

# Place-based and participative approaches: reflections for policy design in rural development

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## Regular Session

RS11.2:

Rural development

Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021

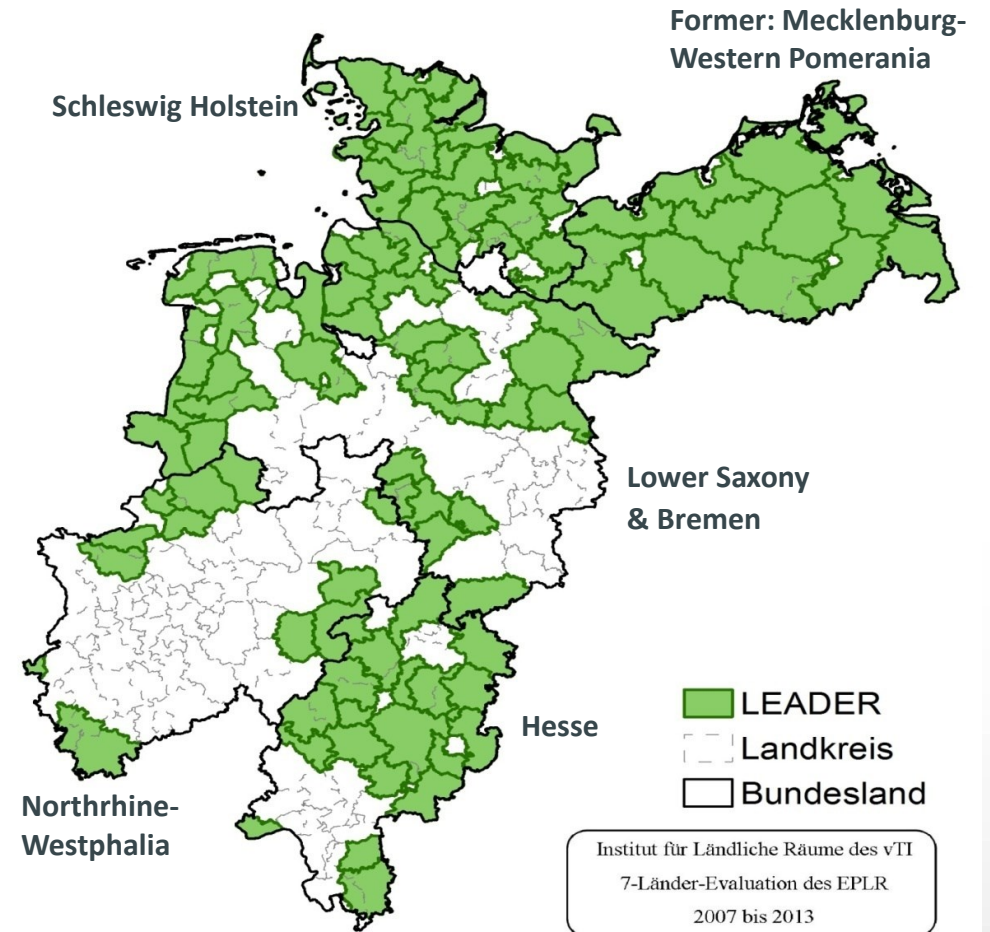
13:15 – 14:30

Virtual conference  
25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2021

# 5-“Länder” Evaluation: Project Background

„Länder“ = „Bundesländer“  
= federal states in Germany

- Analysing the **effects of financing rural development** on agriculture, the environment and **well-being/quality of life** in rural areas
- Evaluation of **Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)**
- Ongoing research: 2007 – 2016, 2016 – 2024
- **Mixed methods** approach:
  - Interviews with project initiators and government employees
  - Different surveys (written questionnaires, mostly as online surveys) with various stakeholders
  - Quantitative analyses of data from the funding databases



Source: Thünen-Institute of Rural Studies, 2012

# Outline

1. What is LEADER?
2. LEADER in Germany
3. Focus/research question
4. First results
  - Staff capacity of LAG managements
  - Delimitation of the LAG territory
5. Preliminary conclusion
6. Further of analyses



