea of power as something dirty, I came to see that antagonism, conflict and power dynamics can have similar effects as learning and deliberation and that decision making processes simultaneously contain a power struggle and learning. Moreover, as with learning, the effect of power dynamics can also lead to unanticipated and unforeseen outcomes, again only under certain – often coincidental – circumstances and conditions. Parallel to my own experience in writing this thesis, one of these conditions is clearly an *a priori* willingness to become fully engaged with and immersed in these unpredictable processes without holding on too much to the 'certainties' of existing judgments.

Notes

¹ Positivist and interpretative research share two central attributes of scientific practice; an attitude of doubt and a procedural systematicity. However, the way it is enacted upon differs; interpretative researchers enact this doubt in other, nonexperimental ways (Yanow, 2006: 9).

² Numagami makes the case that there are no universal laws to be found among social phenomena because “regularities present in social reality are not fixed over time and space” and “most observable stability and universality are not generated by invariant and universal laws, but are supported by the stability of knowledge and beliefs shared steadily and universally, for the conditions under which conscious human conduct reproduces the same macro patterns are stringent even if we assume away many important conditions for the sake of simplicity” (1998: 3, 10; see also Yanow, 2006: 9 and Hawkesworth, 2006).

³ The local level in Wales generally is assumed to be the local authority level, officially called Unitary Authorities but also referred to as County Councils. The local level in the Netherlands is generally the municipality level, also the lowest official administration level. In terms of geographical scale, however, there is considerable difference between the local administrations in Wales and the Netherlands. There are 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales and 458 municipalities in the Netherlands. Rural partnership working in the Netherlands takes place at a supra-municipal or regional level. Despite the different wording, however, the local authority level in Wales and the regional level in The Netherlands are of comparable scale.

⁴ One interview in Conwy was a sequenced group interview during which the five partnership members who were interviewed came and left at different times.

Chapter 3

The construction of professional identity: symbolic power in rural partnerships in the Netherlands

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The construction of professional identity: symbolic power in rural partnerships in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This article addresses the construction of professionalism in rural partnerships in Achterhoek, a region in the east of the Netherlands, where public, private and community representatives are involved in the spatial reorganisation of agriculture. In contrast to the dichotomy between 'professional' and 'citizen' that can be found in the literature, we argue that professional identity is a multi-layered construct. Moreover, professional identity can be seen a source of political capital. Based on a qualitative case study of one partnership, we conclude that it is not just civic or community representatives who are unable to access all the relevant layers of professionalism. Partnership members from small interest organisations also lack the professionalism that stems from scientific knowledge. Even when these actors have access to scientific knowledge, only a few of them can identify with and align themselves with the dominant discourse. Community representatives are particularly prone to question the legitimacy of the professionalism that dominates such partnerships. They are proud of their experiential knowledge and draw on this to contest professionalism, which they disapprove of. If the governance of local partnerships is to be a bottom-up process more lay people and local inhabitants need to be involved. Their experiential knowledge could bring about a cultural change in governance that goes beyond the current decentralisation of decision-making to the local level.

3.1 Introduction

Over recent decades the governance of rural areas in Europe has changed, with agriculture losing some of its hegemonic position and other concerns, such as the environment, nature preservation and the countryside as a consumption space for leisure activities coming to the fore (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). At the same time national and European rural policies have placed more emphasis on bottom-up and local self governance (Ward and McNicholas, 1998; Frouws and Leroy, 2003). Rural areas, therefore, are seen as having experienced a shift from centralism and State-led policy initiatives to policy formation and delivery by a combination of public and private stakeholders with a growing role of the local and regional level (Winter, 2002). The term 'governance' is often used to describe these changes, as it signifies a change in 'both the meaning and the content of government' (Goodwin, 1998: 5). The concept of governance enables us to focus on the emerging alliances and the relations between various governmental and non-governmental actors working together (Goodwin, 1998; Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). Governance expresses the broadening of scope from a 'unilateral (government or society separately) to an interactionist focus (government with society)' (Kooiman, 1993: 35).

For Kooiman (1993: 2) the concept of governance contains two distinct analytical levels. The first is the level of concrete examples of new models of governing and the second is the level of underlying patterns that might point to more fundamental developments in our societies. Here, we mostly contribute to the first level of analysis, focusing on a concrete example of a new governance model, a local partnership in the east of the Netherlands for the spatial reorganisation of the countryside. Partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors has become a popular and practical instrument of governance. The category of non-governmental actors generally includes a wide range of groups and organisations from both the private and community sectors. Participation from local communities is encouraged to ensure that rural development is truly bottom-up and reflects local needs (Edwards, 1998; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). As a result, private citizens or community groups (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998), or active citizens (Kearns, 1995) have become fashionable new partners of government (Murdoch and Abram, 1998).

Different empirical studies, however, show that many partnerships provide little access for community or civic representatives (Geddes, 2000; Bock and Derkzen, 2006; Bristow et al., forthcoming). This has been identified as a problem of democratic legitimacy, since inclusion is a cornerstone of the arguments for establishing a body of largely unelected representatives (Hayward et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004). Moreover, when citizens do gain access to these structures they often find themselves in a disadvantaged position. It has been noted that, community partners lack the necessary administrative resources and 'are often unused to operating effectively within bureaucratic processes' (Geddes, 2000: 793). Atkinson (1999), for example, argues that the presence of professionals, officers and politicians constrains the effectiveness of community representatives. Representatives of

civic groups risk becoming 'peripheral insiders', sitting at the table but being unable to influence the central issues (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998: 325; Taylor, 2000: 1022). The main argument here is that community or civic representatives cannot participate in a meaningful way as they lack institutional support and financial resources (Taylor, 2000). To address this asymmetry it has been argued that these 'weaker' members should receive institutional support, training and education to enable them to more effectively take on the professional role.

This focus on community representatives creates a distinction between professionals or experts on the one hand and citizens or the community on the other (Atkinson, 1999; Mancini, 1999; Geddes, 2000; Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins, 2004; Fischer, 2005). The danger of such a distinction is that civic representatives are seen not to belong to the dominant category of professional or expert and may end up serving as the 'other', reinforcing the perception that the rest of the partnership belongs to the dominant category. In this way, civic representatives cannot access the symbolic power attached to being a professional. We argue here that the construction of identity in partnerships is an important, but generally overlooked, factor that contributes considerably to power asymmetries. If civic representatives are not seen as professionals or experts, how is their knowledge viewed? Who are the rest of the partnership members? Are they really all professionals, and how is their professionalism constructed? As Glaser (1972) argues, 'it is from the asymmetrical professional-expert relationship that much of the "know-it-all/know-nothing" imagery emerges, with its consequent instant faith and yielding dominance' (Glaser, 1972: 163).

Before we turn to our case study of a partnership in the Achterhoek region, we describe our search for some definitions of what it means to be a professional. There are different bodies of literature on professionalism in, for example, medical, educational and social studies. Different authors agree that the concept of professionalism is ambiguous (Dent and Whitehead, 2002; Boshuizen et al., 2004; van der Camp et al., 2004). Moreover, the terms professionalism, or 'the professional person' are often used in a largely undefined and taken-for-granted manner (Mancini, 1999; Lowe et al., 2001; Fischer, 2005). Nevertheless, we can identify various entry points to the concept of professionalism. We first examine the concept from the level of the individual and later we analyse the group level.

For individuals, the transformation into becoming professionals requires them to acquire specific knowledge or expertise (Boshuizen et al., 2004) and to develop corresponding personal characteristics (van der Camp et al., 2004). Acquiring this knowledge almost invariably takes place through formal training in institutions such as universities with a focus upon domain-related research. After this, socialisation takes place in the culture of the profession (Boshuizen et al., 2004). Professionals who have achieved a degree of success in their occupation can also be called experts. Indeed, the two terms are often used interchangeably or even put together (Mancini, 1999; Fischer, 2005). Fischer, for

example, states that a 'professional expert' is someone who has 'a body of knowledge' and 'relevant techniques' (Fischer, 2005: 29).

What then, distinguishes the expertise of a professional or expert from that of a layperson? According to Boshuizen et al. (2004), experts structure their domain-specific knowledge in a different way. Domain-specific or 'scientific' knowledge affects their perception of a situation or problem and its causes. This scientific knowledge is grounded in empirical measurement, based on a methodology that is assumed to distinguish between facts and values. This method of structuring knowledge produces objective truths and abstractions that are often far removed from 'narrative' knowledge (Lyotard, 1984), 'local' knowledge (Rist et al., 2007) or everyday life experiences (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Fischer, 2005).

"Expert knowledge, thus, is a certain (very successful) *perspective* on a particular domain. Apart from specific information about facts and proven methods of problem solving, professional knowledge includes the world-view that is typical for a certain profession" (Boshuizen et al., 2004: 6 emphasis in original).

Thus, becoming a professional or expert not only involves individual educational achievement, but also a process of enculturation into a group; that is 'becoming accepted and legitimised in a certain context' (Boshuizen et al., 2004: 6). We use the term 'a professional' instead of 'an expert' in this article because 'a professional' indicates a link to 'a profession', and because the issue of enculturation into a group forms an important part of our analysis.

The enculturation of the professional into a group touches on the question of how people come to be identified as part of a common profession, or 'collectivity', and how this professional identity is defined and defended. González and Benito (2001: 346–347) formulate a minimum model, based on three factors. The first is through the existence of specialised technical knowledge, the second is through the capacity for self-organisation and getting its voice heard and the third is through the closure mechanisms which control access to the profession. However, this model omits a further crucial element: that of professionalism as 'the public manifestation of beliefs' (González and Benito, 2001: 345). In this way, being seen as a professional is partly in the eyes of the beholder (Dent and Whitehead, 2002). This aspect is expressed in the definition of Kompf et al. (1996: 5) who define professionalism as 'displaying in one's public (and private) life types of behaviours likely to meet with the approval of the community in which one practices one's professional skills.' Hence, individuals can become professionals if they are able to pick up those signifying practices that legitimate them as professional. This implies that anybody who displays the behaviour of the implicit professional norm, can 'become' a professional, regardless of formal education or a link to a relevant professional organisation. Put in another way, to be seen as a professional and to exercise power 'the individual must present an almost seamless association with the dominant discourses' (Dent and Whitehead, 2002: 11).

Thus, the capacity to align with the dominant discourses and present oneself as a professional can serve as political capital (Swartz, 2003: 142–143). In the words of Bourdieu, 'it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition' (1989: 23). Being seen as a professional in settings where professionalism is the norm can provide symbolic power. Therefore, we argue that processes of exclusion are not limited to 'the resources that communities are able to bring to bear to redress previous imbalances of power' (Taylor, 2000: 1025). The extent to which partnership members see themselves and are perceived by others as capable in that particular social setting is equally important, because this determines how their contributions will be evaluated.

In this article, we analyse how professionalism is a multi-layered construction and show the nuances of this in the context of a partnership in the Netherlands. The following section describes the methods used and the context in which the local rural partnership and its members operate.

3.2 Context and methods

Traditionally, rural policy making in the Netherlands has taken place in the framework of a centralist planning system in which regional and local power is limited (Goverde and de Haan, 2002). Since the 1990s conscious efforts have been made to decentralise some responsibilities and to engage local stakeholders in rural development. The government has delegated the implementation of agri-environmental policies and natural resource management to the regions and the EU directly funds rural development at the regional level. Together, these policies are referred to as *gebiedsgericht beleid*, 'area-based policy', the objective of which is to develop territorial policies that integrate fragmented (and often contradictory) sectoral policies and take specific regional characteristics into account. Integration and decentralisation are seen as necessary to solve specific local problems and to generate legitimacy at the local level over sensitive issues, such as reducing the environmental pressures of agriculture (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005: 299).

A specific area-based policy called 'the reconstruction of the countryside' was introduced in 2002 in the south and east of the Netherlands. The rapid spread of swine fever in 1997, exacerbated by the high concentration of pig farms in these areas, gave the Dutch government the opportunity to initiate this law that is aimed at reorganising the intensive husbandry sector and reducing its environmental impacts. Other aspects of the policy included the establishment of local partnerships to develop strategies for improving the quality of natural habitats and landscapes, water and the environment in general, as well as the quality of life and work of the people in the area. Although formal responsibility for these policies lay with provincial governments, the national government obliged them to work with local partnerships and defined a minimum list of interests that had to be represented in these partnerships. Compared to previous area-based policies, the local partnerships had more decision-making power, as their plans would overrule existing local spatial plans. They had the responsibility to define spatial zones, where agriculture,

nature or other functions would have priority. The partnerships were also involved in prioritising and monitoring EU-funded rural development projects. The new policy, therefore, contained a strong element of land reform, which was a highly politicised process and one that ultimately implied that some farmers could be obliged to relocate to other areas.

Our analysis is based on a case study of one such partnership in the Achterhoek region, part of the province of Gelderland, in the east of the Netherlands. Regions sit between the provincial and municipal administrative levels in the Dutch political hierarchy and have no political or administrative status. The Achterhoek covers roughly a quarter of the eastern provincial territory and incorporates 30 municipalities. The area is defined as rural, having a population density that is half the national average (450 people per km²). Of a total of approximately 155,000 ha, 120,000 ha are used by agriculture and 16,000 ha by urban area and infrastructure.

In Achterhoek four *gebiedscommissies* (here referred to as partnerships) were established to implement these changes. They consisted of representatives of local government, interest groups, the private sector and the community. Three of the four partnerships covered local areas and the fourth covered the whole area and was the partnership where final decisions over the spatial planning task were made. The main partnership was taken as the case study, although two of the other partnerships were also studied.

The reason for choosing these partnerships for a case study was that shortly after the partnerships were started, a new position for community representatives was created in each partnership. This took place after intensive lobbying from local rural women who eventually came to occupy three of the four seats. These women knew each other from a course on improving the local quality of life that they had participated in. In lobbying for community representation on the partnerships, the group was supported by a regional organisation for rural women, to which some of them belonged (although none had more formal links with it either as board members or employees). As such, they took up their places on the partnerships on their own initiative to represent citizens in the area, rather than having been delegated to this role by an organisation.

The data for analysis came from three sources. Firstly, we analysed the minutes of meetings and policy documents. Secondly we conducted interviews with all the members of the main partnership, the community representatives of two other partnerships and with two provincial civil servants. The authors also conducted participant observation by following two community representatives and their support group of rural women in their activities over the two years of their partnership membership, during which time several meetings of the main and of two other partnerships were observed. From these data sources, the following sections describe how professionalism is constructed through identification with an organisation and the capacity to display a specific kind of knowledge

that is favoured, and indeed, required in the partnerships. They also show how the dominant professional identity was subject to processes of resistance and redefinition.

3.3 Partnership members

The main partnership consists of 10 members representing different interests. In addition, the partnership has a chair, a secretary, a civil servant from the plan-writing team and advisors from two national ministries and the provincial government. The chairpersons of the three sub-partnerships are also members. The total number of people around the table therefore could there reach almost 20. Most partnership meetings are open to the public and are attended by an average of 20 people. Partnership meetings are held every four to six weeks and take place in different town and village halls and are announced in the local press. Partnership members receive usually a large stack of paperwork before the meeting, including the agenda, proposals for the spatial plan and rural development project proposals. Most of the time at the meetings is spent discussing the proposals and suggesting adjustments to the spatial plan.

The 10 representatives of the different interest groups constitute the decision making core of the partnership. There were two levels of selection. The state prescribed, in generic terms, the minimum interests that had to be represented on the partnerships. The four partnerships in Achterhoek therefore, did not differ much in their composition, all having representatives from agriculture, water, the environment, nature, tourism/recreation, non-agricultural industry and 'the people'. Secondly, the provincial government translated these defined interests into the representation of specific interest organisations or public agencies.

Thus in the main partnership in Achterhoek agriculture was represented by two board members from the traditional national Farmers Union (rather than including one from the newer Pig Farmers Union). Rural estates and big landowners had their own representative from the Association of Rural Estates. In some cases different interest groups were represented by one individual. Thus, for example, the representative of non-agricultural industry, is an industrial entrepreneur and board member of the local Chamber of Commerce but also represented the Associations of Tourist Entrepreneurs and of Hotel and Catering Entrepreneurs. The partnership also had a representative for the tourism and recreation interests of all the municipalities in the area, which were further represented by the Association of Municipalities. This representative claimed furthermore to represent all people in the area, since everybody belongs to a municipality, a democratically elected level of government. The same claim was made by the community representative, who was recruited by a regional rural women's organisation because of her interest in women's issues and experience in municipal politics, but who formally represented quality of life in the area, interpreting this as being there to represent the local people. The interest groups of nature and environment were taken up by the Nature Conservation Agency and the Environmental Interest Organisation respectively. These two groupings combined forces from the very beginning, forming a coalition for the

environment, nature and landscape. Lastly, water interests were represented by the Public Agency for Water, a governmental agency. The interests involved in the partnership in Achterhoek are presented in Table 3.1.

Employee of organisation	Voluntary board member of organisation	No direct connection to organisation
Environment The Organisation of Environmental Interests	Agriculture National Farmers Union (of which two representatives)	Quality of life and community Rural women
Nature The National Nature Conservation Agency	Rural estates and farmer cooperatives The Association of Rural Estates	
Water The Provincial Public Water Agency	Non-agricultural industry The Chamber of Commerce and two associations of entrepreneurs	
Municipalities The Association of Municipalities		
Recreation The Partnership of Municipal Recreation Interests		

Table 3.1 Partnership membership

At the outset partnership members were encouraged to set up a constituency group (*klankbordgroep*) to provide feedback to their constituency and involve more local people in the process. Not all representatives organised a constituency group: some established more informal feedback arrangements in their organisations. Several representatives, however, did arrange local constituency groups, including the Farmers Union, the Environmental Interest organisation, the community representatives and the Association for Rural Estates. Of these, the Farmers Union representatives report back to their constituency most regularly and extensively, making use of the existing structure of local branches of the Farmers Union.

3.4 Professional through profession

If we use the 'minimum model' of collective professionalism from González and Benito (2001), we can assess the representatives according to the professionalism of the 'collectivity' that they represent. To recall, professionalism was associated with three factors: the existence of specialised technical knowledge, the capacity for self-organisation and getting its voice heard and with closure mechanisms that control access to the profession.

Five out of the 10 representatives participate in the partnership as an employee, in other words as part of their profession (see Table 3.1). The first two factors of the model of González and Benito are especially relevant here. These five representatives are each in the employment of an organisation strong enough to get its voice heard through its employees who, in turn, possess a specific body of knowledge relevant to their job:

“I have a profession in the public sector. So everybody has his or her profession and works in their field [of expertise]”. (Representative of Association of Municipalities).

This statement reveals an assumption that all the representatives are there on behalf of their job. Yet, this was only true for half the representatives. The other five were not there as part of a paid job but were, in one way or another, volunteers. Four of these representatives are board members of interest organisations that are generally closely related to their real profession, and some have taken up these positions after retirement. Two of them are farmers and board members of the Farmers Union, one is a board member of the Association of Rural Estates and is retired and one is a board member of the Chamber of Commerce and an industrial entrepreneur. He comments on his position:

“We only have two people, unlike the others who have an organisation, like the people from the Environmental Interest Organisation. Look at the guy from that organisation, it is his profession, it’s all he does. So he is a hundred per cent knowledgeable on the topic. This is what you notice as a difference.” (Representative of Chamber of Commerce).

The other volunteer is the community representative, who is not a board member of an interest organisation and is only loosely associated with the regional rural women’s organisation that recruited her. The four board members might not have the same amount of time and technical knowledge that come with being a representative as part of the job, but they are at least associated with an organisation which is closely related to their professional life. Although these board members share their voluntary status with the community representatives, their organisational ties imply a greater organisational capacity. They, like the employed representatives, do not work on their own but are part of an identifiable and closed collective. In contrast, the community representative, while having a collective in the sense of a group of rural women who were her constituency group, cannot identify with a formal organisation. Moreover, the interest she represented was not associated with a profession: it was of her private life as an inhabitant of the area. Hence, she cannot access the symbolic values associated with a formal organisation, such as technical knowledge, organising capacity and control mechanisms to entrance. However, like the other board members, she did have experience in interest representation through local political activity:

“They [the rural women’s organisation] could not find any women to take the seat, because women were afraid that they did not to have the right experience. I said yes because I have experience in local politics.” (Community representative).

3.5 'Professional' knowledge

This section explores how the construction of professionalism is also connected to displaying the right kind of knowledge. As we argued in the introduction, knowledge is intrinsically connected to professionalism. Professional knowledge can be defined as domain-specific or science-based, and is characterised as being objective, rational and abstract, structured by a methodology that separates facts from values and rationality from emotion. Equally, professional knowledge is the type of knowledge that fits the norm of the setting. What is seen as professional is in line with the dominant discourses of that setting. If we approach the practices in the partnership along these two lines, a different picture of who is seen as professional emerges.

The main task of the partnership was to make a spatial plan that would quite fundamentally reorganise the countryside. While it is a largely technocratic exercise, it was also one that required the involvement and approval of local inhabitants. The process is firmly rooted in the Dutch spatial planning tradition, yet simultaneously attempts to involve and engage local people through new governance arrangements. In practice, the organisation and culture of the decision making process is more deeply rooted in technocratic design than in bottom-up dialogue. As a consequence, the discourses and therefore the understandings of professionalism are very largely based on domain-specific or scientific knowledge, which is used to objectify the political choices that have to be made.

The spatial plan and the projects it generates will span a 12-year period of spatial rearrangements and public investment intended to improve environmental quality and to reduce the negative impacts of intensive husbandry. It aims to separate vulnerable natural habitats from intensive pig husbandry and to create space for both to develop within the context of other land use pressures. The spatial plan is about defining a development trajectory by establishing functional zones based on the physical features of the area and existing spatial policies, such as EU directives on nature protection. Professional knowledge in this partnership therefore requires (1) knowledge about spatial planning law, (2) technical knowledge about the physical conditions of the environment, (3) the capacity to deal with complexity and large amounts of information and (4) the resources to provide the partnership with scientific evidence that supports a constituency interest.

Those representatives with a job and an organisation that provides them with scientific knowledge therefore have a clear advantage in the partnership. The representative of the Environmental Interest Organisation, seen by another member as 'one hundred per cent knowledgeable' remarks:

"The legal aspects of water retention areas, the measuring of the reduction of ammonia deposition, the impact of agriculture on vulnerable habitats – you need a lot of background knowledge. We have specialists employed in every field and they are the ones who direct me, not the other way around."

Moreover, those that are used to working with texts, reports and definitions, know how to use the power of written words:

“The representatives of the Nature Conservation Organisation and the Environmental Interest Organisation often proposed textual changes to the minutes of the previous meeting. This annoyed others because we had agreed at the start of the process that we would not keep a literal record of what was said, to prevent people from fussing and having endless discussion about words.” (Representative of Association of Municipalities).

Texts and reports however, have a major influence on the negotiations over the spatial plan. Representatives were allowed to provide the partnership with reports of external research or other strategic information that could objectify their arguments. The capacity to provide such documentation and formalise arguments became an important factor in the construction of a professional identity. This ability connects the individual and collective levels of professionalism. At the individual level, the representative needs to be able to master the information to use it in the partnership. At the collective level, it shows that the representative has the organisational resources to access research or to buy expert knowledge. Smaller and less resourceful organisations found it more difficult to organise their evidence and representatives without formal organisational back up, like the community representative, were unable to provide such information to the partnership:

“We had little support, our organisations are small and I do not have a team of civil servants like the others” (Representative of Association of Rural Estates).

In general, therefore, the type of professional knowledge that dominates the partnership favours those representatives with technical and scientific knowledge that is accessed through a job in a relevant organisation. There is one important exception to this pattern, that of the Farmers Union’s representatives. While they are farmers in their daily life, they were also part of a large interest organisation and were well-equipped compared to other voluntary board members:

“You have to be able to read the documents and also be able to speed-read them because it is impossible to read everything. Of course, we have specialists who tell us what are the most important parts to read and they advise us on what to say in the negotiating process.” (Representative of Farmers Union).

The professional identity of the Farmers Union representatives was also enhanced by their being at the very heart of the partnership’s debate. Although the objectives of the Reconstruction Policy extended beyond allocating space to nature conservation and agricultural interest groups, the tension and conflict between these two interest groups dominated the debate in the partnership, structuring the whole agenda and defining what was and was not relevant to its real goals. This close alignment with the dominant discourse and the farmers’ interest in maintaining a narrow focus on the nature–agriculture debate provided the farming members with much political capital:

“I think that, although it was a political process, we spoke quite honestly with each other. But I can imagine that the key players, the professionals of environment, nature and agriculture, also meet in other settings.” (Representative of Association of Municipalities).

“There were three representatives that took the lead, the representatives of nature, agriculture and water: if they agreed, the rest could as well go home.” (Representative of partnership municipal recreation interest groups).

From this perspective, the professionals in the partnership are those with interests in, or property rights to land, i.e. the representatives of the Water Agency, the Farmers Union and the Nature Conservation and Environmental Interest organisations. The partnership therefore was in fact a coalition of professional and property interest. This effectively left the rest of the partnership on the periphery of the discussion, even the job representatives such as the representative of the Association of the Municipalities. While the members of the Association of Rural Estates are also landowners, their science-based knowledge and organising capacity was too small to have much influence on the debate. However, the domination of the partnership by a small coalition of interest groups was not willingly accepted, as discussed in the next section.

3.6 Resistance and redefinition

The capacity to align with the professionalism that provides the dominant and legitimate frame of reference of the partnership provided some members with symbolic power. Yet it was also subject to contestation and resistance. Professional dominance of the partnerships led to a situation where the participative bottom-up planning process was no longer comprehensible for those local residents who were supposed to be at the core of such an exercise and this provided other partnership members with a legitimate avenue of resistance:

“What is wrong with this process is that private citizens and inhabitants are at a disadvantage compared to the civil service and the institutionalised politics. In my eyes, the second group also includes institutionalised interest organisations, such as the Farmers Union and the environmental lobby.” (Representative of the Association of Rural Estates).

For the community representatives, representing the private lives of rural inhabitants, the shortcomings of the process seemed even clearer. They objected to the detached, rationalistic approach of representatives who were there in a professional capacity but who would not *feel* the consequences of any new spatial zoning in their private lives. These professionals did not live in the area and had no bonds to the community. This distance allowed the community representatives to question the legitimacy of these professionals involved in the partnership:

“If you are a partnership member because your boss decided you had to be, you are able to make more rational decisions than when you are living in the area. The

decisions they make will not affect them, they get paid anyway, and their lives won't change because of it." (Community representative).

The community representatives, who have a direct connection to residents in the area, consider themselves as the legitimate participants in the partnership, able to voice the concerns of the people through their strong connection to their local constituency. Moreover, they objected to the conflict narrowly defined as being between nature and agriculture and the emphasis on physical nonhuman environmental characteristics. Instead they mainly use their own experiences and knowledge when discussing the potential negative social impacts of farm relocations or challenging the definition of expansion limits for rural businesses. Community representatives use the fact of their belonging to the area to argue for issues that are connected to their world as they experience it:

"The meetings are full of technical discussions on environmental impacts and definitions. I constantly ask myself what the consequences are for people who live in this area. But it is difficult to relate the technical to the everyday life of people here." (Community representative).

Community representatives, like other more peripheral representatives, brought different issues to the table in order to shift the discussion away from the dominant nature–agriculture debate. They pointed, for example, at the problems of young people unable to buy a house due to the restrictive spatial planning for housing enforced by environmental claims. The community representatives took pride in using their experiential knowledge to oppose the kind of professionalism that they disapprove of.

This opposition was not only expressed in language but also through actions that showed the existence and engagement of local constituencies. At a special brainstorming meeting of one of the partnerships, where the partnership members were encouraged to bring along members of their constituency, the community representative, the rural estates representative and the farmers union representatives each brought along a group of about seven to nine people. The provincial government and the chairperson both recognised the strength and value of the engagement of these groups in the process. It was also noted that some representatives of the public agency organisations were absent from this meeting. In the subsequent regular partnership meeting, the chair congratulated the community representatives for their 'constructive and engaged contribution to the brainstorming meeting'. The community representative took this comment as evidence of the increased visibility of her position and as evidence of the success of their conscious strategy to attend with a large group that successfully expressed the value of experiential knowledge and local engagement.

Despite this, the symbolic power of the professionalism of codified scientific environmental and planning knowledge and the narrow nature-agriculture debate continued to dominant the partnership's agenda. The ability to align with this type of

dominant knowledge provided political capital for board members from the Farmers Union who were able to represent themselves as professionals in the debate. They had to play two hands at the same time, engaging with the professional discourses while representing and dealing with a vocal constituency of local farmers who identify more with experiential knowledge and feelings. These representatives realised that experiential or local knowledge played a subordinate role in the partnership process:

“For a lay person in the process it is hardly comprehensible how the plan is formed” (representative of Farmers Union).

Other voluntary-based representatives, especially the community representatives, had fewer resources for presenting a professional identity. They were also the ones who most strongly opposed the dominant way in which professionalism was constructed. They are proud of their experiential knowledge, which they see as their kind of professionalism, using it as an asset to oppose rational, scientific knowledge. Yet, by firmly opposing dominant professional knowledge, the community representatives ran the risk of marginalising themselves as ‘others’, or non-professionals.

3.7 Conclusion

It seems we have come full circle. The literature referred to in the introduction suggests a distinction between community representatives and the rest of the partnership members, arguing that community representatives lack the institutional, financial and knowledge resources to participate effectively in new governance arrangements. We have shown here that community representatives are indeed the most disadvantaged, not least because of their lack of symbolic resources for participation and acceptance. They cannot access the symbolic values and the material resources that come with being an employee or a board member of a formal organisation and therefore lack access to the symbolic value of a professional identity. What is more, the community representatives *themselves* seem to reinforce the categories of professional versus citizen by opposing the values, norms and rationality of the professionals.

However, there is a crucial difference between the reasoning in the literature and the reasoning of the community representatives. The literature suggests that community representatives should be trained or given the resources to display the professionalism that is the norm in such partnerships. The community representatives in this study oppose that norm by employing their own asset, a different type of knowledge; one that is rooted in local experience. They argue that the partnership process is overly based on technocratic and scientific reasoning, which will not generate the engagement of the inhabitants of the area whose assent (or at least whose lack of opposition) will be needed when the plan is implemented. They are convinced that a partnership process more firmly rooted in true bottom-up dialogue would have given much more precedence to their type of knowledge.

We conclude that professionalism is a multi-layered construct that is constructed in different ways by different partnership members. While there is a professional core in the partnership, the rest of the partnership is a heterogeneous group, not all of whom can align with the dominant professionalism. Representatives of smaller interest organisations and the community representatives lack many of the resources required to display the professionalism connected with science-based knowledge. The representatives of the Association of Rural Estates and of the Chamber of Commerce have neither the organisational support of employees for studying the plan, nor do they have sufficient resources to access or commission scientific research to objectify and support their arguments.

A larger group of partnership members cannot access the perception of professionalism that comes with alignment with the dominant discourse. Only a few partnership members were at the heart of the debate around nature conservation and the development of intensive agriculture and these partnership members were able to keep the debate focused on these issues. Even some of the job representatives, like the representative of the Association of Municipalities, with more access to organisational support and science-based knowledge could only partly use this knowledge, because they were not at the core of the negotiations.

The professionalism derived from access to scientific environmental and planning knowledge and the narrow nature–agriculture debate has dominated the partnership in Achterhoek, but this domination has been subject to resistance and contestation. Some representatives expressed latent dissatisfaction in the process. They can be viewed as trying, but being barely able, to adhere to the professionalism that set the standard in the partnership. By contrast, the community representative and her colleagues in the other partnerships openly questioned the legitimacy of professional domination in the partnership. Instead of trying to get access to the symbolic resources of professionalism, the community representatives are proud of the experiential knowledge that they used to oppose the kind of professionalism they disapprove of. Their contestation of the objective scientific knowledge that is trusted as the truth, not only in the partnership but in society at large, makes them visible and vulnerable as ‘the other’. Their voice, representing another kind of legitimacy and knowledge is new and can be seen as an important sign of change in governance processes. The decentralisation of decision-making to local partnerships has resulted in a form of governance in which governmental and non-governmental organisations work together. This co-operation, however, is rooted in a technocratic and science-based way of working. For local partnerships to work as a bottom-up process requires the involvement of more lay people or local inhabitants. Their experiential knowledge, based on their private lives could bring about a cultural change in governance that goes beyond the current decentralisation of decision-making to the local level.

Chapter 4

Partnership and role perception, three case studies on the meaning of being a representative in rural partnerships

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Partnership and role perception, three case studies on the meaning of being a representative in rural partnerships

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Abstract

Partnerships are a newly emergent form of governance, in which the presence of different governmental and non-governmental organisations reflects – quite literally – the blurred boundaries of state and civil society. This makes it difficult to assess the legitimacy of partnerships and how they relate to the political-democratic system of a country. Governmental discourses and policies about partnerships often use ‘representation’ to democratically legitimise these new governance structures. But what does this mean in practice and how does it guide the actions of partnership members? This paper explores how partnership members justify their role in the partnership. It is based on a qualitative study of three local rural partnerships in Wales (UK). Our analysis reveals important nuances in how four types of representatives (from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors) differ in their perceived duties and attitude towards their constituencies. The voluntary sector representatives act more like delegates and express the strongest sense of responsibility towards the people they represent. Others, such as members from the public sector, act more like trustees and believe that a mandate implies a certain level of independence and reliance on their expertise. These nuances are later illustrated from a different angle when respondents comment about their roles as participants and/or representatives. The majority of respondents attributed positive aspects to being a participant and negative ones to being a representative. They thought that participants were more active and better able to contribute to the common goal of the partnership. This gives rise to a paradox as framing the role of participant in this way also involves downplaying their own organisational ‘self’ interest, yet as we show it is those members with the clearest organisational interest in the partnership who most strongly advocate participation over representation.

