Rural learning regions

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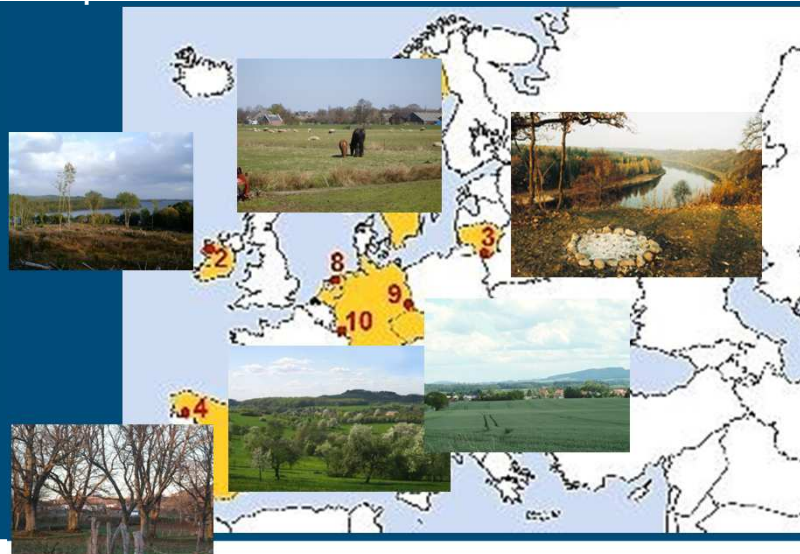

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Content

- **Scope:**
  - Comparative, empirical study across 6 European CSAs

- **Focus:**
  - How support and facilitation for learning & innovation can best be arranged

- **Findings:**
  - Examples of arrangements
  - Evaluation of arrangements by beneficiaries

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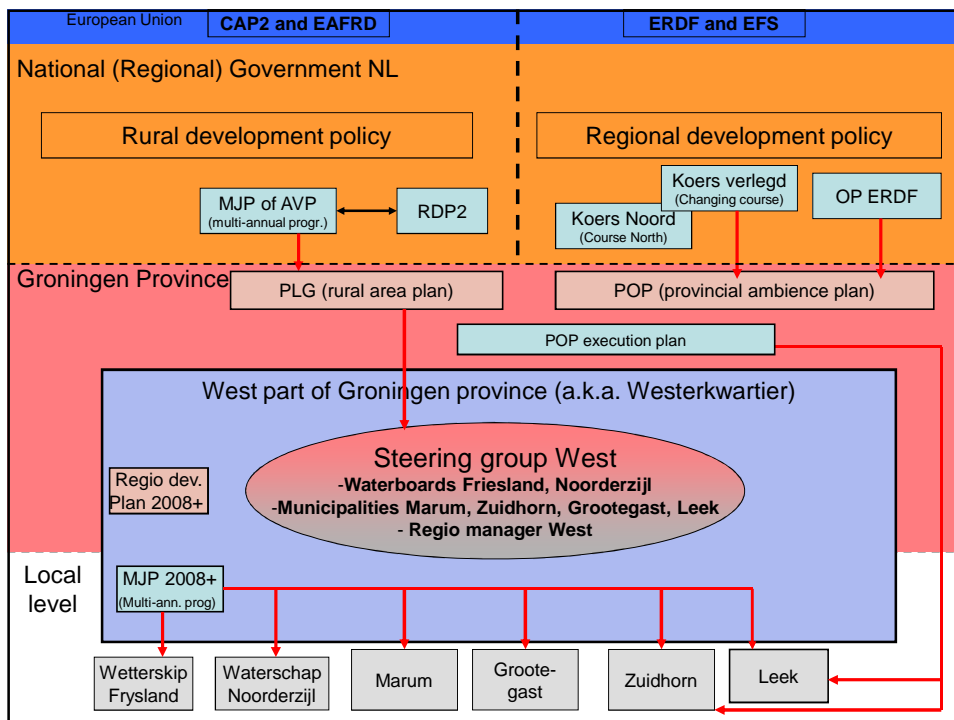WAGENINGEN UR

Scope

- ■ Public policies aim to support and facilitate <u>joint</u> learning and innovation in rural grassroots development initiatives
  - ● Joint capacities, resilience, self-efficacy, sustainability