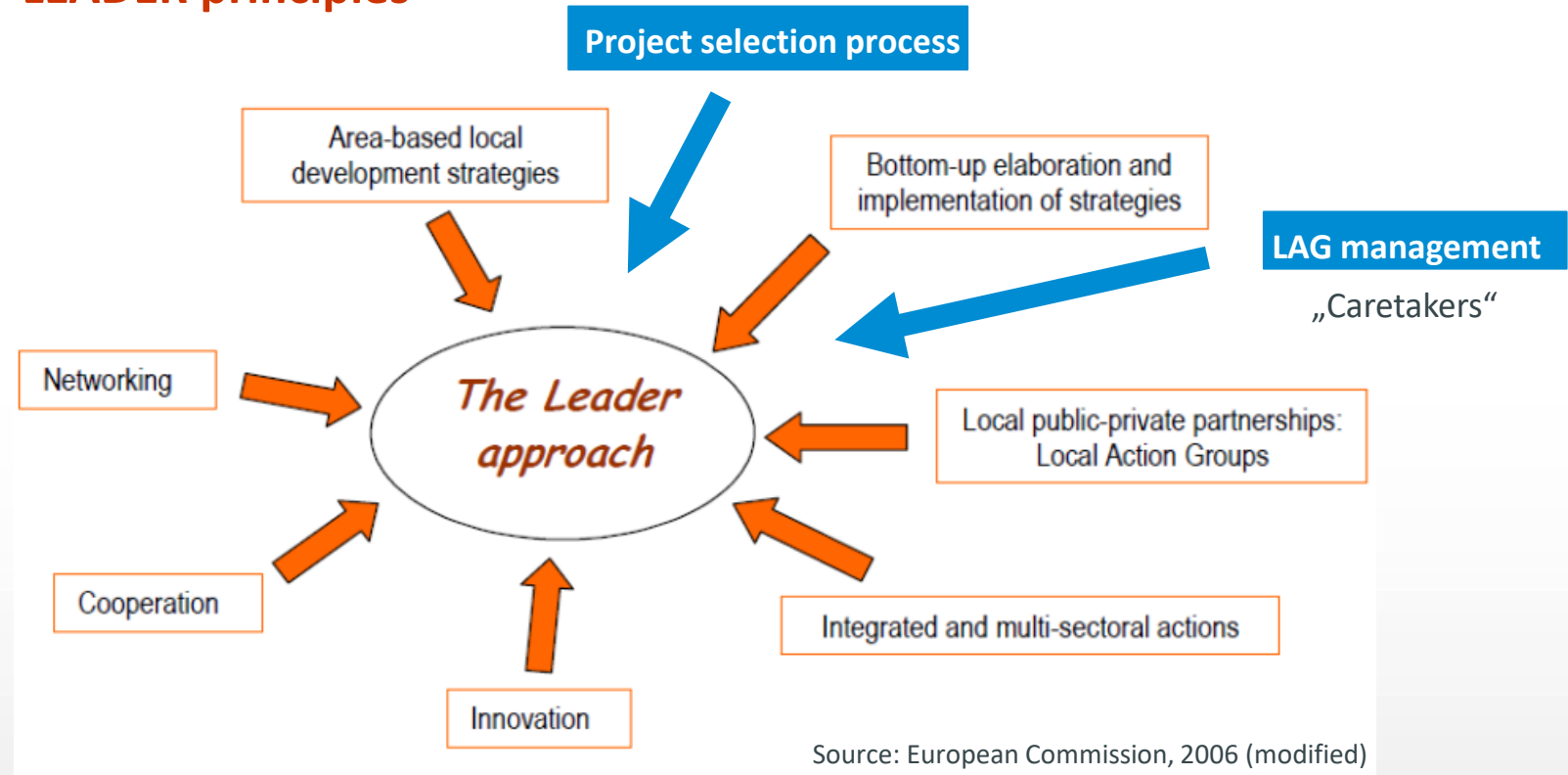
Source: Manfred Bathke

# What is LEADER?

**LEADER** = „*Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale*“

- **Links between actions for the development of the rural economy**
- EU funding to support rural development through locally initiated projects, decision making at local level
- Forms part of the EU's rural development policy since 2007, funded through the EAFRD\*
- Synonym: CLLD (=Community-led local development); applicable for other EU funds