4.1 Introduction

The past decade has seen a comprehensive change in the way in which rural (and urban) Britain is politically governed. This is often described as a shift from government to 'governance', a term that is widely used in political science, sociology and political theory, but lacks conceptual clarity (Bevir and Rodes, 2003). Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2004) distinguish nine different bodies of literature with different approaches to governance, although they do share some common characteristics. First, governance is used to indicate a pluricentric, rather than a unicentric, approach to governing. Second, the various concepts of governance emphasise the relations and interdependences between actors and therefore the importance of networks. And third, there is much focus on the processes of governing, in that a variety of actors are involved in negotiation, cooperation, competition and coordination (ibid: 151-152).

In this way concepts of governance are used to capture "the connection between steering and the practice of freedom in a high modern world, where everyday life is growing increasingly complex, dynamic and differentiated" (Bang, 2003: 2). This growing complexity is related to a blurring of boundaries between state and civil society (Stoker, 1998; Goodwin, 1998). "Where government begins and society ends, or the other way around, becomes more diffuse" (Kooiman, 1993: 4). This diffusion of responsibilities and accountability is apparent in the new ways of governing that blur the borderline between government and society. Examples include citizen panels, interactive spatial planning and partnerships. This article focuses on the last of these.

Academic interest in 'new forms of rural governance' occurred somewhat after the event (Goodwin, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998), although has since received much attention. 'Working in partnership' is an area that has recently received considerable attention from rural scholars (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998; Geddes, 2000; Jones and Little, 2000; Edwards et al., 2001; MacKinnon, 2002; Shortall, 2004; Whittaker et al., 2004; Sherlock et al., 2004; McAreavey, 2006), not least because partnerships have become a "significant vehicle for the implementation of rural development policy in Britain" (Edwards et al., 2001: 289). The impetus for 'working in partnership' has come from both the European and the national levels, and has been framed as an inclusive and participative strategy for local self-organisation, that brings together resources and facilitates cooperation and consensus (Goodwin, 1998; Edwards et al., 2001). Partnerships for rural development typically include representatives of public, private and community interests who are assumed to share a common degree of commitment to specific policy objectives, at a strategic or delivery level (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998). In this sense partnerships – quite literally – reflect the blurred boundaries of state and civil society. This raises the question of how partnerships fit within the existing constellation of government levels and institutions, or, how they relate to the existing political and democratic system. Governmental policies towards partnerships often legitimise these partnerships as a way of strengthening democracy through enhancing 'representation'. Many partnerships, including those covered in this study have a

'representative brief'. But what does this mean to the members of the partnership? This paper explores how partnership members perceive and legitimate their membership roles and responsibilities.

4.1.1 Partnership and democracy

Partnerships have become a significant instrument in rural development governance. They have been subject to critical assessment on a range of issues, such as their inclusiveness, the 'genuineness' of participation, their accountability, their position viz a viz local government, the role of the public sector and their role in articulating the public interest (Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Geddes, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Edwards et al., 2001; MacKinnon, 2002; Bock and Derkzen, 2003; Bock, 2004; Hayward et al., 2004; Sherlock et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004; Whittaker et al., 2004; Derkzen and Bock, 2007).

The assumptions about democracy underlying the analysis of partnerships, often remain implicit but nevertheless do frame the analysis. Differences in the analysis of partnerships are underpinned by different assumptions about democracy that go back to the classical clash of positions within democracy theory (a similar argument was made in relation to studies of community involvement by Goodlad et al., 2005). This clash is situated in "whether democracy will mean some kind of popular power (self government and self regulation) or an aid to decision-making (a means to legitimate the decisions of those voted into power)" (Held, 2006:3). This clash relates to two competing interpretations of democracy, the liberal or representative one and that of direct or participatory democracy (Held, 2006). Participatory democracy has come to be understood in terms of citizens' direct involvement in government (Barber, 1984). Rather than merely being represented by elected politicians, citizens and civic organisations themselves become involved in policy processes. Governance is often assumed to enhance participatory democracy as it facilitates the involvement of non-governmental actors. While some see this as a positive step others see it as a threat to representative democracy, as politicians "become but one out of a series of political decision makers" (Sorensen and Torfing, 2003: 618, see also Mccall and Williamsen, 2001).

A number of problems of democratic legitimacy in rural partnerships have been identified, including a number of tensions that such partnerships create in relation to representative democracy. The position of partnerships in relation to local government, whose legitimacy is founded on their representative democracy – poses a problem as "partnerships of dubious democratic legitimacy (...) exist alongside local government" (Shortall, 2004; see also Woods and Goodwin, 2003) and local government "is superimposed with a new geography of non-elected local governance" (Edwards et al., 2001). There is also concern over whether effective partnerships at the local level that "genuinely enable participants to 'govern' themselves" (Murdoch and Abram, 1998: 42) might not challenge the primacy of national level public interest. From the viewpoint of participatory democracy, based on ideals of active citizenship and self governance, partnerships give rise to different concerns. One area focuses on the adequacy (or not) of

participatory methods, which it is sometimes claimed do continue to exclude marginalised groups who are 'still left out in the cold' (Hayward et al., 2004; Lawrence, 2004; Bock and Derkzen, 2003). Another criticism is that partnerships do not always provide equal chances for participation, leading to a distinction between core and peripheral members (Taylor, 2000; Derkzen and Bock, 2007) or a hierarchy of partners (Sherlock et al., 2004).

Few studies on partnerships have explicitly elaborated the link with representative or participatory democracy (for exceptions see Sorensen and Torfing, 2003 and Sherlock et al., 2004). The debate on new forms of governance, sometimes, and somewhat coyly, refers to participation that "points beyond formal democratic representation" (Rist et al., 2007: 25, see also Everingham et al., 2006). But it is too easy to merely state that "the link between interactive processes and 'normal' political decision-making procedures is apparently problematic. [And] that such forms of participatory democracy are not compatible with the rules of the game of representative democracy prevalent in the West" (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000: 110). It is possible that rural governance through partnership might enhance both forms of democracy. Raco and Flint (2001) and Raco et al (2006) provide some of the very few studies that touch upon the possibility that "the socio-political geographies (...) represent a hybridity of representative and participatory systems" (Raco and Flint, 2001: 609; Raco et al. 2006). This paper seeks to further this debate and explore the significance of partnerships for local democracy by examining the views of the partnership members themselves on their roles and responsibilities.

Three local rural partnerships were selected in order to study the roles and responsibilities of partnership members. The next section describes these cases and how they were selected and researched. This section on methodology is followed by an elaboration of the concept of representation, based on Hanna Pitkin (1967), which is then used as a framework for analysing the results.

4.2 Methodology

Interpretative research characteristically focuses on meanings, which are products of collective human activity, created in everyday situations, in action and through practices and language. The interpretative approach leads one towards a micro level of analysis, because meanings and their representations are highly situation-specific (Yanow, 2003). Moreover, it is one that emphasises the contingency of social definitions: social concepts are seen not as naturally given facts but as constructs, which become treated as natural because they are so taken for-granted (Bevir, 2004). Exploring these avenues requires qualitative research that both investigates the actors' point of view and also allows complex phenomena to be studied in a holistic way (Wester and Hak, 2003).

Within this strategy, interviews, document analysis and observation were combined in a form of methodological triangulation. Moreover, data triangulation was also achieved through studying the practices of partnerships in three different areas. The partnerships and study areas were selected using criterion sampling (Patton, 1990: 56) to select case

studies from among the estimated 2000 'loosely defined' partnerships operating in Wales (Bristow et al., 2003). The most important criteria used were: partnerships had to be initiated by the government, had to operate at the county level and had to be involved in decision making over rural development funding. In addition, they had to have a representative brief. A Welsh Assembly Government policy for rural communities called Rural Community Action (RCA) was taken as the entry point for selection. This programme limited the choice to ten partnerships, spread over twelve Welsh counties. The final selection of the partnerships for this study was made after a series of telephone interviews with key officers within these ten partnerships. The final choice was made to achieve a spread in terms of the year of establishment and the lead organisation for RCA policy. The partnerships are:

- the Rural Objective 1 Partnership in Conwy (2000, local authority lead body);
- the Creative Communities Partnership in the Vale of Glamorgan (2003, local authority lead body);
- the Grwp Cefn Glwad in Carmarthenshire (Rural Objective 1 Partnership, 2001, community organisation lead body).

Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2005 in a semi-structured way, using a "general interview guide" (Patton, 1990: 109) with a topic list for guiding the questions. All the interviews were taped in full. A total of 23 face-to-face interviews were conducted with 31 respondents from the three study areas and two interviews with three national-level civil servants. In four cases the interviews were group interviews, the largest of which was held with five partnership members in Conwy. This interview was by its nature less detailed than the interviews with individuals. To complement the interviews, observations were made of the partnership's practices, specifically focusing on the interactions of members before, during and after (four) partnership meetings.

4.3 Representation

In governmental discourses about partnerships, 'representation' is often used as a means of democratic legitimisation. But it is worth asking why representation is relevant for partnerships involved in rural development? Representation is needed in situations where there are competing interests. Partnerships are and need to be seen as a particular form of political organisation and it is their political nature and the way in which they fit with and relate to established democratic institutions that raises concern among rural scholars (Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Edwards et al., 2001; Shortall, 2004). Partnerships address political questions, prioritising actions and deciding what should be done. They involve decision making and resource allocation, choices that are based on a mixture of facts and values. If we are not comfortable to leave matters to the experts, deliberation, reason and negotiation are needed to value and judge choices so that they are not just arbitrary ones (Pitkin, 1967: 212). At a basic level, representation can mean "making present *in some sense*", something that is "not literally present" (Pitkin, 1967: 8-9 emphasis in original). In political terms, Pitkin (1967) distinguishes two main views about political representation: the formalistic view which treats representation as a formal arrangement

at the start of the activity of representing and a more substantive view which looks at what a representative does or has to do when acting for others.

The formalistic view of representation encompasses two diametrically opposing positions about the criterion that defines the formal arrangement at the outset of the act of representation. The best known view is what Pitkin calls the 'authorisation' view, which defines representation as the giving and having authority to act. In this view a representative "has been given a right to act which he did not have before, while the represented has become responsible for the consequences of that action as if he had done it himself" (Pitkin, 1967: 39). Although this definition makes it clear what a representative is, it does not address the question of how this authorisation is used after it has been given. There is another formalistic approach to representation that does address this problem of accountability to the represented, which Pitkin calls the 'accountability' view. This view defines a representative as somebody "who is to be held to account, who will have to answer to another for what he does" (Pitkin, 1967: 55). In other words, representatives have a responsibility to the represented, they are not set free through being a representative, on the contrary, they acquire new obligations.

Both these two views are formalistic in the sense that they restrict consideration to the procedures or arrangements prior to and/or after the act of representation, but the practice of representation itself stays as "a kind of "black box....[n]either [view] can tell us anything about what goes on during representation, how a representative ought to act or what he (sic) is expected to do" (Pitkin, 1967: 39, 58). These formalistic views might not say much about the activity of representing but the formal arrangements do partly set the context in which partnership members do their work. The partnerships in this study have a representative brief, which means that, in establishing them, the government assumes that the members represent something or somebody. In this sense one can say that the partnerships are based on the authorisation view of representation. The government selects partnership members and gives them authority to act in the partnership.

However, formalistic views do not provide insights into the substance of the activity of representation and only partly explain what representation means in partnerships for rural development. On a practical level it seems self evident that representing others or acting on their behalf requires certain behaviour and obligations. Representatives cannot act on impulse. They have to be accountable for their activities or decisions. "This is what the formalistic accountability theorists try to express, but it is a matter of acting as if we would be held to account rather than of institutionalised accountability" (Pitkin, 1967: 119). This institutionalised accountability sees a representative more as a carrier of messages rather than someone who acts on behalf of others. The substantive view of representation addresses this by including the important assumption that there is a "relative equivalence between the representative and the represented, so that the latter could conceivably have acted for himself instead" (Pitkin, 1967: 140). Acting for others requires a level of responsiveness to the interests of the represented without being

subordinate to them. Responsiveness does not mean that a representative can not act independently, on the contrary, "his action must involve discretion and judgement; he must be the one who acts" (Pitkin, 1967: 209). However, the ones who are represented are also assumed to be capable of independent judgement of the issues at stake and the actions undertaken on their behalf. Such a duality might lead to tension or conflict, but Pitkin argues, this duality between the 'free' or the 'mere' agent resides within the concept of representation; making present in *some sense* something that is not present.

The degree to which representatives experience their duty of accountability or their freedom to act in their partnership work can be mapped on a continuum between the ideal typical roles of delegate representation (accountability view) and trustee representation (authorization view) (Parkinson, 2003: 187). A representative who sees him or herself as a delegate will feel the pressure of being responsive to the principal or the people that he or she represents. This might constrain the freedom that he/she feels in acting and reacting within the partnership. She or he has to follow closely the wishes of her constituency because it can hold the representative to account for his or her actions words or actions. A representative who fits more with the trustee role will be more inclined to make decisions as he or she sees fit. In this respect trustee representatives see themselves as having a much freer mandate and being more independent.

In this article we use the continuum of delegate / trustee representation to analyse important nuances in the roles taken by partnership members from different sectors. The idealised far ends of the continuum, the 'true' delegate and 'true' trustee are also interesting to investigate. An extreme delegate, will not be able to act independently in the decision-making process as he or she is only the messenger of the people he/she represents (institutionalised accountability in the words of Pitkin). Equally an extreme trustee will take the freedom to act to such an extent that it becomes unclear whose account they are acting on. If members do not feel or see the connection to 'others on whose behalf' they are acting, they can participate without the feeling of accountability.

The following sections present the case study results. First, we look into the formal arrangements of the partnerships through the governmental policies. Secondly, we discuss different roles that partnership members take, using the degree of accountability experienced by the members as a guideline. The third section analyses the roles taken by partnership members but from a different angle. Here, the starting point is the perceived difference between the roles of 'representative' and 'participant' and how these differences influence how partnership members act in the partnership.

4.4 Case study results

4.4.1 Formal representation

The new partnerships that have come into being in recent years are intended to include a broader range of stakeholders within decision making. While extending the scope of those involved in decision making beyond traditionally elected governmental representatives the

membership of these partnerships is usually selected by a government body. The three partnerships in this study were all initiated by local authorities, assigned this task by national and/ or European policies.

The three partnerships in this study are all implementing the *Rural Community Action Programme* (RCA) of the Welsh Assembly Government. This programme covers the twelve counties in Wales with substantial rural areas and aims to improve the regeneration capacity of local rural populations. The partnerships in Carmarthenshire and Conwy previously existed as Objective One European Structural Funding partnerships (since about the year 2000) before also being given RCA status in 2003. The partnership in the Vale of Glamorgan was newly created for the RCA. All three partnerships are focussed on rural development. They draw on different sources of funding, with the RCA programme being the only common source of funding. This selection reflects the structure of the RCA Programme in Wales, which where possible, drew on existing partnerships rather than creating new ones. This means that in the majority of the counties, the RCA programme is implemented by an already existing partnership with an already existing composition of 'relevant' stakeholders.

Partnership members are selected on the basis of representing an organisation, sector or a group that is affected by, or that is otherwise seen as relevant to the partnership's goal(s), related to rural policy, rural regeneration and community regeneration. Although the Welsh Assembly encouraged using already existing partnerships, there are guidelines in the RCA policy about what constitutes a relevant representative. These state that:

"The membership of a Partnership is flexible, but we would expect it to include the local authority, development agencies and representatives of the community/ communities (...). The mix of representatives on each Partnership will vary but consideration should be given to the inclusion of *representatives* from local authorities, local development agencies, existing community groups, the voluntary sector, the private sector, and schools and colleges. It is preferable, although not essential, that there should be a reasonable balance of the public, private and voluntary sector representation as well as ensuring a gender balance" (WAG November 2002: 4 emphasis added).

Thus, the envisaged partnership members are defined as 'representatives' and are all assumed to represent some collective or specific interest. However, it is not obvious who defines what is 'relevant' and what factors influence the selection of members for the partnership. Especially since many of the members were selected prior to the RCA being established. The membership structure of the three rural partnerships in this study differs considerably. They all have representation from the Local Authority, (councillors and civil servants), the Farming Unions, the Voluntary Sector and national level Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs). Only the Carmarthenshire RCA had representatives from schools or colleges and (three) community-based local development agencies. In the other two partnerships' areas there is a lack of organised community-based local

development groups. In the Vale of Glamorgan other local representatives, from an arts centre, a local trust, the chamber of commerce, and a community enterprise are members of the partnership. In Conwy, the partnership has little local community related representation besides a representative from a Leader-LAG and has more representatives from ASPBs such as Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). Table 4.1 summarises the composition of the three partnerships:

	Carmarthenshire	Conwy	Vale of Glamorgan
Balance of members between sectors	Private sector underrepresented	Voluntary/ community sector underrepresented	More or less balanced representation
National versus local level representation	Mix of local and national level members	More national level members	More local level members

Table 4.1 Partnership composition

Respondents in all three partnerships generally felt that their partnerships do include all relevant stakeholders. None could name an organisation or group that they thought was undeservedly excluded:

“The community councils should not be on it, they are too small. Those that have actually any influence over the rural area, they are on it, in the sense that they are running programmes, they have got funding, they have got officers out there, they have got staff working there, they are representing the farming community in general. So therefore the Farming Union is there and we are there because we seem to represent the communities. We are a community based organisation” (# 8:22, community sector, Carmarthenshire).

The respondents also emphasised the openness of their partnership. An organisation with an interest in joining the partnership would be more than welcome, although no respondents could recall an organisation or person asking for membership and being subsequently included on the partnership. Membership only changes when the initiator of the partnership – the Local Authority revises the membership, as happened in the Vale of Glamorgan:

“What we found last year.....because we had a lot of farming representatives there and they knew that the funding situation was going to change for farmers and they came on board. When they realised how the partnership was going to work they stepped back. We did not have meetings cancelled but we nearly did not have the minimum amount of people. So there we decided that we needed some new members” (# 19:23, public sector, Vale of Glamorgan)

The partnership one could say, is an inclusive circle of 'collectives' or interests that are affected by the goals of the partnership. Hence, it is the inclusiveness through representation, or in other words the full representation of affected interests that legitimizes the partnership. Appointed by the government, and not chosen by the public, the partnership has representation of the 'relevant' public interests and in this way is seen as legitimate:

"I think it is the power from which you work isn't it? If you are a truly representative partnership, you can speak with authority about your area, it is like me commenting on something when I did not work ever in community enterprise, you have to have a backup and people who can comment on policy. I know how it works on the ground, so I think the partnership needs to be truly representative to be effective yes" (# 20:30, community sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

From a formalistic viewpoint, representation requires authorisation (Pitkin 1967). Partnerships for local rural development are formally arranged around the representation of specific organisations and individuals selected by the initiator of the partnership. Partnership members are given their authority by being selected by the government agency that established the partnership. But this formal arrangement does not provide any guidance as to how partnership members should act in their roles as representatives. There are no government guidelines on this so, partnership members themselves have to find the meaning of their rights and obligations as representatives.

To examine the substantive aspect of being a representative we analysed how respondents talk about their accountability. This revealed different interpretations of what they understood a representative is and should do. The following section discusses these different positions along a continuum that runs between delegates and trustees. We categorised four types of member from the broad sectors defined by national policy (voluntary, community, private and public). The voluntary sector was represented from or through the Association of Voluntary Services, the private sector by the Farming Unions, the public sector by Local Authority and the community sector by community-based organisations (in Carmarthenshire) or proxies (elsewhere).

4.4.2 Adopting roles: 'delegates' and 'trustees'

The analysis showed that voluntary sector representatives have the strongest obligation towards their constituencies. They assume more responsibility to act as delegates in that they are conscious of their obligation to report back from the partnership to their network of volunteers or voluntary groups that support them:

"I think it is people representing different interests, either in geographic communities or communities of interest. One thing I think is important is, that somebody on a partnership needs to be answerable to the people they represent" (# 9:29, voluntary sector, Carmarthenshire).

The voluntary sector representatives tend more to take information from the partnership to their constituencies, rather than the other way around. They see it as important to

keep voluntary groups informed about opportunities, policy and processes as this can help the groups to do their jobs better:

“We are a small organisation, what we do is we organise elections so that we get representatives of the broader voluntary sector that sit on the various partnerships and then they are part of a network and they feed the information back into the network. The most important thing for us in the voluntary sector is that if you sit on a partnership we have to make sure that the information goes further than just for themselves or the organization. It has to go beyond that to make sure that we are all feeding into this partnership process” (# 21:4, voluntary sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

The emphasis that voluntary sector partnership members place on this might be influenced by three factors. First, unlike other partnership members, they represent a defined, large and heterogeneous group of people. Sometimes the voluntary sector's representative is elected from among a pool of volunteers and voluntary groups. In this sense voluntary sector representatives are in a similar situation to an elected politician. Second, the emphasis on being a delegate might be related to the type of expertise they bring to the partnership. They see their constituency, and their close affiliation with local people and voluntary groups, as an asset that they bring to the partnership. They draw on the experience of the voluntary sector in, for example, working with socially excluded groups, which might be target groups for the partnership. Acting as a delegate therefore is partly an expression of the type of expertise of these partnership members. Equally it is only in recent years that the voluntary sector has been considered legitimate members of such partnerships: an invitation to take part in a partnership is quite novel. For many years, the voluntary sector has tried to get involved and to get their voice heard in such bodies, but only quite recently their partnership membership has become the norm:

“We are hoping to be more pro-active now, in the past we were knocking on the door but it was quite tokenistic. It is totally the other way around now; all organisations are actually keen on working with the voluntary sector. We don't have to ask for voluntary representation, it is assumed by everybody” (# 9:23, voluntary sector, Carmarthenshire).

The voluntary sector partnership members are keen not to spoil the possibilities to influence and take part in policy delivery through partnership. They might feel they have to prove that they are worthy members of the partnership, and demonstrate that their individual membership represents a broader network.

Other representatives operate somewhere in the middle of the continuum between delegates and trustees. These representatives have a constituency of people who they represent and at least some of them they meet regularly. Yet, these representatives also feel a considerable amount of freedom to act on the basis of their own expertise. Representatives from the Farming Unions are good examples of this. They express their responsibility to the farmers within their Union. The farmers make up the membership of

the Farming Union and act as principal to the delegate representative in the partnership. Yet the Unions give their representatives a certain amount of freedom to act in the partnership as they see best, so in this sense they act partly as trustees:

“Well I represent in my role the union members of the rural Conwy but I haven't got a specific mandate, I haven't got a specific list of what they need but hopefully what we do, provides an input for the local agricultural industry. There are two unions on the partnership anyway so there is a broad aspect and at the same time I think we pass on any information that this network has” (# 30:47, private sector, Conwy).

“There are some meetings that I ask members to go but members have farms to run and they attend some meetings but they cannot attend a large number of meetings. Most of them I attend on their behalf, if there is anything important, I report back or get their advice when we meet monthly in the county. It does not happen that often” (# 13:2, private sector, Carmarthenshire).

Close to the middle of the continuum but arguably more towards the trustee side are the partnership members representing community local development interests, (a group only found in Carmarthenshire). Community organisations have a particular geographical community as their constituency. They are 'community based' organisations, run on a not-for-profit basis and with a board consisting of community members. While this board is regularly updated about the activities and programmes of the community organisations, the management has considerable autonomy in daily organisational matters and programmes in progress. Most usually it was the management, not one of the board members, who attended partnership meetings:

“I am accountable to my board, I have a board of directors and I am accountable to them, and if we sign a partnership agreement I am accountable for this agreement” (# 8:15, community sector, Carmarthenshire).

Although clearly accountable to their community board, these professionally trained rural development workers have a large degree of freedom to act in accordance with their expertise. They have been given the authority by their board to act as they see fit. The community board is, therefore, bound by the decisions of the management of the community organisation, their representative in the partnership.

Local Authority representatives fall much more into the mould of trustees. They have a mandate from local elections. Their constituency is large and heterogeneous and these representatives are more distant from their constituencies, in their daily working lives than the other representatives. Their authority is institutionalised through periodic local elections. In addition to councillors, local civil servants often attend partnership meetings. They may not have official voting rights (if votes are ever called) but they do advise and contribute and therefore steer on behalf of the Local Authority and its policies. However,

their relation with the representatives is indirect, mediated through the Local Authority as an organisation with elected councillors.

The categories of partnership members used thus far in this analysis all represent identifiable groups of people. Yet, there are other partnership members with less direct interaction or clear connection to the people they represent, as their constituencies are less easy to define. These include partnership members who 'represent' a private business, individuals representing 'the community' and from Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies like ELWa, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) or the CCW. On whose behalf do these people speak and whose interests do they represent? It is particularly problematic to define what precisely 'community representation' is, even though it is often given as an unambiguous precondition for the composition of a partnership in policy documents (see quote of WAG p9). In what way can 'the community' (itself poorly defined) be represented by individuals who happen to live in the community? Who, within the community, are they representing? An example of the confusing use of 'community representation' is shown in the following quotation from a private business owner in the Vale of Glamorgan who sees himself as a community representative of a partnership that serves 'the community' and helps 'communities' whose scale or geography is ill-defined:

"Basically it is a community partnership, so you are working for the community and therefore ultimately you have got to be answerable to that community. We had a lot of projects, more than could be funded so at the partnership we had to decide a) how much money would be available and b) how we could best spend it to be benefiting the maximum number of people or the maximum communities and also have a reasonable spread" (# 18:12, private sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

For others representing QUANGOs such as the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs), the link to a human constituency is not so much ambiguous as is almost entirely absent. Instead of representing people, these agencies represent more abstract reflections of the public interest, as embodied in strategies, ideas and policies. While semi-autonomous, these agencies are formally part of the public sector and have a remit to work in line with the public interest as articulated in the government mandates that define their competences, goals and funding:

"I think particularly with community organisations, I am sure that they feel that they have constituencies behind them. But in terms of the agency, who is my constituency, I am not sure, I suppose my colleagues who work across this office?" (# 2:24, public sector, national level).

Thus, while all partnership members see themselves as representatives in the partnerships there are important nuances in terms of the *kind* of representation that they refer to. This section has shown how the four main categories of representative, occupy different positions on a continuum between delegate and trustee representation (see Figure 4.1).

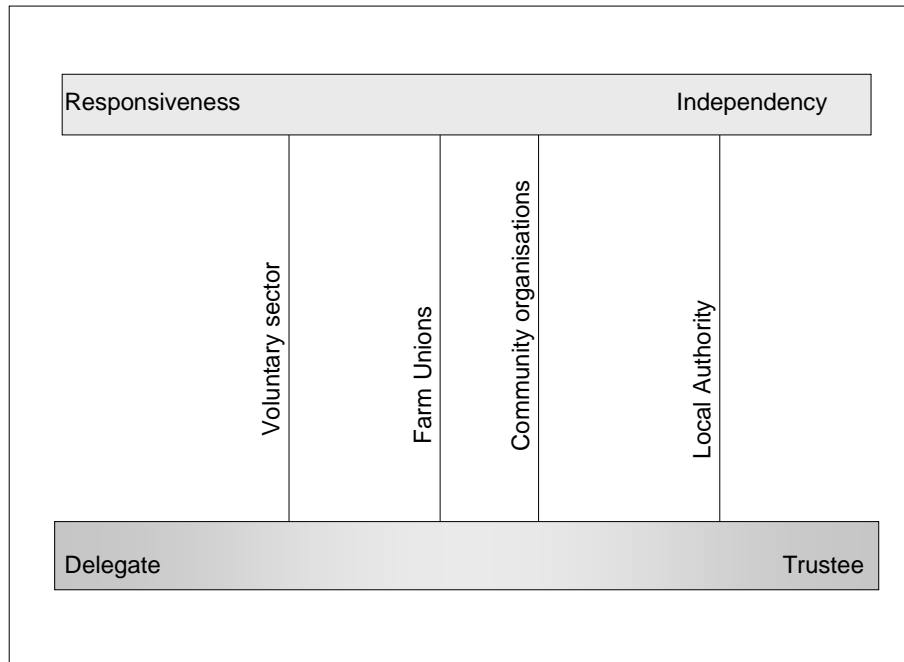


Figure 4.1 Continuum of representatives

The four types of representatives differ in their perceived duties and attitude towards their constituencies. The voluntary sector representatives are more responsive towards their constituency. They not only do have the organisational structures for accountability in place, but also express the strongest need to act *as if* they can be held accountable. Those closer to the trustee position are less responsive to their constituencies (which may not be so close or so well defined) and act more as if their mandate provides them with a certain level of independence. Members who strongly express this independence fit the mould of the ideal typical trustee, if indeed they can be said to be acting on behalf of others at all. Partnership members with unclear relationships with their constituency are more arguably acting on the basis of their own expertise. In such cases it is questionable whether such partnership members can legitimately be referred to as representatives.

The ideal typical trustee we have argued comes close to the notion of being a participant as opposed to a representative. Unlike representation, the notion of participation does not have association with obligations to others. This difference was used as a second starting point to discuss the roles that partnership members take. Their view on and identification with participation shows how members perceive their roles, and highlights other aspects, such as responsiveness and independence.

4.4.3 Representation and participation

Respondents were asked whether they identified themselves as a representative or as a participant and what they thought the differences between the two were. In these

discussions the majority of the respondents attributed positive features to being a participant and negative features to being a representative. While the respondents all acknowledged their representative role, the majority stressed that they also acted like participants. The voluntary sector respondents were a notable exception to this in that they all had a positive view about being a representative and saw their network of constituents as a positive feature of being a representative. The following quote reflects the sentiments of many respondents:

"I would think that everybody in the partnerships I attend is a representative because they are there for their organization, so you know the relevant organisation will come together in a partnership and each member of that partnership is there to either represent the college, or other organisations, but we don't go there to simply sit around the table, we go there to participate in the partnership and to drive the partnership forward." (# 2:3, public sector, national level).

The explanation for the positive feelings about being a participant shows two types of interrelated reasoning. First of all, respondents in all the three case studies saw participation as something that is about more than just self-interest. It is associated with a sense of the common good and with contributing to the goals of rural development and to the partnership as a whole. This was contrasted with an understanding of representatives being only interested in and concerned with the interest of their organisation or people, an attitude that can give rise to conflicting interests in the partnership:

"Participating you do for rural Carmarthenshire. A participant tries to be as holistic as possible" (# 4:9, community sector, Carmarthenshire).

"When you are representing you may represent the organisation that may have a different view to you personally at different times. If you were in the partnership you would be saying, I am not wearing my organisation hat and I think so and so. Then you are participating, but not as a representative." (# 3:7, private sector, Carmarthenshire)

"A representative has a more narrow focus, only for farming for example. A participant is there to contribute to the best of his ability" (# 13:9, private sector, Carmarthenshire).

Respondents also associated being a participant with being active and involved and making a positive contribution to the work of the partnership. Again, this contrasted with viewing being a representative as being passive, not there to give something to the partnership but who is only focussed on taking information from the partnership:

"Someone who is a representative is just there for the organisation they work for and they sit there, they just take information and feedback. (...) while participants

are proactive, they have an impact on the results of the partnership" (# 19:1, public sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

"If you represent all you can do is go there and represent who you are representing and take away from that meeting and give it back to whoever you are representing. So this is a lesser role if you are a representative" (# 6:18, public sector, Carmarthenshire).

"Whilst I am a representative, I do see myself as an active and concerned partner in our organisation" (# 22:8, private sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

Moreover, participation was associated with collaboration and commonality, whereas representation was associated with competition and political struggle. A respondent, commenting on a national partnership says:

"They are representatives rather than participants and that does make a difference. The main focus seems to be just that the people want to come when the minister is going to be there so that they can make a sort of point. So they see these things in terms of a political thing and they also seem to seek a range of bilateral meetings with the minister as themselves. Which is their right but it takes away the point of the partnership" (# 15:55, public sector, national level).

Partnership members see participation allowing them to feel free to act as they see fit, regardless of the organisational position or interest, which might differ from what they bring to the table. Participation as a trustee is less connected to questions of 'on whose behalf' and legitimises autonomous actions within the partnership which are assumed to benefit the partnership as a whole. Members seemed to find that the notion of participation implied independence from a specific constituency and responsiveness to the partnership as a whole. There was reference to some kind of 'internal' responsiveness as opposed to 'external' responsiveness to constituencies. Not bound by the ideas or interests of the people or organisation they are representing, members can overcome differences in positions that might otherwise constrain cooperation and arriving at a consensus.

However, using a strong identification with the public interest or the common good of the partnership to legitimate acting autonomously is not totally disconnected to the organisational 'self' interest. Although members suggest that the organisational interest that they represent is not important, it is the interest that gives partnership members the most incentives to "drive the partnership forward". So who is interested in being actively involved and why? The rationale for being active in and responsive to the partnership can be strategically linked to the organisational 'self' interest, possibly because it gives the organisation or person access to funding:

"Some people are receiving grants because of projects and they are participating much more than representatives" (# 19:4, public sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

Thus, the partnership members gain the most through their active involvement when 'external and 'internal' responsiveness overlap. Although participation may be positively associated with independence and with a kind of responsiveness, being a participant is also strategic or political, not as neutral as those who stress its positive features imply. Being a participant does not stop members from being a representative. They cannot escape their membership of a particular organisation (Sorensen and Torfing, 2003: 618) and are still likely to promote their organisational interests:

"We ought to encourage those organisations to be more participatory. At least if people got a genuine buy in, rather than talk-buy in, you have a better chance in succeeding whatever it is you want to do." (# 15:50, public sector, national level).

Acting as a participant can further the common good, but it can equally be seen as a strategic choice, so long as the common good does not interfere with organisational interests. A private sector respondent expressed this strategic choice when asked whether he was in the partnership for the common good:

"Hopefully there will never be a conflict between a representative and a participant. Because otherwise in my case, it has to be as a representative." (# 13:10, private sector, Carmarthenshire).