- ■ Support needs to be able to reach development initiatives at grassroots level - <u>interfaces</u>

- ■ How can public support of joint learning and innovation at grassroots level be best arranged?
  - ● Comparative, explorative analysis across 6 CSAs

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Scope

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Focus

- **How can support & facilitation best be arranged?**
  - Overview of <u>public policies</u> supporting joint learning & innovation in grassroots development activities
  - Outline of <u>public knowledge institutes</u>, <u>agencies</u> and <u>agents engaged</u> in regional development activities
  - Inventory of <u>10-15 grassroots development initiatives</u> in each CSA
    - What type of support is received?
    - How is the support arranged?
- **Which arrangements work well?**
  - <u>Evaluation</u> in workshops with beneficiaries/ supporters

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Main findings

- **Arrangements to support and facilitate learning and innovation consist of 2 interrelated parts:**
  - Constitutive agreement
  - Operational interface

Main findings

- <u>Constitutive agreements</u> made by founding
- (public-private) partnerships concerning:
  - Targeted development activities and beneficiaries
  - Scale of governance at which support & facilitation should be provided
  - Type of support & facilitation provided
  - Rules: procedures, regulations, contracts
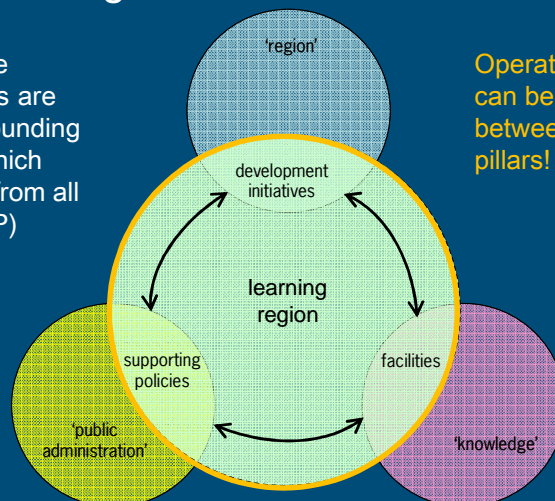
Main findings

- <u>Operational interfaces</u> are created to effectuate the support agreed upon by
  - delegating specific tasks and roles to
  - agents or agencies

- Operational interfaces are the nuts and bolts of well-working arrangements!

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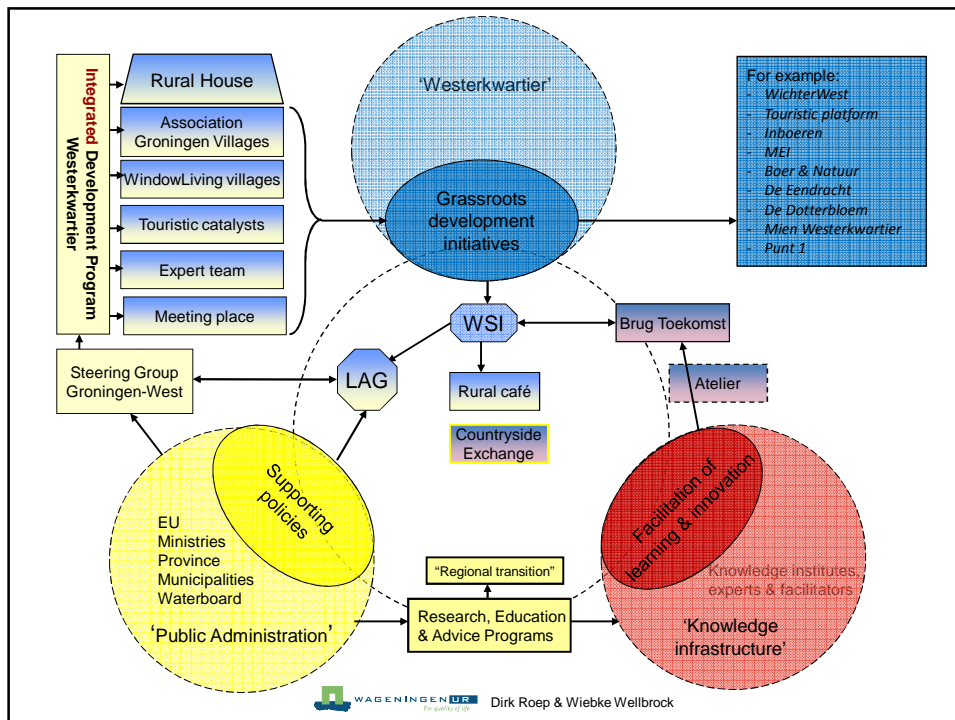WAGENINGEN**UR**