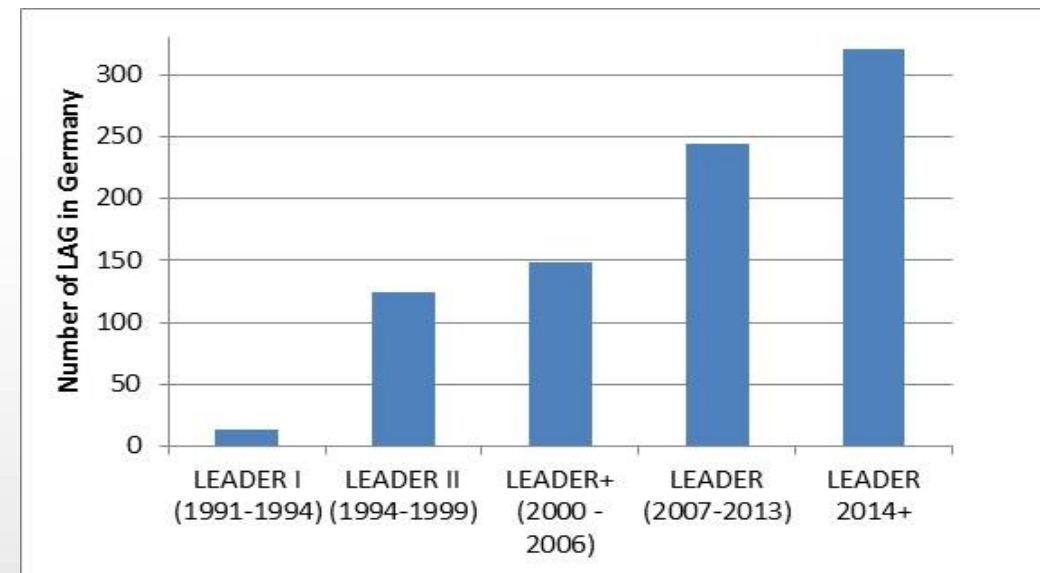
## LEADER principles



\*European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

# LEADER in Germany

- Over 300 Local Action Groups (LAGs)
- LAGs dispose of their own budgets (approx. 3 Mio. € per funding period; in other federal states >10 Mio. €)
- Bottom-up approach (however: top-down elements through funding regulations)
- Programme authorities are situated in the various federal states
- Main obstacle: “multi-level-bureaucracy”



# Research question / Focus of presentation

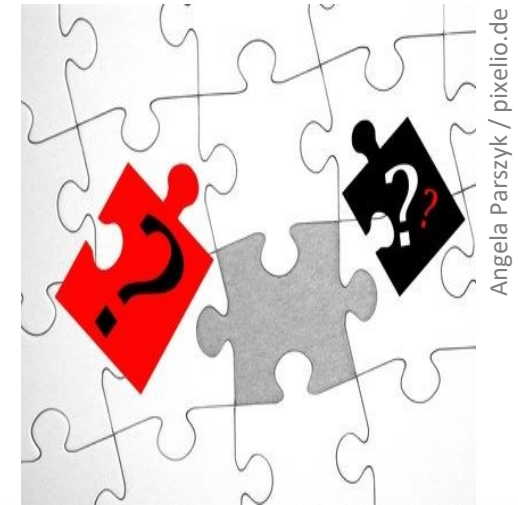
## LEADER implementation occurs in a multilevel system

- Programme authorities may set basic funding conditions (in line with EU requirements) to define the room of manoeuvre for the LAGs.

## Research question:

**“How do varying framework conditions lead to different results in LEADER implementation?”**

- **Research approach:** utilisation of insights from the evaluation of rural development programmes (RDP)
- **Study areas:** Hesse (HE), Lower Saxony (NI), Northrhine-Westphalia (NRW), Schleswig-Holstein (SH) (115 LAGs)
- **Aim:** policy recommendations for the design of suitable framework conditions for LEADER/CLLD implementation



# Staff capacity of LAG managements: Framework conditions

**Role of LAG managers:** coordination of LAG activities, advice applicants/beneficiaries on application procedure, public relations, self-evaluation activities, project design etc.