The active involvement of partnership members could therefore be connected to the opportunities that the partnership offers for pursuing their own self interest, with the ones with a high stake being at the core and others at the periphery. This notion of a partnership core was put forward by one respondent, who contrasted this to the peripheral group who were 'only' concerned with being representative, and 'just sit there and take information':

"You find that some of them [partnerships] work quite well because there is a core of people, but I think in any partnership you probably have a core of participants and you have got people who are sitting around the outsides, the representatives. You have got active people on the partnership and inactive people" (# 20:33, community sector, Vale of Glamorgan).

The responses about aspects of being a representative or participant can be schematically visualised, as in figure 2 (below). Members with a high and direct organisational interest in the partnership, especially through funding of projects, tend to be more active in their membership in order to further the common goal and the public interest of the partnership as a whole. Partnership members with less of an immediate organisational interest tend not to be so overly positive about the partnership as a whole and do not underplay their representational role. They acknowledge that their representational role might mean that they prioritise their organisation's viewpoint over consensus in the partnership.

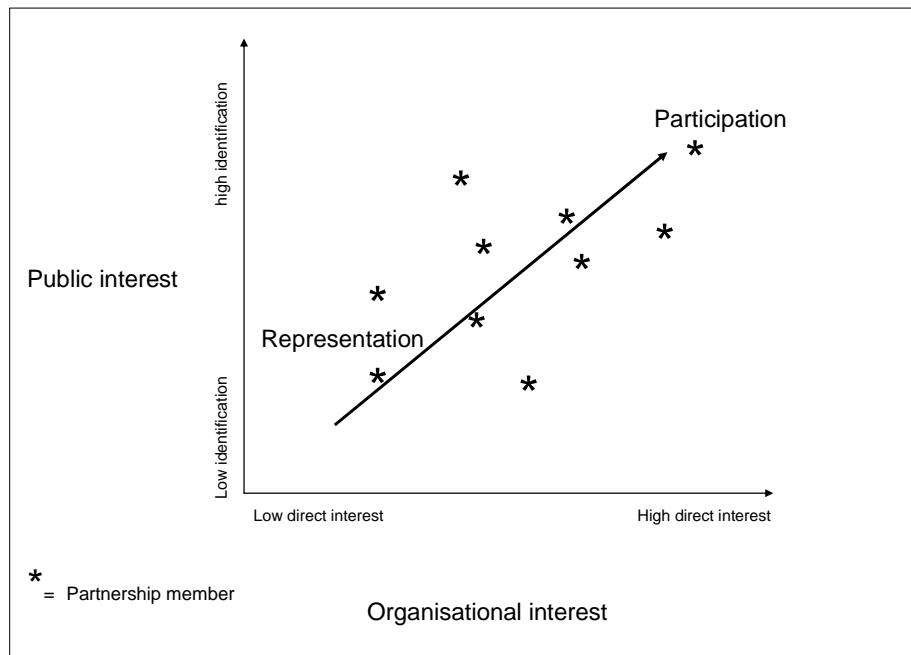


Figure 4.2 Partnership member and interests

4.5 Conclusion

Formal partnership arrangements as a policy instrument for local rural development, are based on the representation of a number of organisations and individuals selected as 'relevant' by government agencies. The formal aspect of such representation can be analysed from Pitkin's definition of authorization (1967). Partnership members have been a priori given the authority to act within the partnership by virtue of having been selected by the government agency that established the partnership. However this formal arrangement does not give any guidelines as to how partnership members should act in their roles as representatives.

Although all the respondents in this study identify themselves as representatives in the partnerships, there are important nuances in the *kind* of representation they refer to. The four types of representatives differ in their perceived duties and attitude towards their constituencies. The voluntary sector representatives perceive their role more as being that of a delegate, and express the strongest responsiveness towards their constituency. Not only do they have the organisational structures for accountability in place, they also express the strongest need to act *as if* they can be held accountable. Those who act more like trustees express less responsiveness to their constituencies, and justify this on the grounds that a mandate implies a certain level of independence. Public sector members of ASPB organisations have particular difficulty in identifying their constituencies, which are more abstract policy guidelines than living individuals. For public sector partnership

members there is generally a less strong relation between 'acting' and 'on behalf of'. Their participation is primarily based on their expertise rather than being representatives.

When asked about the relative merits of being a representative or a participant, the majority of respondents attributed positive features to being a participant and negative features to being a representative. As participants, partnership members feel free to act as they see fit, which might differ from their organisational position or interest. The notion of participation closely relates to adopting a role of a trustee, where actions are less connected to the group or interest they are representing. Participation allows them to act autonomously in the partnership. Respondents stressed, however, that they participate for the benefit the partnership as a whole. This notion of participation therefore seems to stress an independence from their constituency, while simultaneously suggesting a kind of 'internal' responsiveness to the partnership as a whole.

Yet, while these positive aspects of participation may be emphasised, being a participant is also strategic or political and not as neutral as implied. Being a participant does not stop a member from also being a representative. They cannot escape their membership of a particular organisation and as such are likely to promote their organisational interests. Partnership members who most actively participate in 'driving the partnership forward' are also those who have the most self interest in doing so.

What conclusions can be drawn on the democratic legitimacy of the politics of such partnerships? One could argue that it is not important what type of role partnership members take in the partnership because every partnership member, regardless of who or what they represent, has been given the authority to act *beforehand*, by having been selected and appointed by a government agency. This gives them the right to be a partnership member without particular obligations. Under this reading all partnership members are legitimated through their appointment and are free to do whatever they please. Yet by receiving new rights it can be argued the representative also receive new responsibilities. From this point of view, the government and the organisation that sent the person are responsible for the conduct of the representative.

This formalistic view of authorisation appears to dominate governmental policies for partnerships. These policies only stipulate which type of organisations should be empowered to be in a partnership. What happens afterwards does not seem to matter. Little thought has been given to what representatives actually or ought to do "after the right kind of authorization" (Pitkin 1967: 39). This disregards what happens *during* the partnership work and the political nature of such partnerships and their work. Political issues and choices are at the heart of what such partnerships are all about. As such they and their work can only be legitimated through them substantively and demonstrably acting for others. "We need representation precisely where we are not content to leave matters to the expert; we can have substantive representation only where interest is involved, that is, where decisions are not merely arbitrary choices" (Pitkin, 1967: 212).

Such representation necessarily involves an element of both independence to 'act' and a level of responsiveness to 'others' so as to be subject to 'democratic control' (Sorensen and Torfing 2003). The majority of the respondents, whose membership of partnerships is largely based on their expertise and judgement, see themselves as independent actors with few concerns about the showing a lack of responsiveness to their constituency, or the issues of democratic accountability that this raises. This is evident in their clear preference for acting as participants as opposed to representatives, and their views on those who act in a more representative role. Yet, the notion of participation, unlike that of representation does not have a clear link to the interests of the 'others on whose behalf they are (supposedly) acting.

The striking exceptions to this tendency are the voluntary representatives. The three voluntary sector respondents from each area were not negative about the role of a representative. Their more delegate style of representation focussed on being responsive to their constituencies. They stressed the network of those they represent as a positive feature of being a representative.

Partnership members can perhaps be seen as jointly playing the roles of representative and participant. This could imply, as Raco and Flint (2001) suggest, that local governance is a hybrid of representative and participatory systems. Firstly, from a perspective of participatory democracy, participation implies the direct participation and inclusion of citizens and civic organisations in decision making. In these partnerships, citizens, civic groups and other non-governmental organisations do directly participate in the decision making process, but as *representatives* of others. Paradoxically, the civic representatives of the voluntary sector are the ones that act most strongly as representatives of others. Their role perception prevents them from falling into the trap of participatory democracy models in which direct participation can lead to advocating self-interest only. Their role perception enhances their legitimate basis in the partnership.

Secondly, the role perception of partnership members who have less identification with a constituency can lead to participation in which there is a weak or absent link to the notion of representation. Especially public sector members have stronger role perceptions around being a participant rather than of being a representative. In this case, the role of participant can – contrary to the theory of participatory democracy– legitimize and strengthen the position of public sector members who feel free to act solely on the basis of their own expertise.

Chapter 5

Examining power struggle as a signifier of successful partnership working: a case study of partnership dynamics

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Abstract

In Britain, and Wales particularly, inclusion and equal opportunities for all became key principles guiding the work of the many partnerships that were established at the beginning of this century. In this paper we argue that power is an important constitutive element of the politics of partnership which should not be overlooked through too much emphasis on equality and consensus. What we demonstrate, using a differentiated topology of power (Allen, 2003), is the effect that different modes of power, at different times, can have on social interaction and the process of partnership working. Although inequality in terms of resources existed in our study, we show that effective partnership working was enhanced at times when more reciprocal modes of power were used. We conclude, therefore, that an analysis of power based on resources alone is limited because the use and effect of resources may be “modified, displaced or disrupted depending upon the relationships that come into play” (Allen, 2003: 97). Hence, there is a need for more research on power struggles and conflicts in partnerships over time. Only then it is possible to see how and when differences in resources affect social interaction and result in different levels of (in)equality. A partnership cannot be seen simply as an indirect instrument of a dominant government actor to control organizations and individuals.

5.1 Introduction

The 1990s has seen a comprehensive change in the political management of rural (and urban) Britain. Central to this change has been the perceived shift from government to 'governance'. Governance as a broad and widely applied term is used in this context to refer to either "a *new* process of governing; or a *changed condition* of ordered rule; or the *new* method by which society is governed" (Rhodes, 1996: 652-653, emphasis in original). With the acknowledgement of an increasingly differentiated and complex political system, a governance perspective has become useful in the analysis of socio-political interactions encompassing governmental and non-governmental actors (Kooiman, 1993). It draws attention to:

"the multiplicity of actors specific to each policy area; interdependence among these social-political-administrative actors; shared goals; blurred boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors; and multiplying and new forms of action, intervention and control" (Rhodes, 1996: 658).

Certainly in Britain, a governance perspective draws attention to a more multi-level and multi-actor arena, particularly since New Labour came to office in 1997. Under the Labour government, regions received devolved powers. This 'Government Modernisation' agenda was wrapped in discourse of citizen and community engagement and enhanced public participation (Barnes et al., 2003; Millward, 2005). Devolution would bring government closer to the people. For Wales, this meant the creation of the Welsh Assembly in 1998. In the run up, a particular Welsh discourse on inclusion and participation was developed to secure Welsh support for devolution, by trying to include previously excluded minority groups and political parties (Chaney and Fevre, 2001a). The White Paper of the Welsh Office reads: "the Government is committed to establishing a new, more inclusive and participative democracy in Britain" (Welsh Office, 1997: 3; 2.1 in Chaney and Fevre, 2001a: 27).

Inclusion and participation became key principles guiding the Government of Wales Act and the creation of the Welsh Assembly. One of the key mechanism for putting inclusiveness in to practice in Wales has been through furthering of the principle of equal opportunities for all. This was also one of the cornerstones of the Labour government's 'Government Modernisation' agenda and required "a proactive stance from government and the general *promotion* of equality of opportunity" (Chaney, 2004: 64 emphasis in original). Hence, the "unique" statutory equality duty of the Welsh Assembly can be seen as an interplay of UK and Welsh politics (Chaney and Fevre, 2001b; Chaney, 2004). In parallel to this;

"the European Union has given added momentum to an inclusive policy agenda in the first years of the Assembly, in areas such as the mainstreaming of equality matters in the administration of European Objective One funds earmarked for Wales" (Chaney and Fevre, 2001a: 36).

The statutory equality duty was put in practice through the creation of binding partnership arrangements with the local authorities, the private sector and the voluntary sector. Indeed, partnership with the voluntary and community sector was seen as a way to achieve inclusive governance, with the voluntary sector since invited to participate in the many partnerships that arose in Wales (Chaney and Fevre, 2001b; Bristow et al., 2003; Millward, 2005). Thus partnerships have become a central feature of policy delivery and decentralisation, which has “not been tried on this scale before in Wales” (Bachtler, 2003: 39).

The push for equality went further than the general endorsement of partnership decision-making. The principle of equal opportunities for all and the importance of representation of the community and voluntary sector in partnerships led the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999 to create the rule of “three-thirds” representation in statutory partnerships. To assure equal participation, statutory partnerships had to be composed of equal amounts of public, private and voluntary sector representation. Despite the good intentions, creating equal representation through equal amounts of people or organisations from the different sectors, was overly simplistic. Certainly it did not secure equality in the partnership process itself. Indeed, it remains the case, as has been observed by many, that partnerships are seldom fully inclusive and equal (Geddes, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Lowdnes et al., 2001; Franklin, 2003; Hayward et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004; Bristow et al., forthcoming).

However, rather than dismissing partnership as incapable of achieving full equality within the policy process, perhaps we instead need to focus on relative levels of (in)equality. If we close our eyes to the difference in interests and resources and the role of power and interaction among the ‘participants’, then the mission for quantitative equality can become an illusion of substantive equality. What we argue, however, is that power will always be present within partnership, as an essential feature of collective decision making which deals with differences in interests and preferences (Mouffe, 2000). If we want to know what constitutes effective rural development (McAreevey, 2006), we need to look beyond the mission for quantitative equality.

We need to study the politics of partnership working, focusing particularly on power struggles and conflicts. What such an exercise brings to light – our interest here - is that power struggles and conflicts may, in fact, indicate relatively low levels of inequality because the partnership process is not dominated by a single actor to the extent that conflicts are prevented from arising (Lukes, 2005). Power struggles and conflicts are particularly insightful when studied over time. It is then possible to see how and when differences in resources affect social interaction and result in different levels of (in)equality.

What we want to demonstrate, using a differentiated topology of power, is the effect that different modes of power, at different times, can have on social interaction and the

process of partnership working. We do so in this article, drawing upon longitudinal empirical data to address the knowledge gap identified by McAreavey (2006) surrounding the analysis of group level dynamics inside partnerships. Using a single case study we reconstruct some of the group dynamics and power struggles that were played out over a five year period in a local level partnership. The case study represents decision making in an Objective One rural partnership at county level in Wales from 2001 to 2005. To facilitate the presentation of the empirical material, we embed our discussion in theoretical considerations of power.

5.2 Partnership and power

A good starting point for a discussion of power theory is with the view of Lukes (2005) that conflict and power struggle can be indicative of the absence of total domination. This assertion is informative in that it signals that power struggle can also be indicative of relatively low levels of inequality. It points to the fact that where struggle occurs there is unlikely to be blunt domination played out by a single actor. Not so useful to the analysis here, however, is the underlying definition of power which Lukes then goes on to present. Lukes sees power as a dispositional concept which identifies an ability or capacity which can, but does not have to be exercised, to be effective (2005). In the light of our analysis, such a view has two major shortcomings.

First, a definition of power as a dispositional concept bears the danger of seeing power as 'centred' within individuals, groups or institutions. It might lead to 'reading off' the power from the resources that actors 'have' available (Allen, 2003). From such a point of view, any inequality in partnerships is wrong because actors with fewer resources are bound not to 'have' the same chance to influence. It might lead to conclusions that partnerships are unjust spaces of inequality, which do not live up to the promise of equal participation and inclusion (Geddes, 2000; Hayward et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004; Bristow et al., forthcoming).

Secondly, as Lukes himself admits (2005: 109), such a definition is geared almost exclusively towards power as domination. It implies that those who 'have' power may be able to dominate to such an extent that they no longer need to exercise it; resistance will simply fade away in the face of such overwhelming inequality in resources and capacities. The dominance – resistance framework stemming from such a view, however, oversimplifies the fact that power makes its presence felt through a variety of modes playing across one another:

“the erosion of choice, the closure of possibilities, the manipulation of outcomes, the threat of force, the assent of authority or the inviting gestures of a seductive presence, and the combinations thereof, are among the diverse ways in which power puts us in place” (Allen, 2003: 196).

Moreover, the dominance–resistance framework seems to be fundamentally at odds with a governance perspective which takes the complexity, interdependence and blurred

boundaries of multi-actor arenas as its departure point (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996). The sheer instrument of partnership constrains the potential for domination by resourceful public sector actors in the sense that outright refusal or indifference towards other actors can hardly be upheld and is likely to be questioned in partnership settings.

Although we do not wish to ignore the fact that resources often can and do make a difference, on the other hand, inequality in terms of resources does not need to determine the outcome of a partnership process. Moreover, we need a spatially more diverse understanding of power which includes the 'receiving end' of power and moves beyond power as an undifferentiated or even ubiquitous concept. We follow Allen (2003: 97) in his argument for a greater acknowledgement of the "mediated nature of power, wherein the effects of power may be modified, displaced or disrupted depending upon the relationships that come into play". He proposes, therefore, the need to see power "as a relational effect of social interaction" (Allen, 2003: 2). Power is, hence, not structurally given as defined in resources, but built, into the interaction and interplay of various actors.

Such a view has two consequences for the analysis of power struggles in partnerships. First, the acknowledgement that different modes of power produce their own specific effects, leads to an analysis of power that goes beyond domination to recognise the (overlapping and parallel) effects of other modes of power. For our analysis, therefore, the effects of modes of power such as of authority, inducement, coercion, seduction, manipulation, persuasion and negotiation, are important too. Authority is not seen here as the possibility to command, but following Allen, as the recognition of expertise, competence and norms that lead others to comply (Allen, 2003: 101, 149). It is different from seduction or manipulation which do not need the internalisation of norms to have effect. Inducement is power through which people are won over to the advantages of something (2003: 101). They bring themselves in line because they are rewarded somehow. Acts of inducement might coexist though, with coercion where the threat of deselection or dismissal bring people in line (2003: 145). Persuasion or negotiation are distinguished from the other modes of power by the need for two-way communication and more symmetry in the relationships involved because there is no obligation for all those involved to comply (2003: 125).

Second, a differentiated topology of power can be more sensitive to "the diverse geographies of proximity and reach" (2003: 152). A partnership can be seen as an instrument to exercise power through incorporating others within close reach. This might have implications for the relationships that come into play. The mode of power of authority needs recognition to be effective. Authority as mode of power therefore "implies that the more direct the presence, the more intense the impact" (2003: 149), in contrast to seduction or manipulation which do not need the consent of the 'receiving end'. Seduction and manipulation therefore have more spatial reach, precisely because there is the possibility for the 'receiving end' to be indifferent (whereas with domination, this

option remains absent). Hence, “the option not to participate is precisely what enables seduction to be effective at a distance” and “those subject to manipulation may be simply unaware of the control exercised over them” (2003: 148 emphasis in original, 150). However, another way for power to be exercised across space is through a series of mediated relationships through which power is successively composed and recomposed (2003: 134). The social interaction and relationships of people and organisations within a partnership might successively enrol others at a distance, through the representative nature of partnership membership or through programmes, projects and arrangements that are a result of the social interaction in the partnership. This is also why, within a partnership process, evidence of conflict and power struggle do not support a thesis of total domination. We illustrate this by turning now, to our case study.

5.3 Methodology

A primary objective of the research was to develop a greater understanding of the politics and processes within ‘partnership’ as a widely used governance instrument. The rural domain is especially relevant because of the interplay of European and national rural policies and funding. This case study is part of a larger comparative research of rural partnerships (Derksen and Bock, 2007). In this paper, however, rurality was not a specific object of analysis.

Studying the politics and processes within a partnership required a strategy of qualitative research which allowed for studying complex phenomena in a holistic way (Wester and Hak, 2003). In order to build checks and balances into the interpretative nature of the research, methodological triangulation was used through a combination of interviews, document analysis and observation (Patton, 1990). In parallel to this, recognition was also given to the importance of ‘time’ and the effects of ‘change’ as influential aspects in the study of group dynamics inside partnerships, for power struggles become manifest over time. Partnerships are not static and just as power is articulated as an infinite number of iterative steps, so too is partnership. Change happens within the field with which a partnership is concerned, it happens to the individuals within the partnership, and it happens to the regulatory environment within which the partnership and its individual actors are situated. In acknowledgement of this, a longitudinal perspective was sought. This was obtained primarily through documentary analysis sustained with a recount of the events in interviews and some observations to get a feel for the setting of the rural partnership.

A total of 36 written sources were analysed, including the minutes from all (17) rural partnership meetings, between April 2002 and December 2005. The other 19 documents, covering a period from October 2001 until July 2005, include documentation of the local authority and of community organisations such as policy plans, action plans and fact sheets as well as reports to the county council cabinet. The analysis also included leaflets and free papers of other involved (community) organisations and relevant websites. Given the political nature of the material, the empirical data has been made partly anonymous

to protect the respondents (Yin, 1994). There are three main community organisations which are referred to as: Rural Valleys; South West Communities; and Welsh Language South. Rural Valleys is the principal and most long standing (established in the seventies) community organisation. It covers all rural areas in the county and also operates in the neighbouring county. Welsh Language South was formed at the beginning of the nineties as a Welsh language initiative, subsequently broadening its remit to incorporate community development and life long learning. South West Communities is the youngest community organisation. It was established in the mid-nineties and operates mainly in the south west of the county. Other all-Wales organisations represented in the partnership are referred to by their general institutional name.

During the spring of 2005 interviews were conducted (11 in total) with three respondents of the community organisation Rural Valleys, two officers of the local authority and six partnership representatives of other organisations. The interviews were taped, transcribed and analysed with the Qualitative Methodology software Atlas.Ti. Information was collated on the role, interest and responsibility of the partnership member, the personal and organisational motivations to be in the partnership, the value, objectives and strategies of the partnership, the kind of decision making and funding relations throughout the partnership's past and the role of local politics and networks of key organisations in the partnership. During the same time period, two partnership meetings, one delivery coordination meeting, and two projects events were observed. There was opportunity for informal discussion after these meetings with partnership members, officers and staff of the community organisations. The observations were crucial as a complementary strategy to the interviewing and documentary analysis, for knowledge regarding the relationships in the partnership.

While all participants were keen to celebrate the success of the rural partnership, mainly referring to the first period of the partnership, the conflict between Rural Valleys and the local authority over match funding shimmered through the positive picture painted in the interviews. The experiences which led to this perspective are set out in the section below. For analytical purposes the case study is divided into three periods. Reflective of the different power constellations at work, these are presented as the 'joined up period', the 'challenge period' and the 'discipline period'. By way of context, though, the story begins with an overview of how the rural partnership came into existence.

5.4 Introduction to the case: the establishment of the rural partnership

The case study presented here represents a rural partnership at the local authority level in the West of Wales, the area eligible for European Objective One funding¹. The award of Objective One funding to west Wales and the Valleys has been described as much more than 'icing on the cake' – for much of these areas, it was 'the cake itself!' (Morgan and Price, 1998). This assertion gives a good indication of the level of importance attached to the funding award, not least by the local authority of Carmarthenshire – the area in which our empirical research took place. Traditionally Carmarthenshire had not

benefited from inward investment to the same extent as other areas in the south and east of Wales. At the time of receipt of Objective One funding, the GDP per capita for Carmarthenshire stood at only 76% of the UK average. The main factors identified as contributing to this gap were lower economic activity rates, an older age structure and lower average productivity by those in employment. Urban communities in Carmarthenshire continue to be challenged by high levels of unemployment, poor housing, poor health, educational attainment and crime. The rural communities are recognized as facing just as serious a set of problems, caused by unemployment, low wages, out-migration and low accessibility of services, work and learning. Agriculture remains of predominant importance to the rural economy of the County. It is this socio-economic context within which the inhabitants and institutions of Carmarthenshire have to operate, however, which also makes it a particularly interesting case for study. Although new to the experience of Objective One funding qualification, there was already a wealth of understanding within Carmarthenshire of the requirements of structural funding (gained primarily from the County's involvement in previous rounds of funding applications). It was the combination of this pre-existing bank of knowledge, together with an up-to-date understanding of the latest thinking coming out of Europe (due, not insignificantly, to Carmarthenshire acting as the longtime host of the West Wales European Centre), which placed Carmarthenshire in a strong position from the outset to engage with the Objective One implementation process.

When Objective One structural funding became available for the West of Wales and the Valleys (1999), partnerships had to be established in order to fulfil the implementation requirements of the European Union. In Carmarthenshire, the local authority pro-actively took up the partnership process guiding Objective One funding. By September 1998, the decision had already been taken to set up a county wide forum on Objective One in order to establish a mechanism to debate the Objective One strategy and future opportunities for the county. Evolving from this forum in 2000 came an Objective One partnership board, which was set up as a county-wide strategic board with equal representation of the three sectors. Whilst the original forum continued to exist as a consultative body, the partnership board was tasked with overseeing the creation and delivery of an Objective One local strategy. The exercise of drawing up a local strategy served as a political opportunity for the different interest groups to move their visions and ambitions to the fore.

In the case of rural development, the county already had a number of active community based organisations, which had been involved in the delivery of previous European Union funding. Rural Valleys particularly, built up a high level of professionalism over the years and expanded its activities to cover a wide range of rural development and rural marketing initiatives spread over the whole county. Having previously been involved in the delivery of LEADER II, it was Rural Valleys that made a case at the beginning of the Objective One period for a separate non-urban approach to, and funding for, rural objectives. The model which was proposed (referenced here as 'rural framework') served

as a vehicle to start negotiations with the local authority about a separate *rural* Objective One programme:

“At that time, there was a strong discussion between the local authority and us. We drew in others to actually make sure that the model was supported by the views and opinions of key delivery organisations in the county” (Resp. 1 Rural Valleys).

The result of the pressure and persuasion exerted by Rural Valleys and their colleague-community organisations, was that the Objective One partnership board decided on 27th of April 2001 to put Measures 4 and 6 of Priority 5² of the structural funding programme “on a hold until an integrated rural framework and action plan was in place to identify the key areas of activity to be targeted” (doc. 7). From this meeting a sub-group was established, referred to here as the ‘rural partnership’, to develop such an action plan. Given that the political power base for the local authority was in the urban part of the county, the direction of attention specifically towards the rural areas was therefore quite an achievement. The alliance between Rural Valleys and the local authority was a useful instrument for a subsection of the local authority that was keen to get more influence. It is also a reflection of the recognised authority of Rural Valleys in terms of their expertise on rural development:

“I don’t think there would have been as much recognition for the rural part of the county, as politically the power of the local authority was in the urban areas. The money would have gone mostly to the urban areas” (Resp. 1 local authority).

Once the idea of giving separate attention to rural development had been accepted by the Objective One partnership board, though, the local authority quickly took ownership of the newly born sub-group. In doing so it simultaneously took ownership of the rural framework, which was produced ‘collectively’ by this new partnership (doc. 5):

“We pulled together half a dozen interested organizations like [Rural Valleys], mainly public and community organizations. Indeed, we had a kind of exercise of analytical work to identify what were the problems and how we needed to address those problems. From that exercise emerged a rural framework” (Resp. 1 local authority).

At the start, then, the rural partnership had as its core, a group of six organisations that had a direct interest in rural development through Objective One. Presented as a sub-group to the official Objective One partnership board, it started as an informal partnership with no need to comply with the required three-thirds representation in Welsh government policies for partnerships. The local authority provided the chair and secretariat for the rural partnership, with both positions coming from their special ‘Partnership Centre’ (which was dedicated to managing partnerships). In the following three sections of this paper the different phases that the rural partnership went through are reviewed.

5.4.1 Joined up period 2001 – 2002

In the first phase, a common vision and common interest in the Objective One monies served as a binding element in the rural partnership. The ambitions – laid down in the rural framework – were high, and in order to bid successfully for large amounts of Priority 5 Objective One funding, cooperation among the future beneficiaries was needed. The expertise on integrated rural development came from the community organisations, above all from Rural Valleys, whereas the local authority provided match funding, experience with European funding procedures and the legal status of a public body. The relative symmetry in the relationships, with no obligation at this stage to comply with anything prescribed in the partnership yet, gave room for discussions and negotiations over the development of bids for funding. In a joined-up spirit, the rural framework was translated into five large bids to the Welsh European Funding Office.

All initial partnership members clearly had something to bring and to gain from the cooperation. The inducement of the possibility of funding meant that the community organisations continued to align themselves with the rules of the game. From a resource perspective alone, the local authority was able to mobilize most resources in terms of staff, expertise and time. Most likely for the sake of the joined-up spirit and expected benefits of cooperation, though, the local authority actors were careful not to dominate the proceedings, but to downplay their strength and manipulate the image and importance of their stake in the partnership. Firstly, the local authority's Partnership Centre managing the rural partnership was presented as independent from the local authority. The fact that the offices of the Partnership Centre were located outside local authority establishments was capitalised upon, with the Centre presented as 'independent but part of' the local authority:

"The rural partnership was not set up by the local authority, it was set up by the [Partnership] Centre who are independent although part of the county council. Their secretary is independent of the local authority, they take the minutes and so forth. So it didn't take place just because of the county council" (Resp. 2 local authority).

Secondly, the Partnership Centre consciously avoided meetings taking place in local authority establishments and tried to remove paperwork to give the rural partnership 'less of a public sector image' – even though a third to sometimes half of the people who were present in the early meetings were officers of the local authority. And thirdly, an emphasis on consensus and a feeling of 'we are in this together' was particularly encouraged by officers of the local authority. The five bids to the Welsh European Funding Office, for example, although written by and led by the local authority were consistently referred to as 'rural partnership projects'. The required match funding³ came mainly from the Local Regeneration Fund, which for this purpose was split into a rural and an urban pot. The rural pot was, in the words of the local authority, "allocated to [the rural partnership]" (doc. 7). The local authority symbolically allocated the money to the rural partnership and in return received a mandate to manage the money on behalf of the partnership. This can

be viewed as recognition of the competence of the local authority as an effect of their authority, but again also as inducement through the expectation of other partnership members to be rewarded somehow for their compliance:

"And it was ironic really because the local authority didn't say 'if we put this on the table we want to be in control of it'. We left it to the [rural partnership]. And the partnership actually said I think you are best as local authority to manage and to deliver. So they threw it back, 'you do it on our behalf'. To me it was a very proud moment because they had that trust in us. Because we said; 'fine we will manage it, we will be accountable, but we expect support from yourselves. Can you deliver some of this for me? Can you deliver some of that for me?'" (Resp. 1 local authority).

Although the rural pot was symbolically allocated to the rural partnership, in the absence of any legal status, it was never a genuine option that it could be managed by the partnership itself. Moreover, in the county council meeting of March 2002, the council Cabinet decided that the newly split Local Regeneration Fund could only be used as a source of match funding by the local authority (doc. 7). Other organisations such as Rural Valleys were, therefore, suddenly excluded from using it as match funding to their own bids for Objective One funding. The potential that this raised for conflict was illustrated when, in the two subsequent rural partnership meetings, the representative of Rural Valleys questioned the availability of the Local Regeneration Fund as match funding for their own bid. The relative symmetry in the alliance between Rural Valleys and the local authority had clearly been affected by the decision of the Cabinet to exclude other organisations from the fund. The chair of the partnership repeated the decision of the council Cabinet and added that asking the county Cabinet to rethink their decision was unlikely to bring about any change. The outright refusal of the local authority to reconsider or negotiate with the representative of Rural Valleys showed the ability of the local authority to dominate. Finally, the representative of Rural Valleys conceded that she was, "happy to proceed with the local authority taking the lead on the project so long as the project delivery was sub-contracted to [Rural Valleys] in its entirety." (doc. 12).

The potential for conflict was there, but with the decision by Rural Valleys to concede, the conflict stayed latent. Most probably this was because participation in the partnership still held the promise for Rural Valleys, that acceptance of the current unwanted situation would ultimately bring reward. The effect of the act of domination from the local authority, however, was not only a decreased symmetry in the partnership through the local authority's exclusive access to the fund, but also a decreased willingness on the part of the 'receiving end' - Rural Valleys - to recognise authority and to respond to inducement. During the next period, therefore, Rural Valleys challenged the position of the local authority as sole lead body for all available funding.

5.4.2 Challenge period 2003- 2004

In the autumn of 2002 the rural partnership was extended beyond the local authority and the community organisations to include organisations such as the farmers unions, the colleges, nature and environmental agencies and an umbrella of voluntary organisations. These new members were duly briefed, about the purpose and role of the rural partnership:

“We did strategy at the first few meetings, where we were told: ‘this is the reason for this group, this is the objective and we would prefer a strategy so that we can reach the objective’” (Resp. Farmers Union).

At the end of 2002, the five bids – based on the vision in the rural framework – were granted Objective One funding. This meant an injection of millions of pounds for rural areas in the County. This was judged to be a big success for the partnership, not least because in other Counties the process to get projects ready for application was proceeding at a much slower pace. Two of the five bids were worked out as grant schemes for rural and community development, grant schemes to which local groups could apply for small capital grants to improve their community and environment. All five projects were the responsibility of the local authority as lead body, but for the two grant schemes, service level agreements⁴ were put in place with the community organisations.

However, the subsequent negotiations over delivery arrangements further changed the relations among the initial core members of the rural partnership. Although a shared interest in rural development and in the Objective One funding among the local authority and the community organisations remained, the contractual arrangements made the unequal positions more obvious and problematic with the local authority in the role of principal and the community organisations serving as delivery agents. The new relationship was not only an expression of formal hierarchy among the partnership members but also an expression of new differing interests, as the principal was most likely to negotiate maximum service for minimal costs, whereas the delivery agent would aim for the opposite.

Without the rural partnership in place, the community organisations and the local authority would have been in competition for Objective One funding. The initial cooperation between the local authority and the community organisations to get the funding in the county, proved effective because it reduced lost energy of competition amongst them. Then, when the funding became available, the local authority had a strong negotiation position because it could choose between a range of community organisations for a satisfactory service level agreement. However, negotiations were not entirely two-way communications because the local authority could choose and exclude a community organisation that would not agree with the terms of reference. Hence, acts of inducement coexisted or were substituted by acts of coercion. The local authority most likely also reached satisfactory service level agreements through the threat of exclusion.