Main Findings

Constitutive agreements are made by founding partners which can come from all pillars (PPP)

Operational interfaces can be found anywhere between these three pillars!

'region'

development initiatives

learning region

supporting policies

facilities

'public administration'

'knowledge'

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Dirk Roep & Wiebke Wellbrock

Examples of operational interfaces

- Roscommon Integrated Development Company Ltd.

- Touristic catalysts in the Westerkwartier, NL

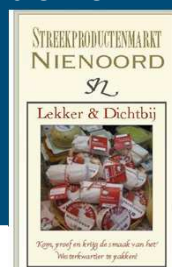- 'Brug Toekomst' in the Westerkwartier, NL

Roscommon Integrated Development Co. Ltd.

- Integrated LEADER partnership company
  - Operationalizes all EU and national socio-economic development programmes
  - Staff consists of local, regional and national agents and agencies (state agencies, business association, politics)
  - Finances, knowledge & skills, facilitation of networks
  - Website: http://www.ridc.ie/

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Touristic catalysts in Westerkwartier (NL)

- LEADER project running from 2008-2010
  - Promote development in tourism sector
  - Contracted private development advisors
  - Network incubator (founders of business association)
  - Provision of knowledge and skills
  - Process management
  - Marketing & PR activities

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'Brug Toekomst' in Westerkwartier, NL

- Links education with grassroots development initiatives

- Benefit for education: learning environment
  - Student projects
  - Practical experience

- Benefit for grassroots development initiative
  - Co-creation of knowledge (*slow advice*)
  - Stimulating and refreshing

- Institutionalized into Educational program ('Work place')

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Lessons learned from the examples

- Roscommon Integrated Development Company
  - A more integrated approach to provision of support is needed
  - It needs to be recognized that rural regional learning takes time!

- Touristic catalysts in the Westerkwartier, NL
  - Control mechanisms need to be loosened, agencies need power to act
  - The right scale of governance needs to be identified
  - Public funding necessary to stimulate organisation of get-togethers

- 'Brug Toekomst'
  - Public policy needs to stimulate coordination and lasting engagement

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Main findings

- **Operational interfaces are diverse**
  - Located at different operational scales
  - Coincidental or intentionally arranged
  - Informal or formalized
  - Temporal or lasting
  - Carried out by private or professional agents and agencies

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Main findings

- 1. Various policy programmes, various operational interfaces
  - Confusing for initiators, not effective
  - A more integrated approach to provision of support is needed

- 2. Support limited to temporal funding schemes
  - New funding schemes mean new interfaces with new objectives
  - Initiators need to find new interfaces and reformulate goals time again
  - Rural regional learning takes time, long-lasting operational interfaces needed

- 3. Executive power to operational agents and agencies
  - 'Politicization' and over-regulation hampers work of interface
  - Control mechanisms need to be loosened, agencies need power to act

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Main findings

- 4. Operational interfaces need to be visible and accessible
  - How depends on regional context, targeted activities/ beneficiaries
  - The right scale of governance needs to be identified

- 5. Involvement of education in the facilitation of joint learning and innovation is very promising, works both ways
  - Rarely part of (formal) education programmes
  - Incidental, short-termed, project-based involvement
  - Public policy can encourage structural engagement of education

- 6. Informal networking activities are crucial
  - Public funding of events and get-togethers organised by operational agents or agencies

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Concluding remarks

- There is <u>no blue print or 'one size fits all' way</u> of operationalizing support and facilitation

- Well-working operational interfaces depend on a <u>balanced composure</u> of:
  - The formal shaping of the interface
  - An adequate scale of governance
  - The delegation of operational tasks and roles

- Which composure works best is <u>context dependent</u>

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Thank you for your attention!

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