Rural Valleys secured the biggest contract for running the grant schemes while progress was monitored by the rural partnership. Through the service level agreements the community organisations became the public 'face' of the grant schemes which worked well as a public relations strategy for the local authority:

"It really was a public relations exercise because everybody was supporting us. But also what is nice as well is that when there was disharmony somewhere we could turn around and say as local authority, 'this isn't just our scheme this is the scheme of the partnership, you have to speak to [Rural Valleys] or [South West Communities] because they are our partners'" (Resp 1. local authority).

Where any potentially conflictual issues arose, they were quickly abated by the local authority. The hierarchical relationships were a powerful tool to induce or force the 'joined up spirit' in the partnership because community organisations were dependent on funding through the local authority:

"Trust is very important in partnerships but the problem is that the reality is often different. For example, if you are in the community or voluntary sector you might be dependent on funding from the local authority or what have you, which will mean that you are probably fairly careful on what you say at the partnership meeting" (Resp. WDA).

The tight financial arrangements in the service level agreement, however, made Rural Valleys, in particular, ambitious to be independent of the local authority in order to govern its own programme. Thus, when in January 2003 the Welsh Assembly launched a new grant scheme for community regeneration called 'Rural Community Action' (RCA), Rural Valleys took the chance to become lead body. The Assembly guidelines made it clear that every organisation able to show strong expertise with community regeneration would be eligible to bid.

In the first meeting of the rural partnership in 2003, the RCA grant scheme was discussed when a representative of Rural Valleys reported back from a conference where the scheme had been launched. Representatives of Rural Valleys and of South West Communities expressed interest in leading the bid, but the chair reminded the partnership that the overarching Objective One partnership board had previously agreed that only one bid on behalf of the county would be sent to the Assembly. The rural partnership considered both community organisations as lead body through the use of a list of criteria. However, according to the minutes, it was in the end, 'agreed' that: "the local authority should take the lead acting as coordinator and drawing on the experience of both organisations to deliver", most probably an effect of the local authority trying to dominate and repeat the previous strategy again (doc. 14). After the partnership meeting, however, this decision was resisted by the community organisations.

Prior to the next meeting, negotiations about the lead body status continued between the involved organisations, with both Rural Valleys and South West Communities preparing

proposals for bidding (doc. 15). During the following meeting, the chair announced that the local authority was, “no longer in a position to take the lead as the tight timescale did not allow sufficient time to put a satisfactory service level agreement in place.” (doc.15). In retrospect one can only speculate as to how these negotiations actually unfolded. At least some of the relative symmetry present at the start seemed to have returned to the relationship. Both the local authority and the community organisations each had a recognised authority in different, complementary fields and the proof of mutual benefits from the funder–deliverer relationship might have prevented an act of domination from the side of the local authority.

Reverting back to the original choice, therefore, the partnership was asked to re-consider allocating lead body status to Rural Valleys or South West Communities on the basis of an extended list of criteria. The recommendation of the rural partnership was that Rural Valleys had to take the lead, on the condition that they would work closely with South West Communities and other community organisations, in developing the proposal further.

Hence, Rural Valleys became the second organisation in the rural partnership acting as lead body for a funding programme, not bounded by a service level agreement with the local authority. In the meanwhile, the service level agreement contract for the Objective One grant schemes had developed as the focus of covert conflict between Rural Valleys and the local authority. The conflict was not present in the rural partnership, but was dealt with in bi-lateral meetings where the staff of Rural Valleys voiced their dissent with the programme requirements and the – in their eyes – too tight financial arrangement with the local authority (Resp. 2 Rural Valleys). Over time, the willingness of Rural Valleys to comply with the arrangements seemed to have slipped away through disappointment of the rewards they received:

“There are conflicts of course, it wouldn't be a good partnership if there weren't. Sometimes a meeting is held with key officers and partner agencies because sometimes it doesn't need everybody involved, it is a key issue that key agencies are involved in” (Resp. 2 local authority).

Without a service level agreement for the new RCA funding, the local authority was left with only indirect instruments to influence the delivery of the RCA programme. Although the rural partnership decided the lead body status had to go to Rural Valleys, it was also agreed in the same meeting that South West Communities, Welsh Language South and another community organisation should all act as delivery partners, while the local authority and the umbrella of voluntary organisations would act as ‘supportive’ organisations (doc. 15). To achieve this aim a new ‘delivery partnership’ had to be created. It was agreed furthermore, that the RCA proposal had to give priority to existing local authority policy (doc. 15). Since the local authority was not the holder of the money in this instance, there was no possibility for an act of domination on their part, should they be unsatisfied with the results:

“On the other hand, the benefits of more freedom for Rural Valleys through the lead body status decreased considerably through the cooperation arrangements that were put in place under pressure from the partnership. The local authority was left with negotiation and inducement as modes of power which could be used to influence the results. The rural partnership served as a vehicle for such influence, in which decisions ‘are always arrived at by consensus’” (Reps. 1 local authority).

The other community organisations, especially South West Communities which also harboured an ambition to become lead body, had an interest in a piece of the ‘RCA-cake’, whereas the local authority had an interest in ensuring both that the RCA programme would comply with their policies and that Rural Valleys would not become too independent. The local authority, however, was challenged in its powerful position by the increasingly critical and independent attitude of Rural Valleys.

5.4.3 Discipline period 2004 -2005

With the grant schemes up and running, the rural partnership meetings in the remainder of the years 2003 and 2004 were dedicated to discussions about project applications and progress reports. The strategy of the initial large bids which were turned into grant schemes worked well, because smaller projects did not have to go down the complicated road of complying with European funding requirements, but instead ‘only’ had to do the paperwork the local authority required.

Although the partnership was extended at the end of 2002, at its core remained the local authority and the community organisations. Unlike the other added representatives, these core organisations had a direct interest in, and access to, the funding. Together, they were involved in a complicated web of contracts and inter-relations. The added representatives stayed at the periphery because they had only an indirect – consultative – interest in the rural partnership, as reflected in their attendance over a course of 14 meetings: the representative of an environmental agency was present twice, the representative of a trust was present three times and the representative of one of the farmers unions was present for five out of 14 meetings. The partnership continued to be valued, though, by members of the core and peripheral groups alike, for its effective management of rural development money.

What I like about it really is, that Objective One is so complicated for smaller groups, there are so many hurdles to take... when things come to the [rural partnership] quite often the applications, they need work done on them and within the partnership, people will decide who is best placed to help that group. So it avoids duplication as well (Resp. umbrella of voluntary organisations):

“I think we all come to the [rural partnership] like any organisation with different expertise and we need to bring that all together. Sometimes I did not know [about

a] project and I learned more about it, so it makes sure we do not duplicate services" (Resp. Welsh Language South).

However, by the time decisions had to be taken about the allocation of the remaining Objective One funding (Measure 4 and 6) in the rural pot, the joined up spirit had started to slip away. The money of the two Measures, reserved in 2002 as contingency funding for future activities, was put forward in a new bidding round open for all interested organisations. The meeting of October 2003 revealed a harvest of 10 bids for Measure 4, the money requested in sum far exceeding the availability in this Measure (doc. 17). One of the 10 bids was a big local authority project requesting, on its own, more money than all the other projects together. It was a bid to run a new grant scheme, introduced as a successor to the (then running) grant schemes ending in April 2005, which would likewise serve as a grant scheme for smaller projects.

The local authority presented the new grant scheme as the solution to the shortage of available funding. First, because the local authority could match fund their bid with the remaining Local Regeneration Funds which would create a bigger total sum. Their second reason was that the other bids which had difficulty finding match funding, would ultimately be able to make use of the grant scheme (doc. 17). This latter argument however, was only partly valid, because the grant scheme itself would not release applicants from the need to find match funding (doc. 33). The local authority proposed to develop their bid for a grant scheme further and presented it at the next rural partnership meeting. In this way it was 'agreed' by the rural partnership that the Measure 4 money would go to the grant scheme of the local authority and that the other projects would have to wait until the grant scheme would be running.

The way the new grant scheme was presented reflected a new method by the local authority, of dealing with the rural partnership, characterized by less focus on joined up working. The remaining Measure 4 and 6 Objective One funding categories, initially drawn in on the basis of the joint vision of the original core rural partnership, were not linked to the original rural framework. Instead they were linked to a new policy with five pillars, called a 'community strategy'. For the local authority, obliged by the Welsh Assembly to implement this community strategy, the remaining money was an opportunity to re-organise the existing partnerships and fund the new policy goals. As a consequence, the grant scheme was not, in contrast to the past, presented as a 'rural partnership project', but rather, solely as an initiative of the local authority. Contrary to the acts of inducement seen at the beginning, reflected in the effort to downplay their role and create ownership in the partnership, the local authority was now behaving in a rather indifferent manner towards the partnership, clearly not willing to negotiate.

At the beginning of 2004 the bid preparation for the new grant scheme was delayed. However, at this time the money in Measure 6 had also still not been allocated. Following the requirements for 20% match funding set down by the Assembly, Rural Valleys made a

bid for match funding to their RCA programme. Although the principle of match funding the RCA programme with Objective One funding was welcomed in the meeting of March 2004, Rural Valleys was asked to clarify in a separate meeting with the local authority, how their application would tie in with the goals of the new grant scheme and policy of the local authority (doc. 20). The request of Rural Valleys and the new grant scheme were, strictly speaking, not related because they opted for money from different Measures. The local authority, however, wanted to direct as much funding as they could to their new policy goals and was ready to try and coerce Rural Valleys to comply with their new strategy:

“It is very difficult to work with them on this, they sort of monopolize all the rural development money. We have been making applications for match funding, for RCA, but we could not have it because it has all gone into the [new grant scheme]” (Resp. 2 Rural Valleys).

The match funding for RCA led to a conflict between Rural Valleys and the local authority, not least because of the criticism Rural Valleys had voiced over the financial arrangement of the service level agreement contract of the previous grant scheme. The conflict was kept out of the ‘consensus’ in the rural partnership, but it was also not solved in the bi-lateral meeting in March 2004. The subsequent rural partnership meetings of May, July and September 2004 all concluded with the need for a bi-lateral meeting between Rural Valleys and the local authority, to further ‘clarify’ a link between the RCA programme and the new grant scheme. The local authority was prepared to use negative sanctions against Rural Valleys by not granting them the bid for match funding and coercing them to comply with the new policy goals for community development.

In the meanwhile the new grant scheme was approved and the local authority started a tendering process to put new service level agreements in place with the community organizations, to run the scheme. In the summer of 2004, while the conflict between Rural Valleys and the local authority was still unresolved, all community organisations except Rural Valleys were chosen as ‘partners’ to deliver the new grant scheme (doc. 32). Apart from the disadvantage of less ‘income’, exclusion from the new grant scheme meant that this funding source could not serve as match funding for the Rural Valleys RCA programme. For a second time the local authority was trying to coerce compliance from Rural Valleys towards their goals by using negative sanctions. The unexpected result, however, was the refusal by Rural Valleys to shift the focus in their programmes.

Further negotiations between the local authority and Rural Valleys had no immediate results and in February 2005 it was announced that the Objective One funding, to which Rural Valleys had made a request, was allocated, but not to Rural Valleys (doc. 24). Being cut off from the funding in the new grant scheme too, Rural Valleys had still not resolved its match funding problem. Although Rural Valleys was the principal in the RCA programme, subcontracting the other community organisations as partners in the delivery, it had to turn to these organisations for help because they had access to the

new grant scheme of the local authority. In the spring of 2005, Rural Valleys and South West Communities wrote an application to the new grant scheme together, in the hope this would secure the match funding for the RCA programme. While the local authority was celebrating the success of the first grant scheme, delivered by Rural Valleys, which "had injected new life into villages and towns in need for rejuvenation" (doc. 30), it nevertheless took until September 2005 before match funding for the RCA programme was finally secured. Challenging the power of the local authority proved a costly risk for Rural Valleys, who were disciplined for their ambitions to shift power positions.

5.5 Discussion

As a point of departure we assumed that partnerships are sites of political organisation, characterised by inequality and difference, in which power is an important constitutive element which should not be overlooked through too much emphasis on equality and consensus.

In the rural partnership case studied, relatively low levels of inequality, in terms of resources, have led to fruitful and effective power dynamics. Firstly, there was no single actor able to dominate to the extent that struggle, negotiation or conflict was even prevented from arising through imposition of 'this is how we do things here'. The case study shows evidence of latent, covert and overt conflict over the definition of the rules of the game and the objectives of rural development. The local authority is somewhat counterweighted by a strong community organisation. It is remarkable that respondents referred to the partnership as a 'real' partnership. In their eyes, it is not a 'talking shop' but a successful example (or struggle) of cooperation in rural development.

Secondly, although resources do matter, this does not mean that to have more resources is to 'have' more power. In the words of Allen (2003), power cannot be 'read off' the available resources. The case study illustrates this by the distinction made between core and periphery partnership members based on their involvement and interest in the partnership, rather than the resources available. Moreover, it is also illustrated by the struggle over the lead body status between the local authority and Rural Valleys, in which the latter was able to acquire independence despite the powerful position of the local authority on the basis of resources.

The case study shows evidence of the gradual shift in the operations of the local authority from modes of power of authority, inducement and manipulation towards more coercion and domination over the course of the five years. The community organisations on the other hand, in particular Rural Valleys, displayed a gradually decreasing willingness to comply with the arrangements. The stalemate reached during 2005 ('discipline period') had the consequence of slowing down activities and decisions in the allocation of funding and breaking up the arrangement of the local authority acting as funding organisation and the community organisations acting as delivery organisations. The gradual shift that was observed in the modes of power used by the local authority, gives a nuanced picture of

what it means to reach 'consensus'. When the local authority became indifferent to the opinion of other partnership members and simply 'presented' their new grant scheme as the best option for everybody, their act of domination could indeed be covered up by the 'consensus' of the partnership for their approach.

What the case study seems to point to is that it is not only the inequality in resources which contributes to the inequality in relationships, but also the modes of power that were used. The effect of the use of more coercion and domination seems to be that the relative symmetry in the relationships between the local authority and the community organisations became more asymmetrical. The increased asymmetry developed because the main basis for the initial relative symmetry was the recognition of complementary expertise and competence. In other words, despite clear inequality in resources, the relative symmetry seemed to have originally worked mainly on the basis of authority as the mode of power. That is, through recognition of the weight of past competence on both 'sides' and the respect, therefore, of each other.

5.6 Conclusion

In search for a better understanding of what constitutes effective rural development, we analysed some group processes and power struggles of a rural partnership during a five year period. In conformity with other studies (see, for example, Geddes, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Lowdnes et al., 2001; Franklin, 2003; Hayward et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004; Bristow et al., forthcoming), inequality in terms of resources also exists in our study with the most powerful player being the local authority (as reflective of a resourceful public sector). However, contrary to other studies (Edwards et al., 2001), this did not lead us to the conclusion that the partnership was entirely dominated by the public sector all the time. It shows that an analysis of power based on resources alone is limited, because the use and effect of resources may be "modified, displaced or disrupted depending upon the relationships that come into play" (Allen, 2003: 97) at various moments in time.

We have argued that inequality in partnerships by itself is not inherently bad and that in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the situation, there is a need to focus on the operations of power and the relative levels of (in)equality. Through looking at power as a relational effect of social interaction, in which different modes of power imply different effects, we have tried to show the mediated nature of power and to incorporate the 'receiving end' of power in the analysis. The longitudinal focus of our case study was deemed necessary because the mediated nature of power points us to the temporal and spatial constitution of the relationships within the partnership. Hence, there is a need for more research on power struggles and conflicts in partnerships over time.

We accept that there are some limitations to the empirical study. The period of fieldwork was rather limited, with the analysis heavily dependent on documentary material. A longitudinal perspective was only gained by looking back in retrospect, through the respondents and the documents. The study could thus be criticised for missing the

anthropological depth that real time observation would have provided to help get more of a hold on what kind of power was mediated and also, its relational effects. Furthermore, the focus on the organisations and the organisational representation in the partnership, left out the question of leadership and whether or not the course of events related more to personalities than to organisational representation. Despite these limitations and the fact that our analysis is based on a single case study, we are nevertheless still drawn to conclude that effective partnership working benefits from the more reciprocal modes of power in which the 'receiving end' at least complies with the position and arrangements in place. Inducement and authority as 'power over' and negotiation and persuasion as 'power to' all work in the absence of force on the basis of some sort of voluntary arrangement (Allen, 2003: 125-126). The instances where, in our own study, the local authority tried to use domination and coercion as modes of power, were shown to be very counter-productive in terms of effective rural development.

Furthermore, in the light of this differentiated topology of power we conclude that the pressure on consensus in partnerships can indeed obscure domination but not necessarily. It makes a difference if consensus is arrived at after a debate in which negotiation and persuasion have their place, or if consensus is arrived at because of an absence of any two-way communication, or indifference towards anything that the partnership brings to bear.

Lastly, the study of partnerships from such a power perspective is important in the light of the governance debate. Central to the governance discussion is the notion that the direct 'command and control' mode of power of the state no longer seems to be effective. Instead, other more indirect technologies of power are used to govern at a distance, with power exercised by the state across space by drawing others in through delegated instruments such as partnerships. Such a straight forward reasoning can be nuanced in two ways. First, contrary to that view, this case study shows that the exercise of power by the state might not be enhanced but distorted and diluted, because there is more opportunity for "agents to mobilize other resources, other sets of interests and to shift the line of discretionary judgement in unanticipated and unforeseen ways" (Allen, 2003: 134). Second, the partnership and its relationships were a medium for enrolment of rural communities in rural development. The local authority was also dependent upon the relationships in the partnership because the community organisations, as the public face of the local authority, were foremost capable of mobilising and empowering the targeted rural communities. Partnerships, therefore, cannot be viewed simply as an instrument to extend control over the member organisations and individuals.

5.7 Sources

Document 5: rural partnership The Sustainable Village Model – a guideline for applicants. [Partnership Centre] October 2001

Document 7: Report county council to Ratification Committee, March 11, 2002

Document 12: Minutes rural partnership September 4th 2002

Document 14: Minutes rural partnership January 31st 2003

Document 15: Minutes rural partnership February 13th 2003

Document 17: Minutes rural partnership October 8th 2003

Document 20: Minutes rural partnership March 16th 2004

Document 24: Minutes rural partnership February 17th 2005

Document 30: Free local paper of county council on first grant scheme, spring 2005

Document 32: county council new grant scheme fact sheet

Document 33: county council leaflet, new grant scheme guidelines

Notes

¹ Objective One of the Structural Funds is the main priority of the European Union's cohesion policy. It is aimed at promoting harmonious development and at narrowing the gap between the development levels of the various regions. Areas eligible for Objective One funding are areas with a gross domestic product (GDP) below 75% of the Community average. The funding supports the takeoff of economic activities in these regions by providing them with the basic infrastructure they lack, whilst adapting and raising the level of trained human resources and encouraging investments in businesses.

² In Carmarthenshire, Priority 5 relates to rural development and the sustainable use of natural resources. This priority supports the diversification of the rural economy and measures to add value to primary products. Measure 4 aims to assist local people secure a sustainable future for rural communities. Measure 6 aims to encourage and support sustainable economic development in rural areas.

³ Match funding refers to the amount of funding needed to match the funding of European or Welsh subsidies for projects. Match funding is required to make up the full cost of the project. Objective One funding contributes between 45% and 75% towards the total costs of a project. The Welsh Assembly contributes 80% in the case of their own Rural Community Action (RCA) policy.

⁴ A service level agreement is a formally negotiated agreement between two parties. It is a contract that exists between service provider for example Rural Valleys and 'customer' in this case the local authority. It records the common understanding about services, priorities, responsibilities, guarantee, in other words, the level of service.

Chapter 6

Integrated rural policy in context: a case study on the meaning of 'integration' and the politics of 'sectoring'

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Integrated rural policy in context: a case study on the meaning of 'integration' and the politics of 'sectoring'.

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Abstract

Partnerships for rural development are often presented and seen as powerful ways of promoting 'integration'. This paper examines the reality of this claim, first by analysing what 'integration' means and then by presenting a case study of a Dutch rural partnership which shows how 'integration' was diluted by the 'politics of sectoring'. In this case study 'integration' was taken to mean harmonising sectoral policies for the physical environment and to imply the integration of competing land use claims. Representatives of different policy sectors sought to safeguard and advance their sectoral objectives through a number of strategies, including expanding conflicts to other playing fields and containing conflicts through private settlement. The interplay of these interests created a paradoxical outcome. The existing sectoral policies were maintained and 'integration' was achieved through the spatial separation of the most conflicting land uses, those of intensive husbandry farming and protecting nature. The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture sees such partnerships as a good example of 'integrated rural policy' but the example shows that the integration of existing sectoral policies for the physical environment has little to do with the achievement of wider socio-economic objectives.

6.1 Introduction

During the 1990s a debate has emerged about the changing patterns of governing in Western democracies. These changes are often referred to as a shift from government to 'governance' (Kooiman, 1993; Stoker, 1995; Rhodes, 1997; Pierre, 2000; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004). Academic interest in 'new forms of rural governance' occurred somewhat after the event (Goodwin, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998), although recent years have seen considerable interest in these 'new forms of governance', with the phenomenon of 'working in partnership' being one topic that has received considerable attention from rural scholars (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998; Geddes, 2000; Jones and Little, 2000; Edwards et al., 2001; MacKinnon, 2002; Shortall, 2004; Whittaker et al., 2004; Sherlock et al., 2004; McAreavey, 2006; Derkzen and Bock, 2007; Bock and Derkzen, 2007). Such partnerships typically include representatives of public, private and community interests which are commonly assumed to share a degree of commitment in collaborating on rural development, either strategically or through improved delivery.

Partnerships occupy a key role in policy debates about 'integration'. At the European level, they have been an important tool in shifting the emphasis from sectoral to more integrated rural policies (Marsden and Bristow, 2000). The Declaration of Cork proposed reforms for promoting 'integrated rural policy', stating that "rural development must be multi-disciplinary in concept, and multi-sectoral in application, with a clear territorial dimension" (CEC, 1996: 2).

Such discourse over integration is not new, but has a long tradition in policy planning (Healey, 1998; Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Cowell and Martin, 2003). However, since the mid-nineties, the metaphor of integration has been "newly re-furbished" (Healey, 1998: 112) and extends beyond the rural domain. Abram and Cowell argue that the rhetoric of integration "can be traced across European democracies, North America and New Zealand, where joining up government and broadening of public participation are widely seen as key elements in reviving confidence in the state" (2004: 701).

Although there is a widespread policy discourse about the need for more integration and "joined-up" governance, it is not always clear what integration refers to. An initial problem with the rhetoric of integration is that its meaning appears quite obvious and self evident. To integrate means to complete, or combine to form a whole. However, in policy debates 'integration' has multiple meanings and can be aimed at different things, "[t]he substantive context in which the 'integration' word is being used therefore matters a lot" (Healey, 1998: 110). Moreover, the literature also refers to different kinds of integration, for example vertical or horizontal integration, levels of integration at the strategic or operational level as well as to external or internal integration (Marsden and Bristow, 2000; Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Abram and Cowell, 2004; Boonstra et al., 2007).

Secondly, despite renewed policy discourse about, and interest in, 'integration' within rich countries there are few empirical studies on "the institutional work the word 'integration'

performs" (Healey, 1998: 112). Studies of local governance from the UK and Norway provide rare exceptions to this (Cowell and Martin, 2003; Abram and Cowell, 2004). These studies suggest there is a danger that discourses of integration "can be represented as the vanguard of rationality and impartiality, enabling society to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number" (Abram and Cowell, 2003: 714). It is therefore noteworthy that the increasingly institutionalised rhetoric of 'integrated rural policy' has received very little empirical attention from rural scholars. Marsden and Bristow argue there is a strong need for empirical and contextualised studies.

"While the 'grand' rural policy statements (such as Cork and Agenda 2000) may have continued to question the legitimacy of the highly sectoral nature of policy delivery in rural areas, the real task is (...) to find ways of *delivering integrated and sustainable rural development* in ways which are sensitive to different countrysides" (2000: 468 emphasis in original).

Shortall and Shucksmith's early empirical studies from the UK (1998, 2001) address the question of what type(s) of 'integration' is(are) achieved through partnerships for integrated rural development. They note the need to distinguish between the process and goals of rural development and conclude that the separation they found between responsibilities for social and for economic goals raised questions about the integrated nature of rural development. Similarly, a Dutch study concluded that procedures at the European level carry "no incentive for the national, regional and local authorities in the partnership to strive for an integrated set of ideas or concepts within the plans and programmes for structural intervention" (Buunk et al., 1999: 93).

These empirical studies raise a third problem of the rhetoric about 'integration', that its positive connotations can obscure the ways in which the elements that are being integrated are constructed and *maintained*. The drive for 'integration' implies improvement by making whole what was previously (and mistakenly) separated. Those separated elements, for example, organisations, government levels or policy sectors embody vested interests. If integration "requires erosion of the structural underpinnings" (Degeling, 1995: 289) of these vested interests, the political struggles underlying the processes for the delivery of integrated rural policy need attention. This paper, therefore, analyses the politics of the vested interests that need to come together to create an 'integrated rural policy' within a Dutch rural partnership. It follows in the steps of Cowell and Martin (2003: 160) by showing how the process of integration is more complex and contestable than policy discourse suggests.

Partnerships are nowadays the main instrument for delivering integrated rural policy. As such studying the politics of partnership at the micro level is vital in improving our understanding of what constitutes effective rural development (McAreavey, 2006). In common with other European countries, Dutch rural partnerships (known as 'gebiedscommissies' -area based committees) are specifically set up to deliver "integrated rural policy" in accordance with both domestic and European policies (Ministry of

Agriculture Nature and Food Quality (ANF) (2004: 19). This paper aims to contribute to a contextualised understanding of what 'integrated rural policy' means in a Dutch rural partnership and how it is operationalised.

Thus, this paper aims to provide a contextualised understanding of the meaning and processes of 'integration' in rural development. The analysis is based on a single case study of a rural partnership in the Achterhoek region in the Netherlands and is structured as follows. The next section (2) will discuss the literature on integration and how integration is a function of 'the politics of sectoring' and the strategic use of conflict. The following section (3) discusses the methodology of the qualitative research and context of the local partnership. The subsequent sections (4) and (5) discuss the case study results. Section (4) focuses on how 'integration' is used within the planning documents of the rural partnership and section (5) discusses the sectoral politics and conflict strategies employed by the organisation with vested interests in the planning process. This is followed by a set of conclusions (6).

6.2 Types of integration and the politics of sectoring

6.2.1 Types of integration

Planning literature identifies different types of integration (see for example: Marsden and Bristow, 2000; Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Abram and Cowell, 2004; Boonstra et al., 2007). Whereas there is general agreement about the meaning of vertical integration (integration between different levels of government) there are different views about what horizontal integration is, or should be. There are two contrasting views on this, which look at horizontal integration through the prisms of governance and policy. From a governance perspective, horizontal integration means cooperation between agencies and key actors within a locality (Abram and Cowell, 2004). From a policy perspective horizontal integration means the integration of key sectoral policy areas within organisational structures or government (Marsden and Bristow, 2000; Boonstra et al., 2007). The latter definition also comes close to the notion of 'external' integration advanced by Janssens and Van Tatenhove (2000) who saw this as representing the "coordination and integration of a policy domain with other domains" (2000: 155).

Whereas notions of horizontal integration may refer to either governance or policy, the notions of external and internal integration set out by Janssens and Van Tatenhove explicitly refer to policies. If we separate the integration of policies (through external or internal integration) and the integration of governance (organisations / governmental tiers) we can develop a typology of views about integration (see Figure 6.1)

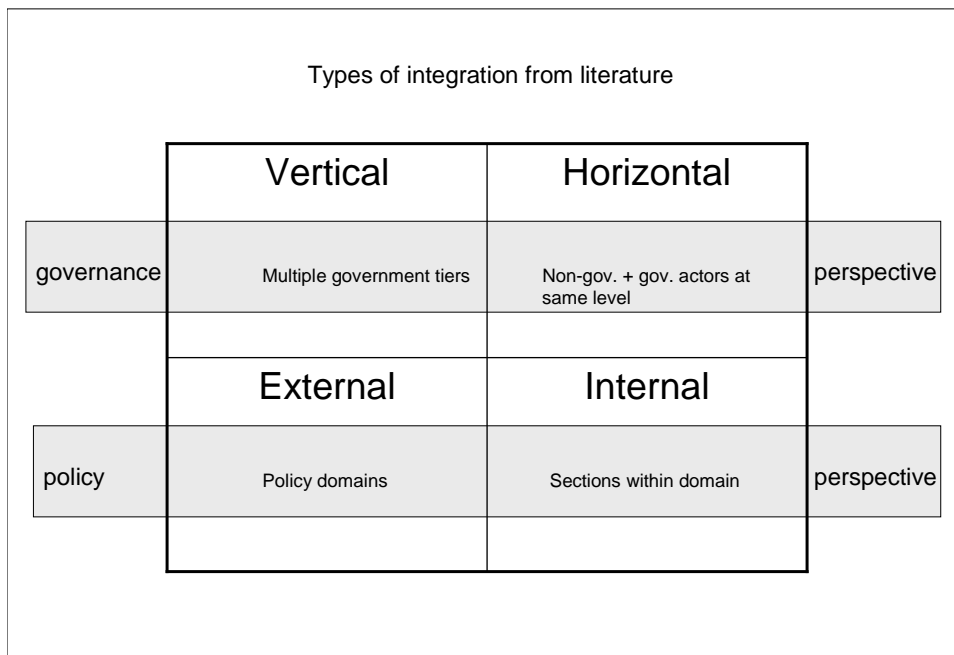


Figure 6.1 Types of integration

Janssens and Van Tatenhove describe how integration has a specific meaning within Dutch planning discourse:

“the discourse on integration refers to the integration of policy domains which have the physical environment as their policy and planning objective, such as spatial planning, environmental policy and water management, but more recently also nature conservation and some social and economic issues” (2000: 146).

Thus, in rural planning in the Netherlands ‘integration’ refers to external integration: which should be understood in the context of the high level of policy fragmentation brought about by the high degree of autonomy among different policy sectors (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002). There are “almost as many public policies for rural areas as there are functions” (Needham, 2007: 78). At the national level integration has been difficult to achieve, largely because of defensive sectoral departments within the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (Peters, 1999). Moreover, the combination of vulnerability to flooding, together with a densely populated and intensively used landscape have led to an ambitious land use planning policy whose interventionist attitude towards development is widely accepted (Needham, 2007). In rural areas this has meant a tradition of large scale interventions in changing spatial patterns of land ownership to promote agricultural modernisation (see also box 6.4 page 95).

From the 1990s onwards attempts to integrate planning policies were taken to the regional level in governance ‘experiments’ (Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Boonstra

and Frouws, 2005; Boonstra, 2004). Integrative planning experiments became intimately enmeshed with new forms of governance and were embodied in new instruments of partnership (in the Dutch *gebiedscommissie*). In these partnerships, different governmental tiers and local social actors (large interest organisations) tried to develop local planning policies that balanced competing claims on land-use. In terms of governance these partnerships embody aspects of both horizontal and vertical integration. The partnerships, a form of integration in themselves, were instrumental to achieving 'integration' - in the Dutch sense of integrating different sectoral policy domains. As such the constituent elements of Dutch rural partnerships are representations of policy sectors and the politics of Dutch rural partnerships are about negotiation, conflict and agreement over sectoral policies. The following sub-section elaborates on the conflicts that emerge from a sectorally-structured polity.

6.2.2 The politics of sectoring

The aim of integrating sectoral policies would seem to imply an end to sectoral policies, as separate policies would not be needed once integration is achieved. The call for sectoral integration, made by government, implies that the former lack of coherence and coordination can be overcome through new and better planning. However, such calls "generally emerge as part of (and in the context of) sectoral politics, not in arenas external to them" (Degeling, 1995: 295). The emphasis on integration therefore deflects attention from the constituent elements of the partnerships, the policy sectors themselves. Thus the call for integration tends to ignore the history of governmental organisation and the previous articulation of agendas and vested interests.

Thus, any analysis of integration is incomplete without an analysis of processes of 'sectoring'. "Sectoring' is oriented towards protecting, if not advancing, the differentiation of one sector from another" (Degeling, 1995: 294). Naming and describing the constituent elements such as the 'agricultural sector' or the 'water sector' already places such constructs beyond question. Paradoxically, the focus on integrating sectoral policies runs the risk of reproducing and reifying the sectors themselves as they remain intact as units of collective action (Degeling, 1995: 293).

Efforts towards integrating sectoral policies are highly political processes as they challenge the boundaries of existing policies and the patterns of resource allocation made by particular professional and administrative groups (Degeling, 1995: 293). Politics, according to Held "is expressed in all the activities of cooperation, negotiation and struggle over the use and distribution of resources" (2006: 270). Dutch partnerships aiming to integrate sectoral policies are no exception to this and likely to be arenas where "sectoral players do whatever is necessary to protect their sector's existing agendas, themes, and patterns of resource allocation from threats that would arise if the concerns raised from within other sectors were taken seriously" (Degeling, 1995: 295).

These sectoral players have numerous strategies for protecting their own agendas and interests. Here we focus on the use of conflicts, which can emerge in partnerships in a number of ways. While there may be multiple latent conflicts competing within a partnership usually just one emerges to take centre stage, and its emergence tends to inhibit the development of the others. Schattschneider (1975: 65) argues that politics largely involves both using and reducing conflicts. He identifies two broad types of strategies for using conflicts. First, there are strategies related to containing conflicts. These might include not providing a political arena in the first place, maintaining pressure to arrive at consensus, or making the negotiations technocratic so as to suppress political cleavages and unwanted conflicts. Such conflicts can be more readily contained by powerful actors who are more likely and more able to do this through private settlement. *"[T]he most powerful special interests want private settlements because they are able to dictate the outcome as long as the conflict remains private"* (Schattschneider, 1975: 39 emphasis in original).

The other type of strategy is almost the opposite of private resolution and involves the socialisation, or widening the scope, of the conflict. Strategies for expanding the conflict might seek the involvement of others, with the aim of creating other outcomes and/or new alignments.

"Private conflicts are taken into the public arena precisely because someone wants to make certain that the power ratio among the private interests most immediately involved shall not prevail" (Schattschneider, 1975: 37 emphasis in original).

Conflicts can expand in a number of ways: to a wider passive audience with its constraining public visibility; to include a wider audience that becomes actively involved or to include multiple playing fields. Competitiveness and visibility play an important role in expanding conflicts. As soon as a new actor appears to have considerable influence, all the 'old' actors try to appropriate this expansion in their favour.

The results of the case study show what 'integration' means in the context of a Dutch rural partnership and show the processes of integration, the politics of sectoring and the conflict strategies used to safeguard sectoral interests. Before turning to this we outline the research methods and the background and context of the partnership.

6.3 Methods and local partnership context

From the 1990s onwards integrative rural planning became fashionably connected to a new mode of decentralised multi-actor governance (Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000). These new modes of territorial governance, known as *'gebiedsgericht beleid'* (area based policy) were based on a combination of European and domestic initiatives (Boonstra, 2004; Boonstra and Frouws, 2005). A specific domestic area-based policy called 'the Reconstruction of the Countryside' was introduced in 2002, covering almost one third of the Netherlands in the east and south of the country (Needham, 2007). The rapid spread of swine fever in 1997, exacerbated by the high concentration of pig farms in these areas, gave the Dutch government the opportunity to seek to restructure the intensive

husbandry sector and reinvigorate its implementation of existing manure policies (Bleumink, 2007). With a focus on land reform, the policy sought to spatially reorganise the intensive husbandry sector by concentrating it and moving farms away from vulnerable natural habitats so as to reduce its environmental impact. It was envisaged that this would lead to 6,000 pig farms closing down and the establishment of 'pig free corridors' that would prevent a future outbreak of swine fever from spreading¹.

In the long process of getting the policy approved by Parliament, the objectives were broadened. New local spatial plans came to be a central feature of the policy. This involved integrating existing policy strategies for improving the quality of natural habitats and landscapes, water and the environment in general, as well as the 'quality of life and work' of people in the area. These new local plans would be partly funded by the Ministry of ANF, with additional funds from the European Structural and Rural Development budgets. Although formal responsibility for these policies lay with the provincial governments, the national government obliged them to work with local partnerships and defined a minimum list of interests to be represented in these partnerships. Compared to previous area-based policies, the 12 partnerships (and 6 sub-level partnerships) in the east and south of the country had more decision making power and their plans would overrule the existing local spatial plans. In addition the partnerships also had to prioritise EU funded rural development projects.

This qualitative research draws on a multi-level case study in the Achterhoek region in the east of the Netherlands. Regions sit between the provincial and municipal administrative levels in the Dutch political hierarchy and have no formal political or administrative status. The Achterhoek covers roughly a quarter of the eastern provincial territory of Gelderland and incorporates 30 municipalities. The area is defined as rural, with a population density of half of the national average (the national population density is 450 people per square kilometre). Of a total of approximately 155,000 hectares, 120,000 are used for agriculture and 16,000 hectares are urban or used for infrastructure (Voorontwerp Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2003).

The planning process in the Achterhoek involved one main and three sub-level partnerships. Three of the four partnerships were studied through intensive long-term fieldwork between February 2003 and December 2004. This paper focuses on the main ('Reconstruction') partnership which was where the final negotiations took place and where the politics of sectoral policy integration were most prominent. Moreover, given the multiple storylines of sectoral policy integration, it is less confusing to focus on the negotiations that occurred within just one partnership.

The study used multiple methods of enquiry to ensure consistency and validity, drawing on document analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation (Patton, 1990). Data gathered included documentary analysis of: supra-local policies and evaluation (15), local rural development and spatial plans (2) and minutes of partnership

meetings (17). In addition interviews were conducted with civil servants and partnership members (13) partnership meetings were observed (4) as were other informal gatherings and public consultations (3).

The main Reconstruction Partnership consisted of ten members representing different interests. These ten members, together with the chairpersons of the three sub-level partnerships constituted the decision-making core of the partnership and were all interviewed in the spring of 2004 (see table 6.1).

Representatives in partnership	
Environment The Organisation of Environmental Interests	Agriculture National Farmers Union (of which two representatives)
Nature The National Nature Conservation Agency	Rural estates and farmer cooperatives The Association of Rural Estates
Water The Provincial Public Water Agency	Non-agricultural industry The Chamber of Commerce and two associations of entrepreneurs
Municipalities The Association of Municipalities	Quality of life and community Rural women
Recreation The Partnership of Municipal Recreation Interests	Chairs of three sub-level partnerships

Table 6.1 Partnership composition

The partnership had a chairperson, a secretary, a civil servant from the provincial plan-writing team and advisors from two national ministries (Agriculture Nature and Food Quality -ANF - and Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment - HSPE) and from the Province. In all there could be as many as twenty people around the table. Most of the meetings were open to the public and attended by an average of twenty members of the public. Partnership meetings were held every four to six weeks, were announced in the local press and took place in different town and village halls. Partnership members usually received a large stack of paperwork before the meetings, including the agenda, written proposals for the spatial plan and for rural development projects for European Structural funding. Most of the meetings were taken up discussing the text proposals and suggesting adjustments to the spatial plan.

6.4 Integration of multiple land use policies through spatial separation

The initial idea behind the Reconstruction Policy was to reorganise the intensive husbandry sector by concentrating it and moving farms away from vulnerable natural

habitats, reducing its environmental impact. When the initiative was launched the objectives were broadened to include improving the physical and the socio-economic quality of the countryside. As a result, the Reconstruction Partnership had to integrate and deliver multiple sectoral land use planning (water, nature and environment) policies with complementary goals and competing land use claims. Given the scarcity of space, the existing land use patterns, the contradictory nature of different land use policies and ongoing changes in some of these policies this was an extremely difficult political task. A firm condition for the Reconstruction Partnership members, however, was the acceptance of existing policies. National policy objectives were not negotiable, but had to provide the starting point for finding local spatial solutions. The final plan for the Achterhoek makes this clear:

“The most important assignment of this reconstruction is to speed up the implementation of existing policies. In this spatial plan, these policies are not up for negotiation” (Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2005: 10 our translation²).

The three main sectoral policies for which the partnership needed to find local spatial solutions were the ammonia and husbandry act (WAV), the national ecological network policy (EHS) and new water policies. Their spatial implications are explained in boxes 6.1 to 6.3. Box 6.4 provides a background to the history of Dutch land re-adjustment policies.

<p>6.1 ENVIRONMENT Environmental legislation, called the ammonia and husbandry act (WAV), was prepared in Parliament around the same time that the local partnerships for Reconstruction Policy started. The WAV was designed to protect designated natural areas by blocking intensive husbandry expansion in designated surrounding areas. Without the Reconstruction Policy, this would have simply preventing farmers within such surrounding areas from expanding anymore. The funding that would accompany an approved local spatial plan could be used to move these farmers to areas where their farm management and future expansion would not be constrained.</p>	<p>6.2 NATURE The protection of natural areas was part of a national ecological network policy (EHS) which envisaged creating a grid of natural areas inter-connected by ecological corridors to form a countrywide network of natural areas. Much of this network however was only planned. Land for creating these areas still had to be acquired from other land users. Decisions on the exact boundaries of the natural areas had to be made by the Provinces in their spatial plans. Because of the coupling between the WAV and the EHS it was important for farmers to know what land would be designated for nature and how far from the farm, as the protecting circle around these lands influenced the implementation of WAV.</p>
<p>6.3 WATER New thinking on water policies and European Water regulations induced new spatial claims from the water sector. Instead of focusing on drainage (as before), the new approach had three steps: retain, store and only lastly drain off, water. This meant that more space would be needed between dikes to accommodate extreme high flows. Therefore, more areas had to be assigned for controlled flooding zones, with land users, e.g. farmers, in these areas being compensated for this. The new philosophy of restoring the hydrological balance would also lead to higher groundwater levels in some areas, with potential consequences for farming.</p>	<p>6.4 LAND RE-ADJUSTMENT Agricultural land is expensive, its market price is double its agricultural value. "So it must earn its keep" by being used intensively (Needham 2007:76). Since WW2 most land has been re-parcelled at least once and sometimes more often to improve farming efficiency. "And that has taken place <i>outside</i> the system for spatial planning: it has its own legislation, procedures and organisations" stemming from the Ministry of ANF (Needham 2007:79 emphasis in original). The reconstruction policy is a continuation of this tradition of land re-adjustment although its "integrative" ambition is new. Previous land re-adjustment policies were exclusively aimed at agricultural modernization.</p>

Box 6.1 to 6.4 Spatial implications and land re-adjustment

Although the Reconstruction Policy had multiple goals, the goal of improving the quality of the physical environment through nature, water and environmental measures took priority in the Achterhoek region. Given the spatial claims of the three policies for the physical environment, much of the focus of the plan writing team was on ecological and hydrological systems, based on the assumption that ensuring the sustainability of these systems would lead to sustainable socio-economic development. Soil and water quality were seen as main criteria on which land use decisions would be based. The final plan for the Achterhoek reads:

"Through the implementation of this plan, we will harmonise current land use (living, working, farming and recreation) with the sustainable framework of soil, water, landscape and nature. The sandy soils and associated conditions (soil,

water, landscape, nature and cultural heritage) on which the landscape of Achterhoek is based will direct spatial decision making. The condition of the system (water and nature objectives) will further direct the development of agricultural land use" (Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2005: 46-51, our translation³).

The use of the words 'integration' and 'integral' in the spatial plan was linked to the ambitions of restoring the ecological and hydrological system. In deciding upon a package of measures for spatial reorganisation, the Reconstruction Partnership had to choose from three alternative levels of ambition. The highest level was to achieve all environmental objectives, thus creating the maximum space for the development of natural areas, environmental measures to improve the quality of water and the landscape and water retention areas. This option was known as the "Integral" alternative. Two other alternatives with lower levels of ambition the "Regional" and the "Pinprick" were derived from this alternative. The Pinprick alternative would focus on a few locations with the most severe environmental problems. The Regional alternative would broaden these locations to cover sub-regional areas. Choice of the second two alternatives would mean the intervention would only affect some areas of the Achterhoek, as the mid-term draft spatial plan explains:

"A higher level of ambition means a higher level of intervention and reorganisation in the planning area. Choosing the "Pinprick" or "Regional" alternatives does not preclude plans for achieving the "Integral" alternative in the longer term." (Voorontwerp Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2003: 33, our translation⁴).

The Regional alternative aimed to find a "balance between ecological and economic developments" (Voorontwerp Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2003: 35, our translation). This implied a different type of integration, that of ecological and (socio)-economical objectives, to that the planning was focussed on.

The Reconstruction Partnership decided to adopt the high level of ambition and developed a preference that embodied most of options within the "Integral" alternative excluding three environmental objectives which would be not be possible to achieve over the next decade.

One of the key planning instruments for achieving these goals was to divide the whole of the Achterhoek into three planning categories, each with specific preconditions and regulations. Assignment of land into one of these three categories was a core and mandatory aspect of the Reconstruction Policy. The first category of land 'Nature' (*extensiveringsgebied*) designated areas where nature objectives would prevail over other claims, such as the areas that needed protection under the EHS national ecological network policy. The Reconstruction Partnership had to decide whether or not it wanted to extend this category to cover more space than required by the national ecological

network policy. This would constrain more farmers in their farm management and expansion plans, but would also provide them with compensation and an opportunity to relocate their farms.

In the second 'Mixed' category (*verwevingsgebied*) all spatial claims would have the same weight with, for instance, new development being measured against ecological and hydrological conditions. The third category that of 'Agricultural Development' (*landbouwontwikkelingsgebied*), would give farming primacy over other spatial claims and provided room for the expansion of the intensive animal husbandry sector, including both existing farmers and those relocated to these areas.

Thus, paradoxically, the main planning instrument adopted for integrating multiple conflicting claims on land was to separate the two most incompatible land uses (intensive husbandry and nature conservation/creation) from each other. Each of these 'sectors' – 'agriculture' and 'nature' – would acquire its own spatial area where their claims would receive priority over any other. "Integration" therefore would be achieved by spatially separating the two most environmentally conflicting land uses. The final plan for the Achterhoek explains:

"This reorganisation is aimed at spatially separating conflicting spatial interests and to concentrate intensive husbandry on sustainable locations with prospects. This means that intensive husbandry in vulnerable areas – around villages and protected nature areas– will be gradually phased out." (Reconstructieplan Achterhoek en Liemers, 2005: 15, our translation⁵).

Despite the fixed area and existing land use patterns in the Achterhoek, this separation was seen as creating more 'space' as a rearrangement of land uses that would lift the burden of policies with the spatial restrictions and constraints that these placed on different rural actors.

The rural partnership in Achterhoek and its spatial plan for reconstructing the countryside, interpreted 'integration' as meaning maximising the integration of sectoral policies for the physical environment (from the 'nature' 'environment' and 'water' sectors) with existing land use patterns. In this sense the "Integral" alternative only aimed at the first objective of the Reconstruction Policy, relating to the physical environment. The other alternatives appeared to be dilutions of the "Integral" alternative and, therefore, seemed less integrative. Different forms of integration were not considered, even though in planning terms the "Regional" alternative would strike more of a balance between environmental and *economic* developments, a form of 'integration' that would balance two key objectives of the reconstruction process. Thus in the Achterhoek 'integrated rural policy' became almost exclusively focused on implementing existing policies for the physical environment and the improvement of the socio-economic fabric of the region received hardly any attention. The inhabitants, their problems and activities were almost disregarded from the

planning process and when considered were seen more as a constraint (e.g. intensive husbandry farmers) to improving the physical environment.

The spatial integration of policy measures for the physical environment, in which each policy sector aimed at maximising their sectoral objectives, resulted in competition and conflicts over land use and the boundaries of the three spatial categories. The next section unravels the process of integration by focusing on the politics of sectoring and the conflict strategies used by the organisations represented in the partnership.

6.5 The politics of sectoring and conflict strategies

6.5.1 Reification of sectors

The Reconstruction Policy of the Ministry of ANF defined which interests needed to be represented in the partnerships. Thus, the composition of the regional Reconstruction Partnership followed national guidelines and consisted mainly of sectoral representation (see table 6.1). As explained before, one aspect of 'sectoring' is a tendency to treat sectors as whole and homogeneous units without any internal divisions or heterogeneity. Thus the process reproduces these sectors and the sectoral boundaries, which appear as given and natural entities, which despite the quest for integration, maintain their own logic and identity (Degeling, 1995).

In the Reconstruction Partnership, the involvement of the different defined policy sectors involved was put beyond any question. This reification of the *status quo* was so strong that the representatives were first of all seen a representative of a policy sector and only secondly as representatives of the actual organisation linked to this sector. Each policy sector was represented by only one agency or interest organisation and these representatives were often referred to just by their sectoral interest. Thus, although the representative for 'nature' was from a particular interest organisation, as were the representatives of 'agriculture' or 'recreation' the organisational identities of the representatives of these sectoral interests were not much used. Rather, 'water', 'nature', 'environment', 'agriculture', 'recreation' were used as shortcuts for those representing the interests of 'water', or 'agriculture' and so on (see table 6.1). In interviews, they also referred to each other by using these shortcuts, such as; "Agriculture said that" or "The environmental guy was reasonable in that....". The minutes showed a mixture of reference to organisations such as the Province or the Association of Municipalities and to sectors: 'From agriculture there was a remark that.....' or 'Nature pleads for.....' (e.g. Minutes no 2).

Moreover, the 'integration' of the sectoral interests of these representatives was not aimed at giving up, or compromising, any of their interests but rather at safeguarding and advancing them throughout the process of planning negotiations. The focus on the objectives of policies for the physical environment resulted in multiple spatial claims being made upon the countryside. In the Netherlands, agriculture accounts for roughly 55% of total land use. Hence, the spatial claims of sectoral policies found the main obstacle to be

farmers. The farmers, represented by a Farming Union were quite naturally opposed to the Reconstruction policy and were very reluctant to even take a seat in the partnership. However, they were also aware that this would be their only opportunity to influence the planning process. The resultant negotiation processes involved political struggles and conflicts between the land owners and those with other claims on the land. The land owners had property rights and customary laws on their side, the claimants had policies and land reform laws on theirs. Thus, the core of the partnership consisted of the main representatives of land owners; 'agriculture' and of the claimants to land representing 'water', 'environment' and 'nature' (see also Derkzen and Bock, 2007). Throughout the planning process no challenges were made to the existence of the sectoral interests represented or to the legitimacy of these interests.

6.5.2 Conflicting sectors: 'nature' versus 'agriculture'

Although the Reconstruction Policy was focused on re-organising the intensive husbandry sector, the means to achieve this shifted to defining the nature protection areas where intensive husbandry could not develop anymore. The biggest political conflict in the partnership therefore was mapping the boundaries of these 'Nature' areas. This had political significance because the boundaries would determine how many farms would be 'locked' for further expansion and face future constraints in farm management.

In addition to the areas that were automatically protected through the EHS national ecological network, the partnership had to decide whether or not to assign more areas to the planning category of 'Nature' and achieve the high level of ambition of the "Integral" alternative. In addition although the broad framework of the national ecological network of EHS natural areas had been decided upon, the Province had to define the specific local boundaries, taking into account existing land use. Hence, *parallel* to the negotiations in the Reconstruction Partnership the Province was engaged in a decision making process to define the specific local boundaries of the EHS natural areas.

It soon became clear that the existing policy for the ecological network was not as fixed as it first appeared, despite the painstaking efforts of the 'nature' and 'environment' representatives to reassure everybody that the network of EHS natural areas were not up for negotiation. At this time the Minister for HSPE encouraged local partnerships to find local solutions for farmers constrained by environmental and nature policies. This opened negotiation space for the Farming Union to plea for further research and change the local boundaries in order to 'save' some farmers. The Reconstruction Partnership created a sub group of partnership members, with the task of reassessing the boundaries to see if the Province could be advised about any desirable changes. This subgroup returned with a proposal with redrawn boundaries that left some farmers out of the protected areas and also suggested 'compensation' areas. Neither sectoral interest was satisfied with this outcome of this process. The Farming Union thought that not enough farmers had been 'saved' and the Nature Conservation Agency and the Organisation of Environmental

Interests were afraid of losing space. The latter two organisations formed an overt coalition throughout the negotiation process:

“If I also answer this question on behalf of the Nature Conservation Agency – it is because we always worked together, for the objectives of nature, environment and landscape in Achterhoek” (interview with the representative of the Organisation of Environmental Interests).

“The Nature Conservation Agency and the Organisation of Environmental Interests were constantly sitting each others lap” (interview with the representative of the Association of Rural Estates).

Although the same key partnership members had been part of the subgroup that developed the proposal, once back in the partnership meetings, they reverted back to their sectoral positions, each seeking to interpret the Minister's advice in favour of their interests. The minutes of one meeting illustrate the positions of the opposing sectoral interests of 'nature/ environment' versus 'agriculture' (Minutes no 6):

(Organisation for Environmental Interests)

“The perception of the environment is that the Minister said that there should be a balanced exchange. It is unacceptable to first draw new boundaries for EHS natural areas without a binding decision about compensation.”

(Nature Conservation Agency)

“Nature has the opinion that the boundaries for EHS natural areas have been discussed long enough. These boundaries should be taken as given. What is undecided are the proposals for compensation because we don't know if these can be enforced or not. The proposed exchange needs to create more confidence to achieve a consensus decision.”

(Farming Union)

“The Minister said that at least 30 percent of the farms should be taken out of the constraining spatial category 'Nature'. The proposal is unsatisfactory because only 25 percent of the farms are helped.”

Whereas none of the opposing sectoral interests were entirely satisfied, their interests were met at least partially in the compromise that they made in the sub-group. The conflict was controlled and reduced by giving the conflicting interests the opportunity to find solutions outside the partnership.

6.5.3 Socialising the conflict: agricultural interests

The political struggle over space for nature or for agriculture was not limited to the Reconstruction Partnership. On the contrary, the competition over spatial claims was

played out on a multi level playing field, with the conflicts being deliberately expanded to increase the possibility of reversing the power balance. The – nationally organised – Farming Union tried to socialise the conflict over the ‘Nature’ category and took the debate to the parliamentary level. They lobbied Members of Parliament to dilute the WAV legislation (which was coupled to the EHS national ecological network, see box 1). This resulted in a successful motion that limited the scope of the WAV act to protect only the most vulnerable habitats. Thus the farming lobby managed to prevent every designated EHS natural area from having its own protective WAV circle. The key question now was, what would count as ‘most vulnerable’ and what would not? Pending the decision and guidelines of the Ministry of ANF, the Farming Union representatives felt more confident in opposing the Reconstruction Partnership’s proposals.

“At a certain point, it was difficult to continue because agriculture frustrated the planning process. Their successful lobbying in Parliament gave them the confidence that existing policies would be diluted. While it was not clear how the Minister would decide upon the motion, they felt able to say ‘no’ to everything” (interview with the representative of the Organisation of Environmental Interests).

The conflict was not only scaled up to the parliamentary level, but was also expanded to provincial politics, including the local constituency of the Farming Union. The Farming Union used the statutory requirements for consultation over the definition of the local boundaries for EHS natural areas, to mobilise their members which resulted in 1100 objections against the proposals. The Farming Union representative explained:

“We are also busy influencing other aspects like the Provincial Plan. There, we try to make clear that if the money to move farmers is not available, the natural areas will have to be decreased” (interview with the representative of the Farming Union).

Whereas expanding the conflict towards Parliament proved successful, the attempt to dilute the plan through the objections of the farming community failed. The Province decided not to assess each of the 1100 petitions individually. A provincial councillor informed the Reconstruction Partnership meeting that “there will be only approximately 40 problematic locations where farmers are in trouble, and assessing all petitions would be very inefficient” (Observation no 2). The Reconstruction Partnership unanimously recommended that these problematic locations be given further attention, but this recommendation was disregarded by the Province who argued that the uncertainty about the WAV protective circles arising from the change in government policy would probably lead to a new round of discussions and decisions about the local boundaries. Thus, this attempt by the Farming Union to socialise the conflict and extend it to other playing fields did not have the intended effect.

6.5.4 Privatizing the conflict: water interests

The representatives from the water, nature, and environment sectors (see table 6.1) all shared the same basic interest: that of furthering the spatial claims derived from their

respective sectoral policies. However, whereas the coalition of the Nature Conservation Agency and the Organisation of Environmental Interests found themselves pitted against farming interests, the objectives of the Regional Public Water Agency representative were almost completely absorbed into the plan without any significant resistance. The spatial claims for water would constrain some farmers in the future (specifically those in farming land designated as flood areas at high flows and areas where the ground water table would rise) but would not impose the need for relocation (see box 6.3).

Why did the spatial claims of water policies not provoke the same level of political struggle and overt conflict as those of the nature policy? The water claims were discussed in the Reconstruction Partnership and letters were received from farmers protesting against the designation of areas for controlled flooding, yet the issue did not expand into a major conflict. There are two possible explanations for this. Firstly, these conflicts may have been prevented from arising because they were “blotted out by stronger systems of antagonism” (Schattschneider 1975: 66). In other words, in the relationships that came into play in the cleavage between agriculture and nature and the environment were stronger than those between agriculture and water interests.

Secondly, these conflicts might have been kept private through a number of unique empowering resources that the water sector had, which were not available to other sectoral interests. The Regional Public Water Agency, part of the hierarchy of government, was able to make civil service staff available to work with the team writing the plan. The water sector, therefore, was the only sector in the partnership that provided its own text for the written documents presented to the partnership:

“Two of our staff worked within the plan writing team from the beginning. And their work was regularly discussed with me and other staff in order to be consistent in our approach” (Interview of the representative from the Regional Public Water Agency).

The second resource was the existence of a number of ‘associates’ in the partnership who were morally obliged to support the water interests. The Regional Public Water Agency has elected boards of local representatives, representing citizens, industry and farmers (with a historical strong bias towards the latter group). In the four rural partnerships in Achterhoek, 9 partnership members from other interest organisations including agriculture, recreation, quality of life and the community and non-agricultural industry (see table 6.1) were members of their local Water Agency Board and thus had already internalised the logic of the water sectors claims:

“What made it easier, is that I knew the water objectives because of my board membership. It is even fair to say that I helped develop their strategic thinking by asking in Water Agency board meetings prior to the start of this, what their take would be” (interview with a representative of the Partnership of Municipal Recreation Interests).

Before the start of the Reconstruction Planning process the Water Agency was already clear about its water strategy and objectives. So from the very beginning of the partnership, the Water Agency was able to present this as an input and 'building block' for the planning process. Potential conflicts of interest between citizens, farmers and industry within the Water Agency boards had been smoothed over beforehand and the Water Agency representative ensured that everyone involved maintained the Water Board's line:

"The vision report was accepted by the boards. It was questioned by different parties but the fact of the matter was that they had accepted it. It gave us, as management, a firm position in the partnership." (Interview with the representative of the Regional Public Water Agency).

The Water Agency thereby employed a strategy of containing conflict through effectively removing one potential internal arena for conflict. Moreover, the Water Agency representative invested time in private meetings with local branches of the Farming Union helping farmers to find ways to voluntarily comply with the water objectives. The Regional Public Water Agency representative was satisfied with the way they had safeguarded their sectoral interests in the plan:

"We came out of this process very well. We did not achieve a hundred percent of what we wanted but we did achieve almost all our objectives" (Interview with the representative of the Regional Public Water Agency).

6.6 Conclusion

The Reconstruction Policy was intended to find local solutions for conflicting land use claims in order to further a range of national sectoral policies for the physical environment. Given the difficulty of integrating sectoral policies at the national level, the Reconstruction Policy and the requirement to work in local partnership in itself represents a large scale socialisation of conflicting sectoral policies: with the task to achieve integration at the national level being passed down to the local level.

However at the local level there was (initially) no scope for altering any of the national policies for the physical environment. Hence, the local planning process could not touch upon the legitimacy of objectives already established by these policy sectors at the national level. Their boundaries and objectives were fixed and given. The kind of 'integration' achieved at the local level, therefore, was a more sophisticated spatial 'fitting' through the relocation and adding up of land use claims. Sectoral policies were maintained and 'integration' was, paradoxically, achieved through spatial separation and rearrangement of the most conflicting land uses, those of intensive husbandry farming and protecting nature.

The partnership instrument was effective in breaking down much of the resistance of the farming community to accepting relocation, environmental measures and area designations that implied farm management constraints. In this respect it did much to further the implementation of nationally made policies for the physical environment.

Negotiations within the partnership created pressure for compliance as there was an obligation to arrive at a plan. The farming union was aware that blowing up the negotiations would mean measures being unilaterally imposed at the provincial or the national level. Yet, after three years of negotiations and a plan that was arrived at by "consensus", the farm relocations and other measures were still only a proposal, needing much more detailed negotiation to become a reality.

We have shown here the substantive context in which the word 'integration' became meaningful. According to the Dutch Agricultural Ministry (ANF) Reconstruction Policy is a good example of 'integrated rural policy' (Ministry ANF 2004: 17). Use of the term integration appears to be in line with rural policy statements (such as Cork and Agenda 2000) and funding schemes from Europe. For the local partnership, however, prioritising projects for European rural development funding was very much a secondary priority. This case study points to the specific Dutch connotation of the concept of 'integrated rural policy' which is rooted in a tradition of land re-adjustment interventions and the persistence of autonomous sectoral policies. Whereas land re-adjustment interventions were previously only focused on agricultural modernisation, they are now being applied to other policies for the physical environment.

A possible danger of the integration discourse, identified in the introduction, is that it seems to imply inclusiveness and comprehensiveness, as if everything has been taken into account. However, in line with studies from the UK we also question the integrated nature of rural development because of the continued separation between social and economic goals. The inhabitants, their activities and problems and the wider social and economic development of the countryside received little attention throughout the entire process. The local partnerships were seen as the key platforms for rural development, yet issues such as diversified employment opportunities, innovative entrepreneurship, housing opportunities for young people, accessibility and infrastructure, the increasing proportion of elderly, the maintenance of services and health care facilities, to name but a few, received scant attention in the almost exclusive focus on the planning of the physical environment.

Notes

¹ However, since preventive vaccination is now permitted this last measure has now lost its relevance.

² “De belangrijkste opgave voor de reconstructie is het versnellen van de uitvoering van het bestaand beleid. Dit beleid staat in dit reconstructieplan niet ter discussie.”

³ “Met de uitvoering van de reconstructie wil dit plan het grondgebruik (wonen, werken, landbouw en recreatie) zoveel mogelijk weer in evenwicht brengen met het duurzaam raamwerk van bodem, water, landschap en natuur”. “In het zandlandschap van de Achterhoek zijn de ondergrond en de daarmee samenhangende waarden (bodem, water, landschap, natuur, cultuurhistorie) sturend in de inrichting. Het agrarisch grondgebruik zal met name op basis van randvoorwaarden uit het systeem (sturende water- en natuuropgaven) verder ontwikkeld worden.”

⁴ “De alternatieven Speldenprik en Regionaal zullen het bereiken van het ‘Alternatief Integraal’ in de verre toekomst niet in de weg mogen staan. Naar mate het ambitieniveau hoger is, is de mate van ingrijpen in het gebied groter.”

⁵ “In the reconstructie is het de bedoeling die conflicterende belangen ruimtelijk te scheiden en de intensieve veehouderij te concentreren op duurzame locatie met toekomstperspectief. Dat betekent dat de intensieve veehouderij in de kwetsbare gebieden – rondom dorpen en natuurgebieden – op termijn word afgebouwd.”

Chapter 7

Rural partnerships in Europe, a differentiated view from a country perspective: the Netherlands and Wales

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Rural partnerships in Europe, a differentiated view from a country perspective:
the Netherlands and Wales

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Abstract

In recent years partnership has become an established aspect of rural development across rural Europe. Both Wales and the Netherlands have seen similar trends towards more decentralised and territorial modes of rural governance in which policy networks of governmental and societal actors work together at a local or regional level to further rural development. Such networks are called 'partnerships' in English and 'gebiedscommissies' in Dutch. This paper addresses differences in the composition and organisation of rural partnerships in these two countries and attributes the differences between them to the policy context in each country. Four policy factors are identified as contributing to the specific approach to partnership adopted in the two countries. The review sustains the presumption that in Dutch rural partnerships the integration discourse is more important than the participation discourse, which is more prominent in Wales.

7.1 Introduction

In recent years the partnership approach has become established as means of promoting rural development across rural Europe. This has been attributed to the influence of European policies for rural areas, which emphasise the importance of partnerships in policy implementation. Although the existence of a single piece of European Union guidance might imply that rural partnerships across member states will exhibit many similar characteristics, in reality their structure and functioning is framed by differing national contexts (Westholm et al., 1999), especially when the partnership approach is also used for national policies. This has been the case in both the Netherlands and Wales where, unlike many other European countries (Westholm et al., 1999), the partnership approach for rural areas was also used to promote different national policies as well as European initiatives. Rural partnerships in these countries, therefore, often combine domestic and EU priorities.

Hence, in line with a broader trend, rural policy, in both the Netherlands and the UK, is increasingly negotiated and delivered at a more decentralised level, through more or less formalised networks of relevant organisations that encompass governmental and societal actors. Such networks have become known as 'partnerships' in English and '*gebiedscommissies*' in the Dutch context. In both countries these types of networks have some agenda-setting power over domestic and European funding for natural resource management and socio-economic rural development. While there have been studies of these rural partnerships in both the UK and the Netherlands, there have been no comparative studies of the specific nature of rural partnerships in the two countries. This paper tries to fill this gap by providing a contextualised and comparative analysis of rural partnerships in the two countries. The analysis is based on case studies in the Netherlands and Wales, which have also provided the basis for separate studies (Derkzen and Bock, 2007; Derkzen, 2007).

Partnerships in Europe are surrounded by discourses of 'integration' and 'participation': discourses that are used to legitimise an increasingly decentralised and multi-actor governance (Marsden and Bristow, 2000; Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Leach and Pelkey, 2001; Cowell and Martin, 2003; Abram and Cowell, 2004; Hayward et al., 2004; Sherlock et al., 2004; Shortall, 2004; Boonstra and Frouws, 2005; Derkzen and Bock, 2007).

Abram and Cowell (2004) argue that the rationales of integration and participation are frequently used simultaneously to advocate the merits of partnership working, implying that integration and participation can be achieved simultaneously, or through the same mechanism(s). They question the compatibility of these two rationales. Integration of services or policies, for example, might need detailed negotiation, which only requires the involvement of immediately concerned interests. Widening participation and including more social groups would make such negotiations unmanageable (Abram and Cowell, 2004: 711). Equally, the two rationales for partnership may vary in importance. This

paper explores such differences and shows that more emphasis on one or the other of these rationales for participation can lead to quite different partnership compositions and organisational forms. By examining the specific composition and organisation of rural partnerships in the Netherlands and Wales, it seeks to explain the differences, and it argues that the two different rationales for partnership play a significant role in explaining these differences.

This paper is structured as follows. After some brief remarks on the empirical research underlying the paper, section 3 discusses the main differences in the composition and organisation of rural partnerships in the two countries. Section 4 reviews the literature about the differing policy contexts of the last twenty or so years to search for clues to explain these differences. It identifies four major factors connected to the emergence of the partnership approach in European policies and to more decentralised territorial governance in the two countries. Section 5, links the differences outlined in section 3 with the different rationalities in partnership highlighted in section 4 and the final section draws conclusions from this analysis.

7.2 Methods

This paper draws on case studies of local rural partnership within the Netherlands and Wales. The Dutch fieldwork was done in Achterhoek region over almost two years (2003/2004), during which one main and two local partnerships were studied (Derkzen and Bock, 2007). In Wales, fieldwork was done on rural partnerships in Carmarthenshire, Conwy and the Vale of Glamorgan in the spring of 2005. This fieldwork was more comparative and spread across three regions as there was insufficient time available to follow the long term evolution of one partnership (Derkzen, 2007).

The fieldwork consisted of a combination of interviews, observation and documentary analysis. In all cases, all or a selection of, partnership members were interviewed as well as local or regional government officers. The interviews dealt with the partnership members' perceptions of their roles, their responsibility and accountability as members, their interest in the partnership, their ability to participate, their view on decision making processes and the values they attached to working in a partnership. Observation of partnership meetings took place in all cases, although this method was more widely used in the Dutch fieldwork. Documentary analysis involved examining the policy and planning documents from the national, regional and local levels, the minutes of partnership meetings and other relevant documents of involved organisations.

7.3 Main differences in composition and organisation

The partnerships studied in the Netherlands formed part of a domestic territorial policy known as 'the Reconstruction of the Countryside', which was introduced in 2002 and covered almost one third of the Netherlands in the east and south of the country (Needham, 2007). With a focus on land re-adjustment, the policy sought to spatially reorganise the intensive husbandry sector by concentrating it and moving farms away

from vulnerable natural habitats so as to reduce its environmental impact. This involved a process of spatial planning aimed at integrating existing policies for improving the quality of natural habitats and landscapes, water and the environment in general, as well as the 'quality of life and work' of people in the areas concerned. The 12 partnerships (and 6 sub-level partnerships) in the east and south of the country had to draw up new spatial plans which would overrule the existing local spatial plans. In Achterhoek, the partnerships were also the platform for decision making on EU funded rural development projects.

The choice of partnerships in Wales reflects the heterogeneity in funding of rural development schemes (Derkzen, 2007), although all three partnerships were involved in the Welsh Government's 'Rural Community Action' (RCA) initiative, the objective of which is to empower rural communities through community capacity building. Many of the 10 county-based rural partnerships responsible for its implementation existed before the introduction of this scheme, often being responsible for managing European Structural Funds, such as Objective One. Hence, in Carmarthenshire, the rural partnership was overseeing a combination of Objective One and RCA funding, in Conwy, the rural partnership had three funding sources (and responsibilities), Objective One, RCA and LEADER+. In the Vale of Glamorgan the rural partnership was established for the purposes of the RCA, although it subsequently received additional Rural Development Regulation Article 33 funding.

7.3.1 Composition

The most striking differences in the composition of the partnerships in Wales and the Netherlands are related to their size and the categories from which members were selected. The partnerships in Achterhoek had 13 members, close to the average of 14 members of all the main partnerships under the Reconstruction Policy (Boonstra et al., 2007). The three partnerships in Wales, however, had an average of 20 members, also in line with the other Welsh rural partnerships.

In the Netherlands, members were selected from the categories defined by the national 'Reconstruction Policy' that guided these partnerships. These categories reflected the rural spatial functions, such as 'agriculture', 'recreation', 'water' and so on. In Wales the categories from which members were selected were less pre-determined. The Welsh government guidance for RCA stated that the mix of representatives was expected to vary, but indicated that consideration should be given to "local authorities, local development agencies, existing community groups, the voluntary sector, the private sector, and schools and colleges" (WAG, November 2002: 4). Moreover, in the Dutch cases each of the categories was generally represented by just one organisation, whereas in the Welsh cases, one could find more than one organisation from the same category. Thus, in the Netherlands some organisations were not represented on the partnership because they did not reflect a pre-defined category¹, or were not seen as adding to the

existing mixture. This was not the case in Wales, where the partnerships contained members from the two farming unions or from multiple community organisations.

7.3.2 Organisation

The partnerships in the Netherlands had to decide upon measures that would have far-reaching consequences for the spatial organisation of the countryside (Derkzen and Bock, 2007). The partnerships were the negotiating platform where different land use interests were weighed against each other, in the context of multiple and conflicting land uses. This process was facilitated by the provincial authorities who wrote planning proposals which were discussed and adjusted in the partnership meetings. The province also facilitated by administered the various funding schemes. The monitoring and formal approval of ready-to-go rural development projects, largely based on EU funding, was a small and additional task in comparison to what absorbed everybody's attention: the design of a new spatial plan.

Large scale planning intervention for the countryside was not an issue in Wales. The partnerships under RCA were not operating under such a uniform regime as the Dutch Reconstruction Policy partnerships. Their main task was to monitor and formal approve ready-to-go rural development projects. The partnerships served as platforms for consultation and information exchange and for tapping into the various networks to stimulate new projects or cooperation. This process was mainly facilitated by the local authorities who wrote strategies for and administered the various funding schemes. Decision making was sometimes more far-reaching when it related to implementing funding schemes. For example in Carmarthenshire, the local authority and the community organisations in the partnership had financial relationships through service level agreements.

In both countries, the partnership members were formally regarded as representatives. In the three Welsh partnerships, the representative role had no further organisational consequences for the partnership. Partnership members were assumed to take their own responsibility in reporting back to their organisations or voicing their constituents concerns and were largely invited to participate on the basis of their mandate or expertise (Derkzen, 2007). In contrast, representation in the Reconstruction Policy partnerships in the Netherlands was more formally organised through varying forms of a two-tier system (Boonstra, 2007: 30-31). Each representative in Achterhoek partnerships was assumed to have a consultation group (*klankbordgroep*), itself representing a part of the larger constituency of this specific interest. Most of the members (such as the farming union, the environmental organisation, the association of municipalities) had such a group which they consulted with before and after partnership meetings.

The following section attempts to provide a deeper understanding of the origins of these differences, providing a literature review that identifies four major influences that have shaped rural policy in these two countries. The first two are connected to the

differentiated influence of the emergence of the partnership approach from European policies for rural development. The last two are connected to differentiated patterns of decentralised territorial governance in the two countries.

7.4 Policy context in each country

7.4.1 Partnership approach in EU Structural Funds

The European Commission developed its first regional approach in the early '80s to accommodate the integration of agricultural development into the rural economies of the new Mediterranean member countries (Vihinen, 2001). In 1988, the EU publication *The Future of Rural Society* reflected a move towards more acknowledgement of the specificity of rural problems and of the heterogeneity of specific rural contexts in member states (Ray, 1998; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). As a result, the Objective 5b Structural Fund was introduced. This was limited to addressing rural problems and included a more flexible and local approach with delivery through 'partnership'.

"An important aim of the introduction of the partnership principle was an attempt to legitimise regional development policy through formally including sub-national actors with key knowledge of regional problems and priority needs" (Olsson, 2003: 286).

This more territorial approach was also adopted for the Objective 1 Structural Fund and further strengthened through the introduction of the communitarian LEADER initiative in 1990 (Boonstra 2004). The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 induced further reforms to the structural funds. Criteria for eligibility were broadened, making more areas eligible (Van der Stelt-Scheele and Berkhout 1998). A third reform followed with the Agenda 2000 proposals in which Objective 5b funding was integrated into Objective 2, the principles of partnership and subsidiarity, however, remained central to the delivery of the programmes.

The Netherlands

The structural funds were initially aimed at disadvantaged areas, of which the Netherlands had only a few, so the reforms of 1988 had little impact in the Netherlands. In 1988, the Netherlands had no Objective 1 areas and only one Objective 5b area, in the north of the country (Boonstra, 2004). After the 1992 reforms, a few more areas became eligible for Objective 5b and the connected LEADER II programme. However, at that time the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries (ANF) was short of funds to finance its proposals for a spatial planning oriented territorial approach (Peters, 1999). Specific areas² for the creation of more natural habitats had just been introduced in the new integrated spatial strategy for the countryside called the Structural Scheme for Green Space (SSGP)³ (Peters, 1999). The European regulations gave national governments discretion in listing areas for Objective 5b status (McNicholas and Ward, 1997). The Ministry ignored the area that had already had funding but proposed strategic new Objective 5b areas that were matching its own territorial proposals for nature policy (Boonstra, 2004). Thus these EU structural funds were used to help co-finance⁴ the ANF's first territorial approach to natural resource management (Peters, 1999; Boonstra, 2004).

At that time the Ministry of ANF did not think very much in terms of broadly defined rural policy objectives and its focus was still largely towards the agricultural modernisation agenda (Van der Ploeg, 1999: 260-295). ANF did, however, become caught up in national policy struggles over manure surpluses and environmental pollution. In 1984, the urgency of the matter forced the Minister to launch the Interim Law Limiting Intensive Husbandry which was meant to immediately stop any further expansion of the sector. This was the starting shot in more than ten years of policy struggle over manure surpluses, which involved interdepartmental competition and conflict between the Ministries of ANF and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Policy, and the Environment (Frouws and Van Tatenhove, 1993; Frouws, 1994). After the swine fever outbreak in 1997, the manure policy became central to the 'Reconstruction Policy' and focused on the 'problem areas' in east and south of the country. A new territorial approach to the manure policy decentralised it out of Ministry control into local multi-actor partnerships.

The UK and Wales

British rural policy also arrived at a crossroads by the end of the eighties (Ward and McNicholas, 1998). In the UK, the 1988 reforms of the structural funds, designed to establish partnerships posed "a challenge to the existing balance of intergovernmental relations in the domestic arena" (Rhodes, 1997: 142). Given the centralist unitary state structure and a lack of regional government, the move of the European Commission towards regional and territorial relations within the UK threatened the central administration's role as gatekeeper (Rhodes, 1997). Yet, large parts of the country were eligible for Objective 1, 2 and 5b funding, especially after the broadening of the criteria in 1993. For example, the whole of rural Wales was eligible for Objective 5b funding from 1994 (McNicholas and Ward, 1997). The Objective 5b fund therefore provided a 'useful antidote' to the UK's centralised polity and gave the agricultural ministry a more territorial focus (Lowe and Ward, 1998:17). Thus, "[p]rimarily as a result of the increasing importance of the European Union (EU) Structural Funds, local, regional and national actors [were] being required to work in new ways to plan for and administer rural development programmes" (Ward and McNicholas, 1998: 27).

At the same time, Thatcher's continuous attacks on local government's autonomy and expenditures and budget cuts for the Civil Service in Whitehall were part of an agenda of 'rolling back' the state. Policies for rural areas were very modest and mainly coupled to the obligations within the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Winter, 1996). The structural funds for broad socio-economic regeneration in rural areas therefore filled a policy vacuum. But there was a continuous struggle to make the central government recognise and honour its 'additionality' obligation, as opposed to trying to use EU funding as a replacement for domestic expenditure (Rhodes, 1997: 143, 158). Some saw the later introduction of the RCA policy as a response to the critique that Welsh rural policy was too heavily dependent on EU funding sources (WRO, 2004). However, influenced by those European policies and by public-private partnerships in urban regeneration, the

partnership approach did firmly take root in rural areas of the UK (Rhodes, 1997; Ward and McNicholas, 1998; Jones and Little, 2000).

7.4.2 Partnership approach in Rural Development Regulation

The partnership approach was also eventually introduced in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). When rural development first entered the CAP agenda it was interpreted in merely agricultural terms (Vihinen, 2001: 195; Van der Stelt-Scheele and Berkhout, 1998) and the Cork Declaration of 1996 can be seen as a political statement of the urgency of further reform of the CAP (Goverde, 2004: 76). Only at the Berlin Summit (1999), was a compromise reached to establish a detached but parallel rural policy alongside the existing CAP, through the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) or "second pillar" (Lowe et al., 2002). The RDR introduced "a set of alternative management principles, including those of decentralisation, partnership, multi-annual programming and co-financing" to the core of the CAP (Lowe et al., 2002: 3). This embedded the territorial approach within CAP, from 2000 onwards, with the 'second pillar' not only broadening agricultural policy to cover rural policy at the European level, but also inherently influencing the national contexts, through new co-financing mechanisms (Vihinen, 2001: 199).

UK and Wales

As a net contributor to the EC's finances, the UK has strongly argued for liberalising CAP, arguing that compensation payments to farmers should be reduced (Winter, 1996; Lowe et al., 2002). When Mrs Thatcher came into office she was a prime mover in pressing for CAP reform in order to reduce the UK's budgetary burden (Winter, 1996: 140-141). Another strategy of the Conservative governments was to emphasise non-agricultural economic activities as development options for rural economies (Marsden et al., 1993; Winter, 1996). From 1997 onwards, the Labour governments have slightly changed this oppositional stance to CAP to one of progressive reform (Lowe et al., 2002). Both positions readily absorbed proposals to broaden CAP to cover rural development in more general terms. The RDR and the possibility for modulation thus "offered an opportunity to 'test drive' degressivity, to show that the UK was really committed to this sort of approach" (Lowe et al., 2002: 7).

By the late 1980s another discourse emerged: that of the 'threatened' countryside (Winter, 1996; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). The passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill raised awareness in public debate and an increasingly assertive environmentalist movement found unlikely allies with an emergent food lobby and new right thinkers (Winter, 1996: 138). At the same time the countryside was under pressure from a development boom in southern England and a relaxation of the land use planning system (Marsden et al., 1993: 102). In the words of Ward and McNicholas "a host of policy contradictions came to light in the rural sphere and calls were increasingly made for a new strategy for the countryside" (1998:29). The Conservative government responded with three Rural White Papers for England, Wales and Scotland produced between 1995 and 1996. These overarching statements raised the profile of rural areas and while they

did not contain many concrete measures or commitments to providing resources, they were a sign of a changing perspective, which was further developed by Labour's Rural White Paper in 2000 (Lowe et al., 2002).

The Netherlands

In contrast to the UK, the broadening of the scope of the CAP met with considerable resistance from the Dutch Ministry of ANF and the Dutch farming lobby. The historic success of the agricultural modernisation agenda and its congruency with the thinking of policy makers, farming union and knowledge institutes was an obstacle to adopting another perspective (Van der Ploeg, 1999). "In this respect, the tactics of the Dutch were to fight against including a dimension in the CAP which would not contribute to their idea of agriculture" (Vihinen, 2001: 175; RLG, 2004). Moreover, as an exporting country, the Netherlands benefited considerably from the existing price and market policies. The farming lobby and associated agribusiness interests formed a formidable status quo, determined to safeguard their vested interests. Thus, in Dutch discourses the crisis of CAP was seen purely in economic terms, as a problem of efficiency.

Although rural policy had its own place within the CAP from 2000 onwards, it was the responsibility of each Member State to translate the second pillar into integrated rural policy. The Dutch strategy went in the reverse way and integrated the RDR into existing Dutch policies for the countryside, leaving the focus on agriculture and natural resource management largely unchanged (RLG, 2004; Boonstra, 2004). The budget therefore became fragmented and was used for rather narrowly defined measures, for example for land consolidation in relation to nature policy, agri-environmental measures and water management in the agricultural sector. Modulation, designed to increase the budget at the expense of direct payments to farmers was not used (RLG, 2004). Thus policy discourse for broader rural development developed quite slowly (Boonstra, 2004) and the first broader rural policy was only published in 2004 (MinLNV, 2004).

The post-war corporatist consensus about agriculture that existed in both countries was much readily and earlier challenged in the UK by Conservative governments that were reluctant to treat agriculture differently from other economic sectors. Despite the early significance of the 'environmental question', the importance of the agricultural and related sectors in the Netherlands and the focus on sectoral politics provided a more narrow perspective on 'rural' policy. Moreover, the Ministry of ANF was not at all ready to share 'its' domain with supranational or lower levels of government. By contrast, the acknowledgement of rural diversity and a broader rural economy in the UK fitted better with national interests as well as with the intentions of CAP reform. Although, in both countries the budget for RDR has been limited, due to historical spending patterns, the second pillar was better received in the UK.

7.4.3 Territorial approach in national land use planning

The Netherlands

Although the Netherlands is densely populated and highly urbanised, there is still a clear distinction between town and countryside, due to a restrictive and centrally coordinated spatial planning system. Space is a scarce resource and the importance of the spatial dimension is reflected in the national government's power to overrule decisions of lower governmental levels made within a decentralised political system (Goverde and De Haan, 2002). Equally, municipalities did not, until recently, have a tradition of governing beyond the town and village. In the light of agricultural productivism, the countryside was the domain of the Ministry of ANF.

Dutch spatial policies have been dominated by thinking in terms of functional separations and are organised in separate, centrally coordinated, planning systems for agriculture, the environment, nature and water (Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000). Hence, there are "almost as many public policies for rural areas as there are functions" (Needham, 2007: 78). Vihinen notes that "as premises, the values of the environment and of nature were more obvious for the Dutch than rural or agrarian values" (2001: 192). Moreover, Dutch spatial planning is closely connected to a strong belief in man-made solutions to the physical environment (Needham, 2007). Spatial planning for the countryside therefore has been highly interventionist in character. Since World War Two most land has been reorganised at least once and sometimes more often to improve farming efficiency. "And that has taken place *outside* the system for spatial planning: it has its own legislation, procedures and organisations" stemming from the Ministry of ANF (Needham, 2007: 79 emphasis in original).

Under pressure from Parliament, the Ministry of ANF decided in 1988 to integrate the sectoral spatial policies for Agriculture, Nature and Recreation into the SSGS⁵ (Peters, 1999). This led to an impasse within the Ministry between defensive sectoral departments, and at the beginning of the 1990s two local territorial categories were proposed to try to overcome this. The first was Strategic Green Project areas to further nature policy goals at the regional level and the second was Valuable Man-made Landscape areas where agriculture, nature and environmental policy would be integrated in order to preserve valuable landscapes (Peters, 1999). These categories were inspired by the successful territorial policy⁶ of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Policy, and the Environment, which it introduced to strengthen its position in the rural domain and to speed up agri-environmental policy implementation through the voluntary cooperation of farmers and other stakeholders working in planning partnerships at the local level (Frouws and Van Tatenhove, 1993; Boonstra and Frouws, 2005).

In the 1990s therefore, integrative planning came into vogue and connected with a new mode of decentralised multi-actor governance (Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000). Policy initiatives aimed at integrating sectoral spatial categories (agriculture, nature, environment and landscape) that were not coordinated at the central level. Such

integrative projects had to be formulated at the local or regional level in partnerships with multiple levels of government and interest organisations in what became known as '*gebiedsgericht beleid* (area based policy) (Boonstra, 2004; Boonstra and Frouws, 2005). To formalise these area based policy 'experiments', the state and provinces signed an agreement in 2001 introducing the principles of area based policy as the new governance model in which the provinces played a central role (Boonstra and Frouws, 2005). The Reconstruction Policy, which starting in 2002 was therefore seen as the 'second generation' of already established formal arrangements for area based policy (Boonstra, 2004: 244).

UK and Wales

Land use planning in the UK has to be seen in the light of recent governments' long standing commitment to foster market forces. Changes to property rights have been the topic of continuing debate in the UK and "one key characteristic of landowners throughout British history has been their ability to defend and then adapt their interests in response to changing economic and social circumstances" (Marsden et al., 1993: 70). The land use planning system is administered by the local authorities, though in lines with guidance provided by the Department of Environment. As in the Netherlands, these responsibilities have been confined to town and village planning, as agricultural land and buildings were excluded from planning control under the 1947 Agriculture Act. Thus, "[t]he vast bulk of rural land was not covered by development plans (...) and the coverage of rural areas by local plans was, and still is, very limited" (Marsden et al., 1993: 110-111).

Because of an ideological commitment to a market led planning system, the Conservative governments of the eighties and nineties often sought to weaken the land use planning system, although their stance was often ambiguous. Attempts to reduce the scope of the planning system were subject to opposing pressures from within the party for planning protection, some from the conservation lobby and some from landowners, both traditional constituents of the Tory party. Thus Marsden et al. (1993: 128) conclude:

"Attempts to liberalise rural planning inevitably produced a backlash from people concerned to protect their own environments, environments whose boundaries were spreading farther afield. Rural conservation interests and planning authorities (mostly Conservative-controlled) have strenuously resisted the government's attempts to relax planning constraints over agricultural land, and the rural planning system has been strengthened and not weakened as a result."

However, the planning system did become more private-sector driven and more directed to the provision of positional instead of collective goods. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture became less involved in protecting agricultural land from development (Marsden et al., 1993).

The establishment, in 1999, of a regional tier of government, the Assembly Government for Wales, (see following section) created a new regional level for planning policy. Welsh guidelines for planning policy (Planning Policy Wales 2002) adopted a more cautious

approach of respect for local distinctiveness than had existed under the centralised system. Moreover, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 meant that a far reaching spatial vision had to be developed. It placed statutory duties on the Assembly to develop and implement a Spatial Plan that incorporated “a legal duty for local authorities to follow” (Wales Rural Observatory 2004: 57), leading to the first pan- Welsh spatial strategy.

Despite these differences, both countries are known for their highly developed spatial planning systems. Until recently, in both countries, local authorities' competence for planning had traditionally been confined to built spaces in cities, towns and villages. The countryside – defined as agricultural production space –for a long time remained the exclusive domain of the respective Ministries of Agriculture. The crucial difference, however, was the level of intervention employed by the two Ministries in countryside planning. Whereas the UK Ministry of Agriculture passively protected agricultural production areas from other developments through regulations, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture actively engaged in large scale interventions in land re-adjustment and rationalisation to increase the efficiency of agricultural production.

7.4.4 Territorial approach in national governance structure

Wales

In 1997 Tony Blair's New Labour won 'a landslide victory' in the general election establishing a 'new politics', the politics of the 'Third Way' (Fairclough, 2000: 21; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). This political discourse differentiated itself from the Conservatives' exclusive focus on the private sector, through the 'inclusion of civil society', 'equality of opportunity' and 'working in partnership'. The word 'partnership' is one of the 15 strongest keywords of New Labour (Fairclough, 2000: 17). The 'joined-up' philosophy was reflected in the White Paper *Modernising Government* (1999) in which the state presented itself as the enabling partner that joins and steers flexible networks with the civil service playing a new facilitating role (Bever and Rhodes, 2003). Part of the modernisation agenda involved devolving some legislative powers to regions within the UK, leading to the creation of the Assembly for Wales in 1999.

The 'designers' of devolution in Wales (and Scotland) were greatly concerned with creating a new style of governance that explicitly did not replicate the Westminster model, by trying to import values of participation, inclusion, openness and cooperation (Judge, 2004). The Westminster model grants a powerful position to the Prime Minister who has his/her own extended Office. “Power over the Cabinet lies in rights of appointment and dismissal and also the control of agendas and meetings, even the power to take decisions without votes, and the power to (...) reorganise departmental responsibilities, so allowing a particular Minister to accrue power or lose it” (Winter, 1996: 33). Before devolution all policies came 'from London' and were implemented by the Welsh Office which, according to Bishop and Flynn (2005) adopted a coercive and insular style of governance.

Devolution therefore was seen as a massive opportunity to do things differently and to counter the shortcomings of the previous style of governance (Bristow et al., 2003).

The new style of collaborative governance was solidified in the Government of Wales Act. This stipulated an obligation to consult with the business sector, local government and the voluntary sector in every policy domain. Influenced by the equal opportunities agenda, all statutory partnerships in Wales were obliged to have equal representation from these three sectors (Chaney, 2004). Partnership with the voluntary and community sectors was seen as a way of achieving inclusive governance and the voluntary sector has since been invited to participate in all the statutory partnerships that have been created in Wales (Chaney and Fevre 2001; Bristow et al., 2003; Millward, 2005). Thus partnerships became a central feature of policy delivery and decentralisation in Wales, giving rise to extensive partnership structures that go well beyond those stipulated in (European) rural development policies, something which has “not been tried on this scale before in Wales” (Bachtler, 2003: 39). Hence, while participation became the new rhetoric of policy making in the UK (Fairclough, 2000; Sherlock et al., 2004), it became an even stronger premise underlying all policy making within the newly devolved Welsh political system (Chaney and Fevre, 2001; Chaney, 2004).

The Netherlands

Political power in the Netherlands has always been ‘decentred’, despite a high level of centralisation in the post-war period for building and maintaining social welfare provisions and relatively low levels of discretion for the two lower tiers of government, the provinces and municipalities (Deth and Vis, 2006). It can be described as decentred because of the historical fragmentation of the Dutch political arena, which is best characterised as being “a country of minorities, a multi-party system, coalition government, a formally weak position of the prime minister” and a high degree of “sectorisation” because of largely autonomous Ministerial departments (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002: 139, 148). This horizontal fragmentation, was matched by 1) a vertical focus of sectoral departments towards interest organisations or their ‘clients’, 2) various forms of self governance, stemming from the principle of subsidiarity and 3) a consensus-seeking style within socio-economic policy making (Klijin and Koppejan, 2000).

The vertical cooperation in policy sectors is also referred to as ‘(neo) corporatism’ and was particularly evident in agricultural policy during the period of modernisation (Frouws 1994). Today, there is a much lower degree of institutionalised incorporation of organised interests, and a more informal form of corporatism, known as ‘the polder model’ is more common and has been given as a reason for the successful performance of the Dutch economy in the late 1990s (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002: 145)

The tradition of self organisation had its roots in the search for autonomy and emancipation by minority groups within the Netherlands, such as the Catholics and the industrial working class (Deth and Vis, 2006). In the twentieth century this became

institutionalised through 'pillarisation' in which different confessional, liberal and socialist ideological groups provided their own social infrastructure covering everything from political parties to schools⁷. This meant that only central coordination of national issues was required. Maintaining a balance between the ideologies of different pillars led to strategies of non-decision making and depoliticising issues through technical arguments (Vihinen, 2001: 86). This strategy of depoliticised politics that seeks to avoid conflict and build consensus wherever possible has deeper roots (Boonstra, 2006). According to Kickert, "[c]onsensus democracy is a centuries-old Dutch governance tradition dating back to the very beginning of the Low Lands and the eternal fight against sea, storm, flood and river inundation" (2003: 139).

Since the beginning of the seventies, the ideological pillars have been slowly dismantled, and ever since there has been continuous debate over regionalisation and decentralisation to the regional and municipal tiers of government. Since the eighties, national government has made municipalities responsible for the, now more limited, social welfare provisions and tried to decentralise tasks to the provinces. Provinces received more discretion through more territorial approaches to natural resource management and spatial planning, although this was resisted for a long time by the Ministry of ANF (Peters, 1999). Moreover, these decentralisation proposals were offset by the attempts by Cabinets to reassert their decision making powers in the nineties (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002: 160; Peters, 1999; Kickert, 2003). In addition, there was less emphasis on participation and community involvement in general. In planning a new 'interactive' planning approach was tried but on the whole, participation has always been a feature of the Dutch style of policy making. Andeweg and Irwin (2002: 160) thus conclude that "the development 'from government to governance' that is now observed everywhere, has a long history in the Netherlands".

This comparative literature review has aimed to establish the specific background and policy context to the emergence of a partnership approach in each of the two countries. It shows that the European Union's move towards partnership and broader rural policies had more influence in the UK than in the Netherlands. Partnership and decentralisation also emerged in the Netherlands but were initiated from domestic policies for natural resources and the countryside with the emergent partnerships aimed at integrating sectoral planning policies. In Wales, the establishment of a devolved regional level of administration strengthened the participatory discourse already present in the policies of New Labour. The next section links the composition and organisation of rural partnerships in the respective countries to the dominant discourses over rural policy implementation in each country. Whereas in Wales there was more emphasis on inclusion and participation, in the Netherlands there was more emphasis on the integration of planning.

7.5 Dutch and Welsh partnerships in comparison

The 'integration' discourse is reflected in the composition and organisation of Dutch partnerships. Abram and Cowell argue that 'integration' is "a talisman of modern

planning" (2003:702) and in the Netherlands the emphasis on integration is shaped by the interventionist tradition of land re-adjustment, the strength of the spatial planning system and the vertical organisation of policy making in relatively autonomous sectors. The spatial focus is reflected in the name chosen, '*gebiedscommissies*', which translates as 'area committees', - even though a direct translation of the English word 'partnership' would also have been possible (*partnerschap*) and was used in Dutch programming documents for the European Union. The sectoral focus is reflected in the composition of the Reconstruction Policy partnerships in which only representatives of functional sectors such as 'water', 'environment', 'nature' or 'recreation' were invited to participate. Even the municipalities, which do not represent a functional policy sector, were not included in the first minimum list for partnership membership provided by the Ministry of ANF.

In Wales on the other hand, the rationale of 'participation' came to be interpreted as "involving the community" so as to improve the quality and legitimacy of decision making (Jones and Little, 2000: 177; Abram and Cowell, 2003: 701). This participatory and inclusive rhetoric signalled a break with Conservative negligence of the civil society, and was in many ways a reaction to it. Partnerships usually include three social 'sectors', the public, the private and the voluntary/community sector (Atkinson, 1999; Jones and Little, 2000), reflecting the three main spheres of society, the state, the market and civil society. The requirement in Wales for *equal* quantitative participation of these three sectors through the 'three-thirds' principle showed a strong concern with inclusion. The extent to which the voluntary sector was included has been interpreted as a "'convergence' between the way Blairism privileges community and some of the rhetoric of Welsh devolution" (Chaney and Fevre, 2001: 137).

Moreover, in contrast to the specific *rural* remit of the Dutch '*gebiedscommissies*', Welsh partnerships extended their operations far beyond the domain of rural development. In addition to long existing community forums and inter-organisational collaborative structures (in for example health care), Bristow et al (2003: 35) estimate there are at least 264 statutory, representative 3-thirds partnerships in Wales with at least 2,500 representatives on them (compared to 1270 elected local councillors). Rural partnerships in Wales therefore, are part of a broader move to partnership. Twenty nine partnerships, at various strategic and operational levels, were established to manage the Objective 1 (2000-6) funding programme. Thus the requirements of European funding for working in partnership did contribute considerably to the number of partnerships operating in Wales.

Bristow's high estimate of the number of people involved in partnerships in Wales partly reflects the relatively large membership of these partnerships, compared to Dutch ones. The Dutch Reconstruction policy partnerships had on average 6 members less than the Welsh rural partnerships. Dutch partnership members explained the exclusion of some potential interest organisations in terms of efficiency, that if the partnership were bigger, they would become unmanageable. By contrast, in Wales, the partnerships were open to including new members and two of the three partnerships had their memberships revised

by the authority that established it at least once. Moreover, membership was not limited to single representation of each category as was the rule in the Netherlands, where an assumption of intra-sectoral homogeneity was made which also served to reduce the complexity of competing land use claims of separate policy sectors: each sector was supposed to speak with one voice.

Furthermore, the "community" and voluntary sectors were not invited to participate in the Dutch rural partnerships because they were not seen as important. Several studies have shown that citizens' and voluntary groups were either absent from or only played a very marginal role in the partnerships, which were driven by an 'oligarchy' of public sector and professional interest organisations (Boonstra, 2004: 264; Bock and Derkzen, 2003). These organisations were already involved in policy making through vertical relationships that various central government departments had established with their 'clients' such as the Farming Unions or the environmental lobby organisations. Many of these national organisations took seats on the local rural partnerships as representatives of specific spatial sectors. On the other hand, most partnership members in *Achterhoek gebiedscommissie* had a consultation group and it was felt that this provided opportunity for those few citizens with a specific interest in the partnership to make their voices heard.

Thus, the emphasis in Wales (and the UK), on increasing democratic legitimacy through inclusion of civil society was absent from Dutch discourses over Reconstruction Policy. Boonstra et al.'s evaluation of the Dutch partnerships found that improving the democratic legitimacy of policies through broadening participation was not mentioned as a reason for the partnerships' existence or composition (2007: 28). Individual citizens were assumed to have recourse to the various rights and possibilities to make formal complaints through the normal consultative planning procedures. Local residents, community groups or voluntary groups were not seen as relevant to the natural resource management and land use objectives of the rural partnerships. This despite the requirements for participation set by the European Union for decision making over, and monitoring ,EU rural development funding (Derkzen and Bock, 2007).

7.6 Conclusion

This paper has analysed the specific nature of the composition and organisation of Welsh and Dutch rural partnerships within the recent rural policy context of each country. The emergent differences illustrate and can be explained by the different rationalities which gave rise to rural partnerships in the two countries. The paper started by examining the different rationalities within policy discourses which are used to legitimise more decentralised and multi-actor form of governance. Abram and Cowell's (2004) critical review of these argues that discourses of 'integration' and 'participation' are not only subject to particular interpretations in different settings, but that they are also frequently mutually incompatible. These arguments are confirmed here.

The comparative analysis shows how specific connotations of 'integration' and 'participation' differ between the two countries. For example, the Dutch connotation of 'integration' has roots in a tradition of interventionist land re-adjustment. In the past these re-adjustment projects were implemented only within the agricultural sector, but now the approach is to 'integrate' all land use claims into one spatial re-adjustment plan for the countryside. By contrast, 'integration' in Wales is framed in terms of the need to have more 'joined-up' working of agencies so as to improve service provision and public sector efficiency. The meaning of 'integration' adopted in the Netherlands has major consequences for the compatibility with the rationality of 'participation'.

This confirms Abram and Cowell's (2004) analysis of the incompatibility of the two dominant discourses surrounding partnerships. The dominant need for policy integration in the Dutch Reconstruction Policy excluded concern with a broader participation of stakeholder groups as, the more interests involved, the smaller the share of the pie for each. The strong and political negotiations that were part and parcel of arriving at an integrated plan created a defensive attitude and prevented multiple representation of sectoral interests. The composition and organisation of Dutch rural partnerships, therefore, points to a "tension between encouraging wider participation and constructing the power relations necessary to realise a more integrated approach" (Abram and Cowell, 2004: 709).

In Wales on the other hand, the rural partnerships had a much more consultative character, reflected both in their organisation and inclusive composition. Partnerships were not aimed at the alignment of strategies or detailed negotiations over scarce resources, such as land. Rather they were aimed at stimulating all the relevant organisations to develop projects, work together and reinforce each other. Partnership and inclusiveness were part of the same coin and were used to legitimise the implementation of the programmes.

The extensive use of partnerships within European rural policies, such as the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) is often celebrated as representing a new way forward. Widely advocated within the European Union, partnerships seem to be examples of 'a new process of governing', or 'a new method by which society is governed' (Rhodes, 1996: 652-653). However, "[o]ne problem with some components of the 'new governance' literature is that it virtually defines away some of the more interesting parts of the available variance" (Peters, 2000: 42). In the light of the governance debate, this cross-national study of the composition and organisation of rural partnerships highlights two issues.

The comparative analysis within this paper shows that behind uniform European guidance, there can be great variations in the forms that rural partnership takes in different countries and this in turn can lead to different translations of European rural policies. Whereas the level of decision making is higher in the Dutch rural partnerships,

giving those included more voice, the narrowly defined national objectives create tunnel vision about rural development, and restrict the possibility of achieving the broader European rural development goals. Moreover, the legitimacy of Dutch rural partnerships can be questioned for the corporatist way in which they operate. In Wales, on the other hand, the new and previously excluded groups and organisations are participating in rural development, in line with European expectations for broader inclusion of local groups. However, the largely consultative character of the Welsh rural partnerships shows that (in contrast to the Dutch cases) joint decision making and strategy development based on power dependence of the actors involved in collective action is rather limited. The newly included groups therefore run the risk of providing legitimacy for the partnership's existence with only limited possibilities for substantially influencing the partnership's objectives and programmes.

The relevance of a comparative perspective is situated in building better theoretical understanding of what 'partnerships' and broader 'new methods of governance' are. This comparison showed that the strong emphasis on participation and inclusion of community and voluntary groups is not a *general* characteristic of partnerships, but rather a *specific* characteristic of contemporary British and Welsh ones. Certainly in the light of the best known British studies of (rural) partnerships and the specific British origins of the governance debate (e.g. Stoker, 1998; Rhodes, 1996) comparative studies with experiences outside the UK are much needed because rural partnerships, which are now more widely used to implement European rural policies, can take many forms. These are highly dependent on existing political and policy processes and structures in respective member states. The impact of European rural policies will therefore not only depend on the economic, social and environmental characteristics of a particular rural area but will be highly dependent on the logic that determines who is allowed to be involved as 'stakeholders' at the local level. The varying ways in which rural partnerships are institutionalised at present will play a crucial role in constraining or enabling innovative and broad-based rural development. Comparative studies of the politics of rural partnership help us understand these underlying forces.

Notes

¹ In another partnership in the province of Gelderland, (which includes the region of Achterhoek), the Union of Pig Farmers got access to a second seat for the sector of 'agriculture' after intense lobbying. The Association of Small Villages also tried to get access but their lobbying was unsuccessful.

² 'Strategische Groen Projecten' (Strategic Green Projects).

³ 'Structuur Schema Groene Ruimte'.

⁴ A committee (Vollehoven) advised the Minister that, while EU funds could not be used to fund the entire policy they could be used to acquire and redevelop land to 'create' nature (Peters 1999).

⁵ Structural Scheme for Green Space / Structuurschema Groene Ruimte.

⁶ This policy was called Spatial Planning and Environment Areas ('Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu gebieden (ROM)) see Boonstra and Frouws 2005.

⁷ Dutch society was extremely polarised over social questions such as national suffrage and the organisation of education, known as the 'school struggle'. In 1917 agreement ('Pacification') on these issues was reached through the pragmatic solution of giving each of the conflicting ideologies space to organise itself, starting with schools. Until the end of the sixties, much societal and political life was organised through these pillars (Deth and Vis 2006).

Chapter 8

Discussion and conclusions

This research departed from the idea that partnerships for rural development are a new form of rural governance. It sets out to research how these rural partnerships work from a political perspective, which was elaborated along two lines of thought. First, aspects of the democratic legitimacy of these partnerships were questioned in terms of the possibility of participation and the meaning of representation. And second, the modes of power and the power relations that shape partnership processes over time were studied.

These conclusions are structured as follows. The different concepts that were 'put to work' in the analysis of the empirical material are reflected upon in the following three sections. This reflection uses a comparative perspective, integrating the results, discussions and conclusions from the various papers in this study. The fourth section refers back to the overall research questions posed in Chapter 1 and seeks to answer them and draw some overall conclusions. And lastly some suggestions for future research finalise this chapter.

8.1 The possibility of participation

The question of the democratic legitimacy of rural partnerships was made more concrete by looking at the opportunities for participation and the meaning of representation. It was expected that these new forms of local governance would enhance the inclusion of a

wider diversity of interests, local people and previously excluded groups in decision making for rural development.

Issue expansion

The Welsh and Dutch rural partnerships in this study shared a common task, of overseeing the implementation of rural development budgets of EU and domestic policies for rural areas, and could thus be compared. At the level of implementation, this task entailed rural partnerships prioritising rural development objectives, deciding upon and approving projects for funding, stimulating, consulting and mobilising local people to make use of the budgets and cooperate to establish joint and innovative projects and avoiding duplication of efforts. The obligatory use of the instrument of partnership extended the concept of rural development beyond agricultural interests, with the establishment of rural partnerships at the local or regional level helping break down the representational hegemony of nationally organised agricultural interest organisations.

Thus the instrument of rural partnership facilitated the expansion of issues considered within rural policies. "The idea of issue expansion highlights how previously ignored or excluded issues can be pushed on the 'agricultural' agendas often by outsider interest groups and policy networks." (Greer, 2005: 115). Eased by a discourse of cooperation and consensus, the establishment of rural partnerships can therefore be seen as a large scale socialisation of a long standing conflict (see chapter 6) that broadened the policy agenda for rural areas. While the agricultural lobby resisted inclusion of 'improper' interests, trying to contain such conflict in the private spheres of EU and national policy making circles, it had to face the expansion of other interests influencing policy implementation at the local level.

- **The rural partnerships in this study fulfilled the expectation of wider inclusion of rural interests other than agriculture within rural policy making and implementation.**

Exclusionary mechanisms in Dutch partnerships

The expansion of influence over rural development issues was not a straightforward matter of including local citizens or previously excluded groups. The Dutch rural partnerships were dominated by the task of integrated land use planning (described in chapter 6), which involved some powerful exclusionary mechanisms that prevented local people and previously excluded groups from entering the rural policy arena (chapters 3 and 7).

Access to the Dutch partnerships was extremely limited, particularly when compared to the Welsh rural partnerships, and excluded the voluntary and community sector and newly emerged groups and alliances in rural areas. Membership was largely restricted to representatives of large and well established interest organisations. Land use planning absorbed most of the time and energy of meetings and left little time to discuss rural

development projects and programmes. The high level of scientific, environmental and juridical knowledge needed for interest representation in this process marginalised members who were incapable of accessing this resource of professional knowledge and the symbolic capital of being seen as a professional (chapter 3). The centrality of land use planning kept the 'rural development' agenda narrow (chapter 6). The expansion of issues only ran as far as other land use policies: for environmental, nature preservation and water issues.

- **A number of exclusionary mechanisms prevented the inclusion of local citizens and other local groups in the Dutch partnerships.**

The Welsh and Dutch partnerships had the common task of overseeing rural development budgets, but the Dutch partnerships had a unique and totally different task, that of arriving at an alternative land use plan for their area. The decision making process, based on political negotiations that sought to safeguard and advance sectoral or organisational interests, resulted in an inward and defensive attitude that was focused on fellow partnership members and the members' own constituency interests, rather than adopting a more outward and mobilising attitude focused on local groups and people (chapter 6). The research shows that these two tasks of the Dutch rural partnerships – rural development promotion and sectoral policy integration – were mutually incompatible (chapter 7). The latter task influenced the composition and organisation of the Dutch partnerships and the processes followed to such an extent that the former task was completely marginalised. The overriding need for policy integration to develop an alternative land use plan excluded concern with the broader participation of stakeholder groups. Indeed the more interests involved, the more difficult it would have been to accommodate all the competing claims and interests.

- **The Dutch partnerships showed that there can be a tension and incompatibility between encouraging wider participation and constructing the power relations required to realise sectoral policy integration. These tasks required a different rationality of working and a different composition and organisation of partnerships.**

Inclusion as a way of legitimising partnerships in Wales

The Welsh rural partnerships in this study had a lower level of pre-structuring exclusionary mechanisms in place than the Dutch ones, as central or regional government provided less rigid guidelines on who should (or should not) participate. Membership largely reflected the priorities and interests of local government, which selected and invited participants, and this gave rise to more local variation in the membership structure (see chapter 4). The Welsh partnerships were larger, more diverse and generally had more local representation than their Dutch counterparts (chapter 7) and the voluntary sector, previously excluded from decision making fora was universally included.

- **The Welsh rural partnerships included more local people and previously excluded groups, such as the voluntary sector.**

The inclusion and equal participation of the voluntary or 'third' sector was used in Wales and the UK at large as policy rhetoric to legitimise the establishment of a wide range of partnerships in both the rural and other domains (chapters 5 and 7). Inclusion and partnership were seen as two sides of the same coin. Although the Welsh partnerships included more stakeholders, their involvement was more voluntary, they were not obliged to arrive at a common product as they were in the Netherlands. This made these partnerships highly dependent on the willingness of members – not least of the local authority – to really use the partnership as a source for decision making and improved implementation (chapter 5). The sometimes heard complaint of partnerships being 'talking shops' reflected the lack of real involvement of partnership members and/or the local authority and the consequent inability to arrive at any specific achievements (Derkzen, 2007). Chapter 5 also showed that there were considerable differences over a longer period in the way in which a local authority shared decision making with rural partnerships.

- **The possibility of influencing Welsh rural development was highly dependent on the willingness of the local authority to share knowledge and decision making with the rural partnership.**
- **The concern with the democratic legitimacy of Welsh partnerships through the emphasis on inclusion starkly contrasts the sometimes low level of decision making in these partnerships.**

8.2 The meaning of representation

The legitimisation of partnership membership relied heavily on the concept of representation (chapters 4 and 7). Chapter 4 analysed different notions of what it meant to be a representative in the three Welsh case studies, which were selected to reflect the existing differences in rural partnership policies and organisation. Despite this, all three partnerships had a similar mix of representatives from the public, the private and the voluntary sectors. Although the cases were chosen for their variation, the way that partnership members from different sectors viewed their role as a representative was consistent. Some partnership members, especially those from the voluntary sector, expressed a strong responsiveness towards their constituency, acting more as delegates. By contrast, the public sector representatives found it difficult to even think in terms of constituencies and often acted more as trustees or even just on the basis of their own expertise rather than on behalf of others.

- **Despite the variations in the three Welsh cases in terms of partnership composition and the level of decision making, the perceptions of partnership members from different sectors (voluntary, public and private) of their roles were remarkably consistent.**

Organisational elitism

The Welsh cases also showed that contrary to theories of direct or participatory democracy, it was the civic representatives from the voluntary sector who acted most strongly as representatives of others, whereas public sector members saw themselves as acting more as participants rather than as representatives. Public sector members felt freer to act solely on the basis of their own view or expertise. In such cases, the role of a participant can – contrary to the theory of participatory democracy– legitimise and strengthen a free-rider position, most often by public sector members. This confirms Olsson's conclusion of partnerships as being prone to organisational elitism, where the "inter-organizational complexity tends to strengthen the position and influence of organizational elites in relation to the regional community in general, and to their own organization in particular" (Olsson, 2003: 293).

- **The Welsh cases highlight that– contrary to the theory of participatory democracy– the role of participants can legitimise and strengthen a free-rider position of, for example, public sector members.**

However, the general meaning of organisational representation differed considerably between the two countries (chapter 7). In Wales, organisational representation did not have any consequences for the representatives in terms of obligatory structures for communicating with their organisational 'constituency'. In the Netherlands by contrast, representatives were assumed to have a constituency group with whom they would consult outside partnership meetings. Although this guideline for a two-tier system of representation was not always followed, the majority of the Dutch partnership members had and consulted with such a constituency group. Being a representative in the Dutch rural partnerships more closely resembled the notion of a representative as a politician-answerable-to-constituency. The Dutch two-tier system has an accountability mechanism in place that – in principle – can prevent some of the tendencies of organisational elitism.

- **The adoption of a two-tier representation system in the Dutch rural partnerships made these partnerships less prone to organisational elitism than the Welsh partnerships, in which the representational role had no formal accountability mechanism.**

8.3 Modes of power

Power was the other angle of research in this study, and its effects were studied by looking at the modes of power that shaped the partnership processes over time, specifically the strategies and conflicts used in the partnership process.

Core and periphery

Both the Dutch and Welsh rural partnerships showed evidence of containing core and peripheral members (chapters 3, 4, 5, 6). Other partnership research has suggested that this division is due to difference in resources, such as knowledge and financial support (see Taylor, 2000 and chapter 3). This study shows that this is not the only reason. The existence of core and peripheral members was not only a matter of differences in resources but also reflected the level of interest the member/ organisation had in the partnership. Some, potentially resourceful partnership members, could still be found at the periphery because they apparently had little direct interest in the partnership and were indifferent to what happened in the partnership. These partnership members were unmoved by the game (see chapter 5). Despite sufficient resources to participate these members stayed on the periphery. However while their participation in the partnership was largely tokenistic these members might have had other ways to influence rural development.

- **This study shows that the existence of core and periphery members in the rural partnerships was not only a matter of differences in resources for participating but also a matter of whether partnership members were really pursuing an interest.**

Interest and politics

The rural partnership processes in this study exhibited differing levels of decision making in terms of the capacity of the partnerships to make important decisions. This decision making involved the settlement or agreement among partnership members with competing interests and different opinions and values. In chapter 1 we argued that such decision making forms the core of the political aspect of partnerships but only *if there are real interests at stake*. To understand the notion of interest, "it is necessary to see that it is opposed not only to that of disinterestedness or gratuitousness but also to that of *indifference*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 116 emphasis in original). If partnership members are unmoved by the social game in the partnership, or have no real stake *in the partnership* that matters to them, then no decision making is needed and no politics is involved.

- **The existence of politics in partnerships indicates an element of substantive decision making by at least some involved partnership members.**

Indifference and domination

Paradoxically, indifference is not only related to members at the periphery of partnerships but also to those who dominate them. Previous partnership research has often concluded that the public sector is the most resourceful and therefore most powerful player in partnerships (e.g. Edwards et al., 2001). However, framing this conclusion at the sectoral level overlooks an important distinction. There are many public agencies which can be

viewed as part of the public sector, that might be resourceful but which as described above, may also stay at the periphery. There is usually only one public sector body or more accurately, government body, *responsible* for the daily organisation and decision making of the partnership. In the Welsh case studies this was the local authority, in the Dutch case studies this was the province. Enabled by state policy, the rural partnerships are their instruments. It is this government body which is potentially able to dominate the partnership. Power-as-domination we argued in chapter 5 means strongly imposing a sense of 'this is how we do things here'. This can prevent conflict or struggles from arising as it structures the situation so that there is no pay off for others to start a struggle. The differentiated typology of power of Allen (2003) showed that domination displays itself through indifference. A government body dominates the partnership when it shows itself to be indifferent to the partnership process and the decisions reached. It simply chooses not to use the instrument of partnership at that moment in time and ignores whatever the partnership brings to bear. We saw a few examples of domination in chapters 5 and 6.

- **This study shows that the government bodies responsible for the partnerships have the ability to dominate the rural partnerships by being indifferent to the partnership processes and decision making.**

Different modes of power

We used a differentiated topology of power provided by Allen (2003) in order to avoid looking at power solely through the domination – resistance framework. There were instances where the authorities responsible for the rural partnerships were indifferent to the partnership process. This domination and coercion were shown to be highly counter-productive to effective partnership working because of the resistance and indifference it provoked among others. It slowed down partnership dynamics (chapter 5). There were many instances where other modes of power had different effects on the partnership process. The analysis in chapter 5 seems to point to the benefit of more reciprocal modes of power, such as inducement and authority as 'power over' and negotiation and persuasion as 'power to'. These more reciprocal modes of power emphasise mutual recognition of real interest in the partnership: to be really involved in the game and thus in the politics of the partnership, *including those actors that are able to dominate*. That political game can be unpredictable. The choice of government bodies not to be indifferent, therefore, implies an uncertain choice as the partnership process can evolve in unanticipated ways. Power as a relational effect of social interaction shows that the use and effect of resources may be "modified, displaced or disrupted depending upon the relationships that come into play" (Allen, 2003: 97).

- **An analysis of power as dispositional concept in terms of resources might easily lead to 'reading off' the power that actors 'have'. When viewed in relational terms the mediated nature of power becomes more evident. The acknowledgement of its temporal and spatial nature implies the possibility for change and unforeseen dynamics.**

Conflicts and strategies

Conflicts and strategies for using conflicts played an important role in the partnership processes in both the Dutch and Welsh cases (chapter 5 and 6). There are many ways in which conflicts can emerge since the politics of partnership are structured around the systems of antagonism, largely dealing with the management and settlement of conflicts. The possible inclusion of a larger audience in a conflict and the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of larger scale conflicts can often lead to the emergence of strategies for containing conflict. Those who are able to keep conflicts private will use the private sphere to settle them. The opposite strategy is to expand the conflict in order to try to shift the outcome in unanticipated ways. Both strategies were important in the politics of partnership in the cases studied. Attempts to contain the conflict through bilateral negotiations outside the partnership were used in both the Welsh and Dutch cases (chapters 5 and 6). And some clear examples of conflict socialisation were found in the Dutch rural partnership (chapter 6). Conflicts can point to an absence of total domination. They also suggest that there is really something at stake. Conflicts can, therefore, signify fruitful partnership dynamics.

- **Conflicts, politics and power are not necessarily signs of partnership failure or bad partnership management but can be also seen as a reflection of substantive decision making over real political choices. Conflicts, power and politics are also natural features of *collaboration*.**

The discussion of the results from the five papers contained in this thesis has led to a series of conclusions (bulleted and emboldened in this chapter) of how rural partnerships work in Wales and the Netherlands. These conclusions were drawn out through the political perspective that this thesis adopted. The next section reflects on the overall research questions that addressed this perspective.

8.4 Rural partnerships and rural governance

Rural partnerships are now a key instrument in the governance of rural areas. The implementation of rural policy depends heavily on the involvement of local networks containing a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations. This thesis took these rural partnerships as its object of study. It was guided by the following overall research questions, which will be answered below:

In what ways does the study of rural partnerships as political phenomena contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary practice of rural governance in the Netherlands and Wales? And why do we need to study them in context across different countries?

The value of a comparative perspective

- To start with the second question, why is important to study rural partnerships in context and across countries?

The comparative and contextual perspective made it possible to look beyond the general characteristics that are attached to partnerships. Interpretative research departs from the premise that our social categories are constructed and contingent and that any analysis is made valid through its fit with the context and the background understanding in which the studied phenomenon is situated. As such, the interpretative approach generally is more focused on a micro level of analysis. In a comparative view, other and new elements of context and background are highlighted. Taken-for-granted features of Dutch rural partnerships were highlighted and questioned when viewed from the Welsh context. The comparative analysis therefore greatly enriched the micro level of analysis. This level of analysis is still very important (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999; McAvereay, 2006), not only to better understand decision making in rural development (McAvereay, 2006) but also to complement the meso analysis of policy network and governance studies (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999). Hence, this micro analysis of the inside politics and power dynamics of partnerships combined with a macro analysis of the comparative emergence of partnerships within national policies deepens our understanding of policy networks at the meso level that has generally adopted in governance studies.

The value of the political perspective

- In what ways does the study of rural partnerships as political phenomena contribute to understanding the contemporary practice of rural governance?

The political perspective shows that partnerships deal with political choices for rural development and that this political process has a dynamic of its own. The implementation of rural development is therefore also dependent on the partnership dynamics and modes of power that come into play. A political perspective questions the involvement of the non-governmental actors involved, how they are selected (and others not) and highlights the tension between democratic governance and technocratic policy making. Thus the political perspective provides an important addition to existing policy network and multi-level governance studies.

The governance perspective provided a useful framework for describing the changing processes of governing (Stoker, 1998). It pointed to the involvement of multiple actors, multiple levels, decentralisation of responsibility, power dependence and coordination through networks (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). However, the governance perspective has often failed to address or resolve the impact or meaning of this increased complexity and blurring of responsibilities and accountability in terms of exclusionary mechanisms, power distribution or the democratic legitimacy. The governance perspective does not address these issues as it views the implementation of policies as remaining solely the responsibility of the state, regardless of how the process of implementation is shaped. Partnerships therefore are the responsibility of the state and in the case of a governance failure the state assumes political responsibility (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999). The question of democratic legitimacy is situated in the policy itself, which has been approved of and legitimised by the sovereign power of the State (even in the case of European rural development which although initiated from the EU level still

has to be implemented by the state). In this view, once rural policy has been legitimised through the representative/ parliamentary institutions, the process of implementation is merely a technical issue, because “partnership working is primarily seen as a tool to achieve outcomes, driven by the socio-political *requirement* for collaborative governance” (Sherlock et al., 2004: 663 emphasis in original). Hence, such a view does not see any democratic or political questions around partnerships as governments have legitimately decided who participates.

Sustained by the micro analysis of the processes within partnerships (in chapters 3 to 6), it is argued here that the choice of decentralising some *substantive* decision making power to rural partnerships implies that politics is also partially decentralised. Thus rural partnerships embody the promise for “agents to mobilize other resources, other sets of interests and to shift the line of discretionary judgment in unanticipated and unforeseen ways” (Allen, 2003: 14 see chapter 5). The state cannot be assumed to take full political responsibility for decisions made by other actors in rural partnerships if it has a limited capacity to control the partnerships (Berger, 2003: 221). In contrast to the governance perspective, the conclusion here is that legitimacy obtained beforehand at the national level for the policies for which a partnership is used is not sufficient to secure the legitimacy of the partnership process itself.

Thus the governance perspective needs to be complemented with a political analysis that does address these political questions. The concepts of governance as “‘inclusion of wider parts of the society’ and ‘multi-level government involvement’ (...) are not sufficient to explain the different democratic aspects of governance (responsibility and accountability for policy decisions” (Berger, 2003: 228). The false neutrality over the political nature of this ‘working together’ of a sometimes apparently arbitrary collection of individuals, creates a blind spot about the power relations and democratic aspects of *rural partnerships as decision making arenas in their own right*.

Rural partnerships have contributed to the contestation of the hegemonic position of agricultural interests in rural areas. The closed agricultural policy community has been opened and rural partnerships, as new and more plural institutions, have created opportunities for democratising the policy process in the rural domain. However, there is a tendency for a new generation of closed policy communities to emerge, in the form of these rural partnerships. These rural partnerships generally have no or weak rules for access to partnerships over time, or for the length of time a member can be in the partnership. There are limited accountability mechanisms for partnership members and a limited responsiveness to the public or region at large. The democratising effect of establishing these partnerships for rural development will not last if consideration is not given to the democratic governance of these partnerships over time.

Although the state might not be able to take full responsibility for the substantive political decisions taken by the actors in partnerships, it can and should take responsibility for the

procedures to ensure their democratic governance. Rural partnerships should be seen as political arenas that deserve their own democratic rules and procedures including *after their establishment* by the government. Whereas the state is now mainly concerned with the structure of governance it can no longer ignore the process and time related issues, such as access by new groups and the uneven distribution of power. The state needs to ensure the democratic governance of rural partnerships through *taking more responsibility for the quality of decision making processes* in these partnerships *over time*.

8.5 Future research

As others have shown (Greer 2005) the implementation of the relatively uniform CAP and agricultural policies at the national level differs greatly between members states and depends highly on enduring national policy contexts. The use of local partnership in rural policy implies even more diversity in the implementation of rural development within countries. From a European policy perspective, this is precisely the goal of using local partnerships: to allow more spatial differentiation based upon appropriate adaptation to local situations. However, the extent to which the use of local partnerships really helps to improve adaptation to local needs is highly dependent on the relation of the partnership with the 'local situation'. Rural development can be enhanced or blocked by local politics, domination in partnerships, limited access to partnerships and the absence of local mobilisation and decision making. Much will depend on the dynamics in a rural partnership, which can nurture local development and innovation, block new initiatives or have a mixed influence. Acknowledging that rural partnerships are decision making arenas in their own right justifies ongoing assessment of partnership processes. The working of local rural partnerships therefore deserves special research attention.

Further research of the decision making processes of rural partnerships is needed firstly because the partnerships will continue to be a prominent instrument in European rural development policies. The progressive increase of funding becoming available under the Rural Development Regulation of the Common Agricultural Policy in the current programming period and the mainstreaming of the bottom-up, participatory approach of the LEADER Initiative imply that more funding will be influenced by rural partnerships in the near future.

Secondly, comparative analysis of decision making processes in rural partnerships could usefully be broadened to include more European countries. This study was based on two countries which had similar partnership approaches in that the rural partnerships were implementing both European rural policies and domestic policies. In other countries this convergence of interests might be absent and may give rise to different approaches to partnership. Moreover, the inclusion of other countries, particularly from southern and eastern Europe, would be interesting as these countries have different political cultures. Despite many differences between them, the Netherlands and Wales share some features of political culture which are likely to give partnerships more prominence as decision making fora compared to other countries.

Hence thirdly, future research might usefully also consider rural politics outside the rural partnership arenas. This study focussed solely on rural partnerships as these were a prominent and novel aspect within local rural policy. The way in which these rural partnerships relate to other formal or informal arenas and local politics was beyond the scope of this research but is certainly important in any further elaboration or analysis of rural governance. We saw for example that while some partnership members had sufficient resources to participate, they stayed at the periphery, implying that for them the rural partnership was not the only decision making platform. These partnership members who chose to stay at the periphery might have had other ways of influencing decision making over rural development. The interplay of different local arenas and partnerships and the local informal networks of people from different organisations who possibly meet in many other situations could provide an interesting future avenue for micro level analysis.

Fourthly, there are still very few studies which analyse partnership processes and rural development implementation from a longitudinal perspective. Such a temporal perspective is greatly needed to address the issues of democratic governance over time, since group dynamics might lead to a new generation of closed policy communities. Moreover, in analogue to a film or a picture, a time perspective is less prone to the possibility of essentialism which can emerge from an (interview-based) snap-shot view.

Finally, the possible influence of rurality on rural partnerships is hard to draw out when comparing rural with rural. Research that compares rural partnerships with urban ones might further deepen our understanding of what it is that is particularly rural about rural governance.

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Summary

All over Europe a 'partnership' approach to rural development has emerged in recent years. Rural policy is increasingly negotiated and delivered at a decentralised level in more or less formalised networks of relevant organisations that encompass governmental and societal actors. Such European policies for rural areas, which have only emerged quite recently, are broader than agricultural policies. For decades, European rural policy consisted solely of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a policy exclusively aimed at increasing agricultural production. While within CAP the modest incremental reforms in agricultural policies did not allow for a broader rural remit until the mid-late 1990s, the reforms of the Structural Funds from 1988 onwards reflected a new approach from the European Commission, in which the specificity of rural problems and the heterogeneity of rural contexts within the Union's territory was acknowledged (Ray, 1998; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). To accommodate the involvement of local actors, the principle of 'partnership' was introduced for Structural Funds with a rural remit such as Objectives 5b and 1 and later for communitarian initiatives such as LEADER and INTERREG.

The principle of partnership implied the introduction of a territorial rather than a sectoral approach and a more direct, decentralised relation between the European Commission, governments and other regional and local actors. Since the nineties, the emergence of a broad conception of 'integrated and sustainable rural development' led to "values about the active participation of stakeholders" coming to play a more prominent role than "the closed and exclusionary policy process in agriculture" (Greer, 2005: 120). Despite extensive literature on partnerships in the UK and the Netherlands, there are no comparative studies of rural partnerships in these two countries. By adopting a comparative analysis of partnerships in these two countries this thesis aims to deepen our understanding of what rural partnerships and broader, rural governance mean in practice.

Partnerships are said to play a central role in the emergent culture of 'governance' that now receives much theoretical attention (Jones and Little, 2000). The governance debate of the last decade has much relevance for the social political organisation of the countryside in the Netherlands and the UK. Rural areas have been "deeply affected" by changes which are commonly seen as stemming from a shift from 'government to governance' (Goodwin, 1998: 6; Stoker, 1998). The governance debate has clearly contributed to the identification of changes in government policies and strategies for the rural domain. In summary, the fragmentation of public power among different levels of government has become more evident. Second, the governance perspective has pointed to the emergent arrangements that encourage the formulation and implementation of policies at the regional or local level and third, it has highlighted the increased reliance on novel forms of consultation and methods of inclusion, such as networks and deliberation (Meehan, 2003: 2).

There are, however, a few major shortcomings in the existing theories of governance. First of all, the notion of governance has lost much of its analytical strength simply because it is now widely employed by governments (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 41; Bang, 2003, CEC, 2001). Secondly, the policy network and multi-level governance literature tended to focus on issues of efficiency and network management and on problems in policy delivery and implementation (Klijn et al., 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Heffen et al., 2000). Much of this literature, therefore lacks a more political-democratic analysis. Thirdly, the governance literature has paid little attention to the possible tensions between the *inherent* political nature of decision making processes (Mouffe, 2000) *viz a viz* the explicit consensus building rationality for partnerships in (rural) policies (Westholm et al., 1999). The governance debate, therefore, needs to be extended with other, more critical, concepts to study these 'new' social phenomena (Goodwin, 1998; Bang, 2003; Berger, 2003). To achieve this we need concepts that are sensitive to the political nature of the instrument of partnership.

The objective of this study then is to explore the policy instrument of 'partnership' for rural policies in the Netherlands and Wales *from a political perspective*. The objective led to two broad exploratory questions which guided the research in this thesis:

In what ways does the study of rural partnerships as political phenomena contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary practice of rural governance in the Netherlands and Wales? And why do we need to study them in context across different countries?

The exploration of these questions took place in a continuous iterative process of empirical work and theoretical reflection through which the political perspective was gradually operationalised into concepts which were 'put to work empirically' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). From this iterative process five papers evolved that make up the core chapters of this thesis. The political perspective was elaborated along two different angles. First, the relationship between the rural partnerships and democratic legitimacy in terms of the possibility of participation and the meaning of representation was explored (chapter 3 and 4). The second angle that developed from the political perspective was a focus on how power relations shape partnership processes and how power struggles develop over time (chapter 5 and 6).

The principal methods drawn upon in this qualitative study were interviews, document analysis and observation. The process of case selection in the Netherlands and Wales developed quite differently. For the study of rural partnerships in the Netherlands, the Reconstruction Policy became a point of entry. I participated in a research project focused on partnerships for Reconstruction Policy in the province of Gelderland. The Achterhoek region was selected as an 'extreme case' within the rural partnerships; some loosely organised citizens had gained access to the partnerships there that elsewhere were exclusively based on organisational representation. In Achterhoek, there were four partnerships organised in a hierarchy (regional and sub-regional). The main and two sub-

regional level partnerships were studied and the participation of these 'community representatives' was closely followed.

In Wales, I chose to study partnerships operating under the Rural Community Action Scheme of the Welsh Assembly through which the criteria were met which were formulated for partnership selection. At the same time, some of these rural partnerships were also involved in European Structural Funding such as Objective One. The eleven partnerships under this scheme had a rural remit, operated at the local county level, had a statutory position and needed a mix of representatives to contain a broad cross-section of people and organisations. Further criteria were the date of establishment and the variation in the leading organisation of the rural partnerships. The partnerships studied in Wales were the rural partnerships in Carmarthenshire, Conwy and The Vale of Glamorgan.

The first paper, **Chapter 3**, addresses the question of how professional identity and knowledge shape participation in the rural partnership of Achterhoek. In contrast to the dichotomy between 'professional' and 'citizen' that can be found in the literature, we argue that professional identity is a multi-layered construct. Moreover, professional identity can be seen a source of political capital. We conclude that it is not just civic or community representatives who are unable to access all the relevant layers of professionalism. Partnership members from small interest organisations also lack the professionalism that stems from scientific knowledge. Even when these actors have access to scientific knowledge, only a few of them can identify with and align themselves with the dominant discourse. Community representatives are particularly prone to question the legitimacy of the professionalism that dominates such partnerships. They are proud of their experiential knowledge and draw on this to contest professionalism, which they disapprove of. If the governance of local partnerships is to be a bottom-up process more lay people and local inhabitants need to be involved. Their experiential knowledge could bring about a cultural change in governance that goes beyond the current decentralisation of decision-making to the local level.

Chapter 4 analyses the questions how the concept of representation is used in rural partnerships and how partnership members in the three case studies in Wales gave meaning to their representative role. Partnerships are a newly emergent form of governance, in which the presence of different governmental and non-governmental organisations reflects – quite literally – the blurred boundaries of state and civil society. This makes it difficult to assess the legitimacy of partnerships and how they relate to the political-democratic system of a country. Governmental discourses and policies about partnerships often use 'representation' to democratically legitimise these new governance structures. But what does this mean in practice and how does it guide the actions of partnership members? Our analysis reveals important nuances in how four types of representatives (from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors) differ in their perceived duties and attitude towards their constituencies. The voluntary sector representatives act more like delegates and express the strongest sense of responsibility

towards the people they represent. Others, such as members from the public sector, act more like trustees and believe that a mandate implies a certain level of independence and reliance on their expertise. These nuances are later illustrated from a different angle when respondents comment about their roles as participants and/or representatives. The majority of respondents attributed positive aspects to being a participant and negative ones to being a representative. They thought that participants were more active and better able to contribute to the common goal of the partnership. This gives rise to a paradox as framing the role of participant in this way also involves downplaying their own organisational 'self' interest, yet as we show it is those members with the clearest organisational interest in the partnership who most strongly advocate participation over representation.

Chapter 5 analyses the question of how different modes of power shaped social interaction in the rural partnership of Carmarthenshire. In Britain, and Wales particularly, inclusion and equal opportunities for all became key principles guiding the work of the many partnerships that were established at the beginning of this century. In this paper we argue that power is an important constitutive element of the politics of partnership which should not be overlooked through too much emphasis on equality and consensus. What we demonstrate, using a differentiated topology of power (Allen, 2003), is the effect that different modes of power, at different times, can have on social interaction and the process of partnership working. Although inequality in terms of resources existed in our study, we show that effective partnership working was enhanced at times when more reciprocal modes of power were used. We conclude, therefore, that an analysis of power based on resources alone is limited because the use and effect of resources may be "modified, displaced or disrupted depending upon the relationships that come into play" (Allen, 2003: 97). Hence, there is a need for more research on power struggles and conflicts in partnerships over time. Only then it is possible to see how and when differences in resources affect social interaction and result in different levels of (in)equality. A partnership cannot be seen simply as an indirect instrument of a dominant government actor to control organizations and individuals.

Chapter 6, analyses the meaning of 'integrated rural policy' in the rural partnership of Achterhoek and the strategies that were used within the politics of integration. Partnerships for rural development are often presented and seen as powerful ways of promoting 'integration'. This paper examines the reality of this claim, first by analysing what 'integration' means and then by presenting a case study of a Dutch rural partnership which shows how 'integration' was diluted by the 'politics of sectoring'. In this case study 'integration' was taken to mean harmonising sectoral policies for the physical environment and to imply the integration of competing land use claims. Representatives of different policy sectors sought to safeguard and advance their sectoral objectives through a number of strategies, including expanding conflicts to other playing fields and containing conflicts through private settlement. The interplay of these interests created a paradoxical outcome. The existing sectoral policies were maintained and 'integration' was achieved

through the spatial separation of the most conflicting land uses, those of intensive husbandry farming and protecting nature. The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture sees such partnerships as a good example of 'integrated rural policy' but the example shows that the integration of existing sectoral policies for the physical environment has little to do with the achievement of wider socio-economic objectives.

Chapter 7 analyses the specific composition and organisation of rural partnerships in the Netherlands and Wales and seeks to explain these differences in terms of the policy contexts. Both Wales and the Netherlands have seen similar trends towards more decentralised and territorial modes of rural governance in which policy networks of governmental and societal actors work together at a local or regional level to further rural development. Such networks are called 'partnerships' in English and 'gebiedscommissies' in Dutch. The differences in the composition and organisation of rural partnerships in these two countries are attributed to the differences in the policy context in each country. Four policy factors are identified as contributing to the specific approach to partnership adopted in the two countries. The review sustains the presumption that in Dutch rural partnerships the integration discourse is more important than the participation discourse, which is more prominent in Wales.

Chapter 8 integrates the results, discussion and conclusions of the various papers in this study. The first set of conclusions is that the rural partnerships in this study fulfilled the expectation of wider inclusion of rural interests beyond agriculture. Particularly the Welsh rural partnerships included more local people and previously excluded groups such as the voluntary sector. In the Dutch rural partnerships other than agricultural interests were included but, a number of exclusionary mechanisms prevented the further inclusion of local citizens and other local groups.

Secondly, the concern with the democratic legitimacy of Welsh partnerships through the emphasis on inclusion starkly contrasts the sometimes low levels of decision making in these partnerships. The possibility to influence Welsh rural development was highly dependent on the willingness of the local authority to share knowledge and decision making with the rural partnership. In contrast, the level of decision making in terms of the capacity to make important decisions, was higher in the Dutch partnerships, but there was less concern with inclusion. What is more, the Dutch cases show that there can be a tension and incompatibility between encouraging wider participation and constructing the power relations necessary to realise sectoral policy integration. Both tasks require a different rationality of working and assume different composition, organization of and processes in partnerships.

Thirdly, contrary to the variations in the three Welsh cases in terms of partnership composition and the level of decision making, the role perceptions of partnership members of different types of organisations (of the voluntary, public, private sector) were remarkably consistent over the three cases. The Welsh cases also showed that contrary to

theories of direct or participatory democracy, it was the civic representatives from the voluntary sector who acted most strongly as representatives of others, whereas public sector members saw themselves as acting more as participants rather than as representatives. Public sector members felt freer to act solely on the basis of their own view or expertise. In such cases, the role of a participant can – contrary to the theory of participatory democracy – legitimise and strengthen a free-rider position and enhance organisational elitism. The adoption of a two-tier representation system in the Dutch rural partnerships, made these partnerships less prone to such organisational elitism than the Welsh counterparts, in which the representational role had no formal accountability mechanism.

Fourthly, this study shows that the existence of core and periphery members in the rural partnerships was not only a matter of differences in resources for participating but also a matter of whether partnership members were really pursuing an interest, including the leading organisation, often a government body. This study shows that the government bodies responsible for the partnerships have the ability to dominate the rural partnerships by being indifferent to the partnership processes and decision making. However, when they refrain from indifference, the existence of politics in partnerships can indicate an element of substantive decision making of at least some involved partnership members.

The final set of conclusions from the five chapters is that conflicts, politics and power are not necessarily signs of partnership failure or bad partnership management but can be also seen as a reflection of substantive decision making over real political choices. Conflicts, power and politics are also natural features of *collaboration*. An analysis of power as dispositional concept in terms of resources might easily lead to 'reading off' the power that actors 'have'. When viewed in relational terms the mediated nature of power becomes more evident. The acknowledgement of its temporal and spatial nature implies the possibility for change and unforeseen dynamics.

In reflection to the overall research questions from which this thesis departed, the comparative and contextual perspective made it possible to look beyond the general characteristics that are attached to partnerships. The comparative analysis therefore greatly enriched the micro level of analysis. This level of analysis is still very important (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999; McAverey, 2006), not only to better understand decision making in rural development (McAverey, 2006) but also to complement the meso analysis of policy network and governance studies (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999). Hence, this micro analysis of the inside politics and power dynamics of partnerships combined with a macro analysis of the comparative emergence of partnerships within national policies deepens our understanding of policy networks at the meso level that has generally adopted in governance studies.

Secondly, the political perspective shows that partnerships deal with political choices for rural development and that this political process has a dynamic of its own. The

implementation of rural development is therefore also dependent on the partnership dynamics and modes of power that come into play. A political perspective questions the involvement of the non-governmental actors, how they are selected (and others not) and highlights the tension between democratic governance and technocratic policy making. Thus the political perspective provides an important addition to existing policy network and multi-level governance studies.

Rural partnerships have contributed to the contestation of the hegemonic position of agricultural interests in rural areas. The closed agricultural policy community has been opened and rural partnerships, as new and more plural institutions, have created opportunities for democratising the policy process in the rural domain. However, there is a tendency for a new generation of closed policy communities to emerge, in the form of these rural partnerships. These rural partnerships generally have no or weak rules for access to partnerships over time, or for the length of time a member can be in the partnership. There are limited accountability mechanisms for partnership members and a limited responsiveness to the public or region at large. The democratising effect of establishing these partnerships for rural development will not last if consideration is not given to the democratic governance of these partnerships over time.

Although the state might not be able to take full responsibility for the substantive political decisions taken by the actors in partnerships, it can and should take responsibility for the procedures to ensure their democratic governance. Rural partnerships should be seen as political arenas that deserve their own democratic rules and procedures including *after their establishment* by the government. Whereas the state is now mainly concerned with the structure of governance it can no longer ignore the process and time related issues, such as access by new groups and the uneven distribution of power. The state needs to ensure the democratic governance of rural partnerships through *taking more responsibility for the quality of decision making processes* in these partnerships *over time*.

Samenvatting

Europese plattelandontwikkeling wordt de laatste jaren steeds vaker uitonderhandeld en uitgevoerd op decentraal niveau in min of meer geformaliseerde netwerken van relevante maatschappelijke organisaties en overheden. Een voorbeeld hiervan in Nederland is een gebiedscommissie op regionaal niveau. In het Engels worden deze commissies aangeduid als 'partnerships'. Deze nieuwe trend heeft ook voor verbreding van landbouwbeleid naar plattelandsbeleid gezorgd. Tot aan midden jaren negentig van de vorige eeuw waren de voortdurende hervormingsrondes van het Gemeenschappelijk Landbouw Beleid (GLB) niet gericht op bredere plattelandontwikkeling. Echter, de hervormingen van de Structuurfondsen vanaf 1988 gaven de Europese Commissie wel ruimte voor een nieuwe benadering, waarbij erkend werd dat het platteland specifieke plattelandsproblemen kent en bovendien dat plattelandsgebieden in Europa zeer verschillend zijn. Om aan deze heterogeniteit recht te doen werd samenwerking in *partnership* geïntroduceerd zodat lokale organisaties en mensen bij beleid betrokken konden worden. Het *partnership* principe werd geïntroduceerd voor de Structuurfondsen van Doelstelling 5b en 1 en later ook voor de commanditaire initiatieven zoals LEADER en INTERREG en ten slotte voor de tweede pijler van het GLB voor plattelandontwikkeling.

De invoering van samenwerking in gebiedscommissies betekende de introductie van een territoriale in plaats van een sectorale benadering van plattelandsbeleid en een meer directe relatie tussen de Europese Commissie en regionale en lokale actoren. Aldus ontstond vanaf de jaren negentig een bredere conceptualisering van landbouwbeleid richting 'geïntegreerde en duurzame plattelandontwikkeling'. Daarbij werden 'waarden over de actieve participatie van belanghebbenden' belangrijker ten opzichte van 'de gesloten en uitsluitende beleidsprocessen in de landbouw' (Greer, 2005: 120 mijn vertaling). Ondanks veel wetenschappelijke literatuur over *partnerships* in Groot Britannie en over gebiedscommissies in Nederland zijn er nog geen vergelijkende studies gedaan tussen deze twee landen. Dit proefschrift tracht ons begrip van deze gebiedscommissies op het platteland en meer in het algemeen van nieuwe vormen van plattelandsbestuur te verdiepen door een vergelijkende analyse.

Partnerships als nieuwe trend spelen een centrale rol binnen het theoretische 'governance' debat. *Governance* refereert hierbij aan nieuwe vormen van bestuur op het snijvlak van overheid, maatschappij en markt. Dit debat is relevant voor de studie van de sociaal-politieke organisatie van het platteland in Nederland en Groot Britannie. Van plattelandsgebieden wordt gezegd dat deze diepgaand beïnvloed zijn door veranderingen in het denken over overheidssturing en bestuur (Goodwin, 1998:6; Stoker,1998). Samenvattend gaat het ten eerste om toenemende fragmentatie van publieke macht over verschillende overheidslagen, omhoog richting EU en omlaag richting lokale overheden. Ten tweede heeft het *governance* perspectief geleid tot aandacht voor nieuwe arrangementen welke de formulering en implementatie van beleid op regionaal en lokaal niveau aanmoedigen (zoals gebiedscommissies). Ten derde benadrukt het *governance*

perspectief de opkomst van nieuwe vormen van inspraak en methoden om mensen te betrekken zoals in netwerken en deliberatie vormen (Meehan, 2003: 2).

De huidige *governance* theorieën hebben echter een aantal tekortkomingen. Ten eerste, wordt de notie van 'nieuw (en beter) bestuur' ook veelvuldig door overheden zelf gebruikt waardoor veel van de analytische waarde van dit concept verloren gaat (Bevir en Rhodes, 2003: 41; Bang, 2003; CEC, 2001). Ten tweede, literatuur op het gebied van *governance* heeft zich voornamelijk gericht op vraagstukken van efficiëntie en netwerk management en op problemen in de beleidsuitvoering (Klijn et al., 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Heffen et al., 2000). Veel van deze literatuur mist daardoor een meer politiekdemocratische analyse. Ten derde schenkt de *governance* literatuur weinig aandacht aan de spanning tussen het *inherent* politieke van besluitvorming (Mouffe, 2000) versus de expliciete consensus doelstelling van gebiedscommissies (Westholm et al., 1999). Het *governance* debat behoeft daarom uitbreiding met meer kritische concepten (Goodwin, 1998; Bang, 2003; Berger 2003). Om dit te bereiken hebben we concepten nodig die relateren aan het politieke van besluitvorming in het bestuderen van het instrument gebiedscommissie/*partnership*.

De doelstelling van deze studie is dan ook om het beleidsinstrument *partnership* /gebiedscommissie voor plattelandsbeleid te verkennen in Nederland en Wales vanuit een politiek perspectief. De doelstelling leidde tot twee verkennende vragen die het onderzoek richting gaven:

Op welke manieren draagt de studie van gebiedscommissies op het platteland als politieke fenomenen bij aan een dieper begrip van de huidige praktijk van bestuur voor het platteland in Nederland en Wales? En; waarom is het nodig dit te bestuderen op het micro niveau en in meerdere landen?

Het politieke perspectief is langs twee lijnen uitgewerkt in vijf artikelen. Ten eerste is de relatie tussen de gebiedscommissies en democratische legitimiteit in termen van de mogelijkheid tot participatie en de betekenis van vertegenwoordiging onderzocht (hoofdstuk 3 en 4). Ten tweede is onderzocht hoe machtsrelaties de processen in gebiedscommissies beïnvloeden en hoe machtsstrijd zich door de tijd heen ontwikkeld (hoofdstuk 5 en 6).

De belangrijkste methoden in deze studie zijn interviews, documenten analyse en observatie. Het proces van casus selectie verliep anders in Nederland dan in Wales. Voor Nederland was Reconstructiebeleid de ingang voor casus selectie. Ik participeerde als onderzoeker in een onderzoeksproject gericht op vrouwenparticipatie in gebiedscommissies voor Reconstructiebeleid in de provincie Gelderland. Uit dit onderzoek bleek dat de Achterhoek een 'extreme casus' was in vergelijking met andere Reconstructie gebiedscommissies. In de Achterhoek hadden enkele ongeorganiseerde burgers (enkele plattelandsvrouwen) toegang gekregen tot gebiedscommissies terwijl elders deze commissies louter uit georganiseerde belangenvertegenwoordiging bestonden. Drie van

de vier commissies in de Achterhoek zijn onderzocht; de overkoepelende commissie voor het hele gebied en twee van de drie streekcommissies daaronder. Daarbij is gekeken naar het functioneren van de commissies als geheel en naar de participatie van deze 'burger' vertegenwoordigers.

In Wales heb ik gekozen voor bestudering van *partnerships* die vielen onder het 'Rural Community Action' beleid van de Welsh Assembly. De elf *partnerships* die onder Rural Community Action vielen waren gericht op het platteland, opereerden op lokaal overheidsniveau en waren ingesteld door de overheid. Sommige van deze *partnerships* waren tezelfdertijd ook een *partnership* voor Europese Structuurfondsen zoals Doelstelling 1. Na een telefonische interviewronde met al deze gebieden viel de uiteindelijke keuze op de gebiedscommissies van Carmarthenshire, Conwy en The Vale of Glamorgan.

Het eerste artikel, **Hoofdstuk 3**, richt zich op de vraag hoe professionele identiteit en kennis de participatie in de gebiedscommissies van de Achterhoek bepalen. We beargumenteren dat professionele identiteit meerdere lagen heeft, in tegenstelling tot de dichotomie van 'professional' en 'burger' in de literatuur. Bovendien kan professionele identiteit een bron van politiek kapitaal zijn. We concluderen dat het niet alleen de burger vertegenwoordigers zijn die geen toegang hebben tot alle lagen van professionaliteit. Gebiedscommissieleden van kleinere belangenorganisaties missen ook het type professionaliteit dat verbonden is met gebruik van wetenschappelijke kennis. En zelfs als deze leden toegang hebben tot wetenschappelijke kennis, dan kunnen slechts enkelen zich identificeren met het dominante discours in de commissies gericht op landbouw en milieu. Het waren vooral de burger vertegenwoordigers die de legitimiteit van het dominant professionalisme aan de kaak stelden. Zij waren trots op hun ervaringskennis en zij verwezen hierna als zij het dominante professionalisme betwistten. Meer legitimatie van hun ervaringskennis zou een verandering in bestuurscultuur teweeg kunnen brengen die verder gaat dan de huidige decentralisatie van besluitvorming naar het regionale niveau.

Hoofdstuk 4 analyseert de vragen; hoe het concept van vertegenwoordiging wordt gebruikt in *partnerships* en hoe de partnership leden in de drie cases in Wales betekenis gaven aan hun vertegenwoordigingsrol. De combinatie van overheidspartijen en belangenorganisaties in *partnerships* maakt het lastig om de legitimiteit van deze commissies te beoordelen binnen de bestaande politiek democratische verhoudingen. Het overheidsbeleid met betrekking tot *partnerships* gebruikt vaak 'vertegenwoordiging' om de democratische legitimiteit van deze nieuwe structuren te onderstrepen. Maar wat betekent vertegenwoordiging in de praktijk en hoe wordt het handelen van commissieleden er door bepaald? Onze analyse laat belangrijke nuance verschillen zien in hoe vier type vertegenwoordigers (vanuit de overheid, het bedrijfsleven, de gemeenschap en het vrijwilligerswerk/lokale ngo's) hun plichten en houding ten opzichte van hun achterban opvatten. Vertegenwoordigers uit het vrijwilligerswerk handelen meer als een afgevaardigde en uiten het sterkst een gevoel van verantwoordelijkheid naar de mensen

die zij vertegenwoordigen. Anderen, zoals commissieleden vanuit de overheid handelen meer als gevolmachtigde en geloven dat een vertegenwoordigingsmandaat inhoudt dat er een niveau van onafhankelijkheid en eigen expertise nodig is voor hun rol. Deze nuances worden opnieuw geïllustreerd vanuit een andere invalshoek als de respondenten in de drie cases gevraagd wordt wat ze vinden van de rol van participant versus die van vertegenwoordiger. De meerderheid van de respondenten schrijft positieve kenmerken toe aan de rol van participant en negatieve kenmerken aan de rol van vertegenwoordiger. Zij vinden participanten actiever en beter in staat om een bijdrage te leveren aan het gemeenschappelijk doel van een *partnership*. Dit leidt tot de paradox dat, hoewel allen vertegenwoordiger zijn, zij in meerderheid zichzelf zien als participant waarmee ze hun eigen (organisatorisch) belang lijken bagatelliseren. Echter, we laten zien dat juist de leden met het duidelijkste organisatie belang in de *partnership* het sterkst de rol van participant voorstaan.

Hoofdstuk 5 analyseert de vraag hoe verschillende vormen van macht de sociale interactie bepaalt in een *partnership* in Carmarthenshire. In Groot Brittannië en in het bijzonder in Wales was de filosofie van inclusiviteit en gelijke kansen sterk verbonden aan de vele *partnerships* die werden ingesteld. In dit artikel beargumenteren we dat macht een belangrijk vormend element is in de politiek van een *partnership*, welke niet over het hoofd gezien moet worden door teveel nadruk op gelijkheid en consensus. Wat we laten zien, door toepassing van een gedifferentieerde typologie van machtsvormen (Allen, 2003), is het effect dat verschillende machtsvormen, op verschillende momenten, kunnen hebben op de sociale interactie en het werkproces in een *partnership*. Hoewel ongelijkheid in machtbronnen ook bestond in onze studie, laten we zien dat effectieve samenwerking werd vergroot in tijden waarin meer wederkerige vormen macht werden gebruikt. We concluderen daarom dat een machtsanalyse gebaseerd op kennis van machtsbronnen alleen, te beperkt is. Het gebruik en het effect van machtsbronnen kan immers worden “veranderd, verschoven of ontwricht afhankelijk van de relaties die ontstaan” (Allen, 2003: 97 mijn vertaling). Er is daarom meer onderzoek nodig naar machtsstrijd en conflict in *partnerships* gedurende langere perioden. Alleen dan is het mogelijk om te zien hoe en wanneer verschillen in machtsbronnen de sociale interactie beïnvloeden en resulteren in verschillende niveaus van (on)gelijkheid. Een *partnership* kan niet simpelweg worden gezien als een indirect instrument van een dominante overheid ter controle van organisaties en individuen.

Hoofdstuk 6 analyseert de betekenis van ‘integraal plattelandsbeleid’ in de Reconstructie-gebiedscommissie in de Achterhoek en daarnaast de strategieën die gebruikt werden in het politieke spel om tot integratie te komen. Gebiedscommissies worden vaak gepresenteerd als krachtige instrumenten om te komen tot ‘integratie’. Dit artikel onderzoekt de realiteitswaarde van deze claim, eerst door te analyseren wat ‘integratie’ betekent en vervolgens door presentatie van de Achterhoekse casus waarin ‘integratie’ verwaterde door ‘sectorale politiek’. ‘Integratie’ in deze casus betekende de harmonisatie van sectoraal omgevingsbeleid en betekende dus ook de integratie van

concurrerende claims voor landgebruik. In het proces van integratie probeerden de commissieleden als vertegenwoordigers van verschillende beleidssectoren hun sectorale belang juist veilig te stellen en te bevorderen. Zij gebruikten daarvoor een groot aantal strategieën, waaronder de uitbreiding van conflict naar andere speelvelden en het bedwingen van conflict buiten het publieke domein. De wisselwerking van deze belangen en strategieën creëerde een paradoxale uitkomst. Het bestaande sectorale beleid bleef in stand en 'integratie' werd bereikt door de ruimtelijke scheiding van de meest conflicterende claims voor landgebruik; die van intensieve veehouderij en van natuurbescherming. Het Ministerie van LNV ziet deze gebiedscommissies als een goed voorbeeld van 'integraal plattelandsbeleid'. Het voorbeeld laat echter zien dat integratie van bestaand sectoraal omgevingsbeleid weinig van doen heeft met andersoortige integratie zoals het behalen van sociaaleconomische doelstellingen en het bevorderen van leefbaarheid op andere vlakken.

Hoofdstuk 7 analyseert de specifieke samenstelling en organisatie van *partnerships* in Nederland en Wales en probeert de verschillen te verklaren vanuit de respectievelijke beleidscontexten in beide landen. In beide landen bestaat de trend naar meer decentraal en gebiedsgericht plattelandsbeleid in Nederland middels de 'gebiedscommissie' en in Wales middels *rural partnerships*. De verschillen in samenstelling en organisatie van deze gebiedscommissies in de twee landen worden toegeschreven aan de verschillen in de beleidscontext in elk land. Er worden vier beleidsfactoren geïdentificeerd die bijdragen aan de specifieke benadering van 'partnership' in de twee landen. Dit overzicht ondersteunt de veronderstelling dat in de Nederlandse gebiedscommissies, het meer gaat over integratie van beleid dan over participatie en de inclusiviteit van nieuwe groepen of mensen terwijl dit laatste juist belangrijker is in Wales.

Hoofdstuk 8 integreert de resultaten, discussie en conclusies van de verschillende artikelen in deze studie. De eerste set conclusies stelt dat de gebiedscommissies in deze studie de verwachting van vergrootte inclusiviteit van belangen naast landbouw waarmaakt. In het bijzonder de *partnerships* in Wales bevatte meer lokale mensen en meer voorheen uitgesloten groepen zoals organisaties uit het vrijwilligerswerk en lokale ngo's. De Nederlandse gebiedscommissies bevatte andere dan landbouw belangen maar een aantal uitsluitingmechanismen voorkwam de verdere inclusie van meer lokale burgers en lokale ngo's.

Ten tweede, de bezorgdheid in Wales over de democratische legitimiteit die tot uiting kwam in een sterke nadruk op inclusiviteit contrasteert sterk met de soms gebrekkige mogelijkheid tot besluitvorming in deze *partnerships*. De mogelijkheid tot invloed in Welse plattelandsontwikkeling was in hoge mate afhankelijk van de bereidheid van de lokale overheid kennis en besluitvorming te delen met de *partnership*. In de Nederlandse gebiedscommissies daarentegen was het niveau van besluitvorming hoger; meer belangrijke beslissingen werden door de gebiedscommissie genomen. Aan de andere kant was hier minder bezorgdheid over brede participatie en inclusiviteit. Bovendien laten de

Nederlandse cases zien dat er een spanning en onverenigbaarheid kan bestaan tussen de aanmoediging van bredere participatie en de constructie van machtsrelaties die nodig zijn om te onderhandelen over sectorale beleidsintegratie. Beide taken vragen een geheel andere rationaliteit van werken en veronderstellen een verschillende samenstelling, een andere organisatie en andere processen in de gebiedscommissie.

Ten derde, de roloppvattingen van *partnership* leden van verschillende soorten organisaties (overheid, bedrijfsleven en vrijwilligerswerk/lokale ngo's) was consistent over de drie cases in Wales. Dit in tegenstelling tot de variatie in *partnership* samenstelling en niveau van besluitvorming tussen de drie cases in Wales. De Welsh cases laten ook zien dat juist de burger vertegenwoordigers uit het vrijwilligerswerk het meest handelden als afgevaardigden voor anderen wat in tegenstelling is met theorie over directe en participatieve democratie. En juist overheidsmensen zagen zichzelf vooral als participant in plaats van vertegenwoordiger. Zij voelden zichzelf vrijer om puur op basis van hun eigen expertise te handelen. In zulke gevallen kan juist de rol van participant een vrije positie legitimeren en leiden tot organisatie-elitisme (geen verantwoordingsrelatie en informatie naar organisatie waar degene werkt). Dit is opnieuw in tegenstelling tot theorie over directe en participatieve democratie. De Nederlandse gebiedscommissies zijn minder gevoelig voor organisatie-elitisme door het gebruik van een twee-lagen systeem van vertegenwoordiging waarbij commissieleden in contact staan met een klankbordgroep. Zo'n systeem bestond niet in Wales waar geen formele verantwoordingsmechanismen waren vastgelegd voor de vertegenwoordigingsrol.

Ten vierde, deze studie laat zien dat er binnen *partnerships* meestal een kern en een buitenrand van leden bestaat. Dit was echter niet alleen een resultante van verschil in machtsbronnen om te kunnen participeren maar ook een resultante van de grootte van het belang dat een commissielid bij de gebiedscommissie had. Dit gold zeker ook voor de overheidslaag die verantwoordelijk was voor de *partnership*. De overheidslaag die verantwoordelijk was voor de gebiedscommissie had voldoende machtsbronnen om deze totaal domineren. Dit kwam dan tot uiting in onverschilligheid ten opzichte van besluiten en processen in de gebiedscommissie. Echter, wanneer zij zich onthielden van onverschilligheid was er plaats voor het politieke spel van gezamenlijke besluitvorming. Het bestaan van politiek in de gebiedscommissies kan daarom ook wijzen op werkelijke besluitvorming en het maken van keuzes door ten minste een aantal betrokken commissieleden.

De laatste set conclusies uit de vijf artikelen stelt dat conflict, politiek en macht niet noodzakelijk signalen zijn van een mislukte gebiedscommissies of een gebrek aan goed leiderschap. Het kan juist ook wijzen op een hoog niveau van besluitvorming over politieke keuzes (waarbij meerdere en potentieel elkaar uitsluitende belangen in het spel waren). Conflict, macht en politiek zijn daarom ook natuurlijke kenmerken van samenwerking. Een analyse van macht als dispositioneel concept in termen van het hebben van machtsbronnen kan makkelijk leiden tot de aanname dat macht als bezit kan

worden 'afgelezen'. Echter, wanneer in relationele termen gekeken wordt naar macht dan wordt het bemiddelende karakter van macht beter zichtbaar. De erkenning van het tijdelijke en het plaatselijke van macht wijst op de mogelijkheid van verandering en onvoorziene dynamiek en op uitkomsten welke in tegenstelling kunnen zijn met de verhoudingen in machtsbronnen.

Terugkomend op de overkoepelende onderzoeksvragen, hebben het vergelijkende en contextafhankelijke perspectief het mogelijk gemaakt om verder te kijken dan de algemene karakteristieken van *partnerships* of gebiedscommissies. Bovendien heeft de vergelijkende landen analyse, de analyse van het micro niveau van een *partnership* verrijkt doordat vanzelfsprekendheden in eigen land opeens ter discussie komen te staan. Het micro niveau blijft een belangrijke analyse niveau (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999; McAvereay, 2006), niet alleen om beter begrip te krijgen van besluitvormingsprocessen in plattelandsontwikkeling (McAvereay, 2006), maar ook ter aanvulling van het meso niveau in *governance* studies (McLeod and Goodwin, 1999). De micro analyse van de politiek binnen de commissies in combinatie met de macro analyse van beleidscontext maakt een dieper begrip van het meso niveau mogelijk.

Ten tweede laat het politieke perspectief zien dat gebiedscommissies met politieke keuzes voor plattelandsontwikkeling worden geconfronteerd. Het politieke proces in deze commissies heeft een eigen dynamiek. De implementatie van plattelandsbeleid is daarom ook afhankelijk van welke machtsvorm ontstaat en wordt gebruikt in gebiedscommissies. Het politieke perspectief vraagt aandacht voor de betrokkenheid van de niet-overheid partijen, hoe zij geselecteerd zijn (en anderen niet) en benadrukt de spanning tussen democratisch bestuur en technocratische beleidsuitvoering. Het politiek perspectief vormt daarmee een belangrijke aanvulling op de bestaande beleidsnetwerk- en *governance* studies.

Gebiedscommissies als nieuwe en meer plurale instituties bieden mogelijkheden voor het democratiseren van het beleidsproces in het plattelandsdomein en dragen bij aan het openen van de gesloten landbouw beleidsgemeenschap. Echter, er is een tendentie naar het ontstaan van een nieuwe generatie gesloten beleidsgemeenschappen, nu in de vorm van deze gebiedscommissies. Deze gebiedscommissies hebben over het algemeen geen of weinig regels met betrekking tot toegang tot de commissies nádat de commissie is ingesteld, of de lengte van de periode welke een lid in de commissie kan zitten. Er zijn beperkte verantwoordingsmechanismen voor commissieleden en er is een beperkte responsiviteit naar het algemeen publiek in de regio. Het democratiseringseffect dat uitging van het instellen van de gebiedscommissies zal niet lang duren als de democratische regels voor deze gebiedscommissies door de tijd heen niet in overweging worden genomen.

Hoewel de overheid geen volledige verantwoordelijkheid kan nemen voor politieke besluiten genomen door de commissieleden, kan het wel – en zou het ook –

verantwoordelijkheid moeten nemen voor procedures die het democratisch bestuur vergroten. Gebiedscommissies moeten worden gezien als politieke arena's die hun eigen democratische regels en procedures verdienen, ook in de periode nadát de overheid deze commissies heeft ingesteld. Waar de overheid nu vooral gericht is op de bestuursstructuur kan het niet langer de proces en tijd gerelateerde zaken zoals toegang van nieuwe groepen na verloop van tijd of de machtsverhoudingen in de commissies negeren. De overheid moet het democratische gehalte van gebiedscommissies garanderen door meer verantwoordelijkheid te nemen voor de kwaliteit van besluitvorming *door de tijd heen*.

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Curriculum Vitae

Petronella Hendrika Maria Derkzen was born on the 8th of October 1976 in Zevenaar, Gelderland. She obtained a BSc. in International Agricultural Trade at the Larenstein International Agricultural College of Deventer in 1999 and subsequently started a M.A. at the Faculty of Social-cultural sciences of the Free University in Amsterdam. For her major thesis she worked at Stoas Research where she studied the influence of language and interpretation in the participatory appraisal methodology RAAKS. She graduated in 2001 after which she continued at Stoas Research as a junior researcher. She worked on research projects aimed at knowledge transfer and innovation in (agricultural) vocational education and on projects aimed at improved policy implementation mainly for the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. In 2003 she started her Ph.D at the Rural Sociology Group at Wageningen University, while keeping a part time position at Stoas Research (until the end of 2004). In the first half of 2005 she carried out fieldwork in Wales through Cardiff University, Department of City and Regional Planning. Besides this thesis, her work resulted in publications in scientific journals and books and in contributions at international conferences. Furthermore, she was a teacher's assistant in several courses at Wageningen University and coordinated Dutch participation in an informal European Network for Local Development Teams. In 2007, she participated in the scientific and local organising committees of the European Society for Rural Sociologists' conference, held in Wageningen. Also related to this, she organised a follow-on Ph.D course on 'Social critical theory and rural development' in cooperation with Mansholt Graduate School. Currently, she continues to work at the Rural Sociology Group on research projects including an EC-funded FP7 project: "Assessing the impact of rural development policies (including LEADER)".

Completed Training and Supervision Plan

Petra Derkzen



Description	Institute / Department	Year	ECTS*
Courses:			
Mansholt Introduction course	Mansholt Graduate School of Social Sciences (MG3S)	2003	1,5
Governance crossing borders	MG3S	2003	4
Afstudeervak organiseren en begeleiden	OWU	2003	1
Techniques for writing and presenting a scientific paper	MG3S	2003	1
Research Methodology course	MG3S	2003	3
Hoorcollege geven	OWU	2004	1
Interviewtechnieken RSO 30306	RSO	2004	6
Policy evaluation methodology	MG3S	2004	3
ESRS PhD summer school	ESRS	2004	4
PhD course Discourse Analysis	Nethur Research School	2004	1
Discussion group 'Construction of meaning'	SSP	2004/ 2005	2
Discussion group 'Governance'	Interdepartemental	2004/ 2006	2
Interpretative political science	Polforsk, Danish Political Science Research School	2006	2
			31,5
Presentations at conferences and workshops:			
ESRS conference, Sligo, Ireland		2003	1
SISWO, Instituut voor Maatschappijwetenschappen, Amsterdam		2004	1
ESRS conference, Keszthely, Hungary		2005	1
Mansholt Multidisciplinary seminar		2006	1
Rural Futures conference, Plymouth, England		2006	1
ESRS conference, Wageningen		2007	1
			6
Course Organisation:			
PhD course Critical Social Theory and Rural Development, Wageningen: ESRS/MG3S/Ceres		2007	
Total (minimum 30 ECTS)			37,5