## **No specifications from the EU regarding staff capacity**

- However upper funding limit (25% of total public expenditure in every region)
- Regulations in the federal states act as the principal factors determining the staff capacity

## **Recommendations according to the CLLD guideline:**

- Staff capacity should correspond to the complexity of the LAG and LDS
- Initial recommendation in guideline draft: minimum staff of two for fundamental tasks (this was exempted from the final document)

# Staff capacity of LAG managements: Implementation in the federal states

Federal state <sup>1</sup>	HE	NI	NRW	SH
<b>Regulation</b>	Binding target: 1.5 full-time <sup>2</sup> employees (=60 hours/week)	No binding or recommended target	Binding target: 1.5 full-time <sup>2</sup> employees (=60 hours/week)	Recommendation: 2 full-time <sup>2</sup> employees (=80 hours/week)
<b>Results (2019)</b>	62 h/week (2013: 62)	40 h/week (2013: 34)  Often only 20 h	60 h/week (2013: 38)	56 h/week (2013: 51)  Relatively high variance

<sup>1</sup> Hesse (HE), Lower Saxony (NI), Northrhine-Westphalia (NRW), Schleswig-Holsten (SH)

<sup>2</sup> One full-time position corresponds to 40 working hours per week



# Staff capacity of LAG managements Innovation

**Definition of innovation:** „ideas, approaches or strategies for action, that are new to the region“.

## Correlation between

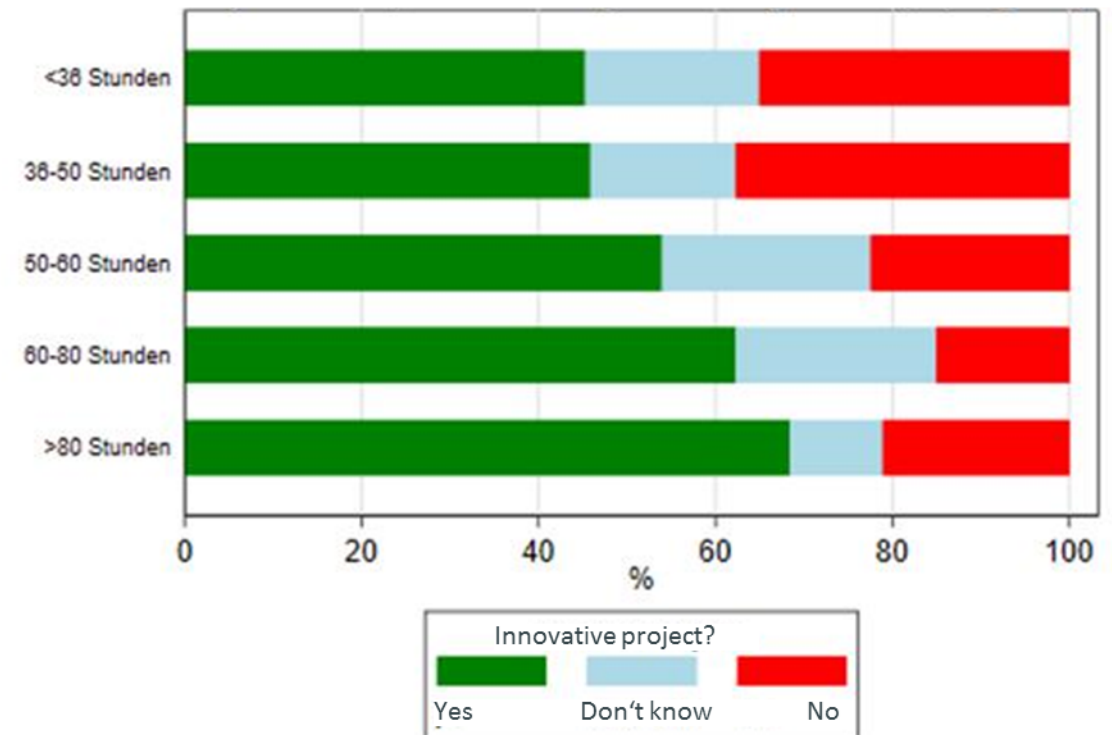
- innovative projects (self-assessment by beneficiaries) and
- weekly staff capacity of LAG managements



## Result:

- The probability of innovative projects **increases** with increasing staff capacity

Innovative projects and capacity of LAG managements (weekly hours)



# Staff capacity of LAG managements: Interpretation and recommendations

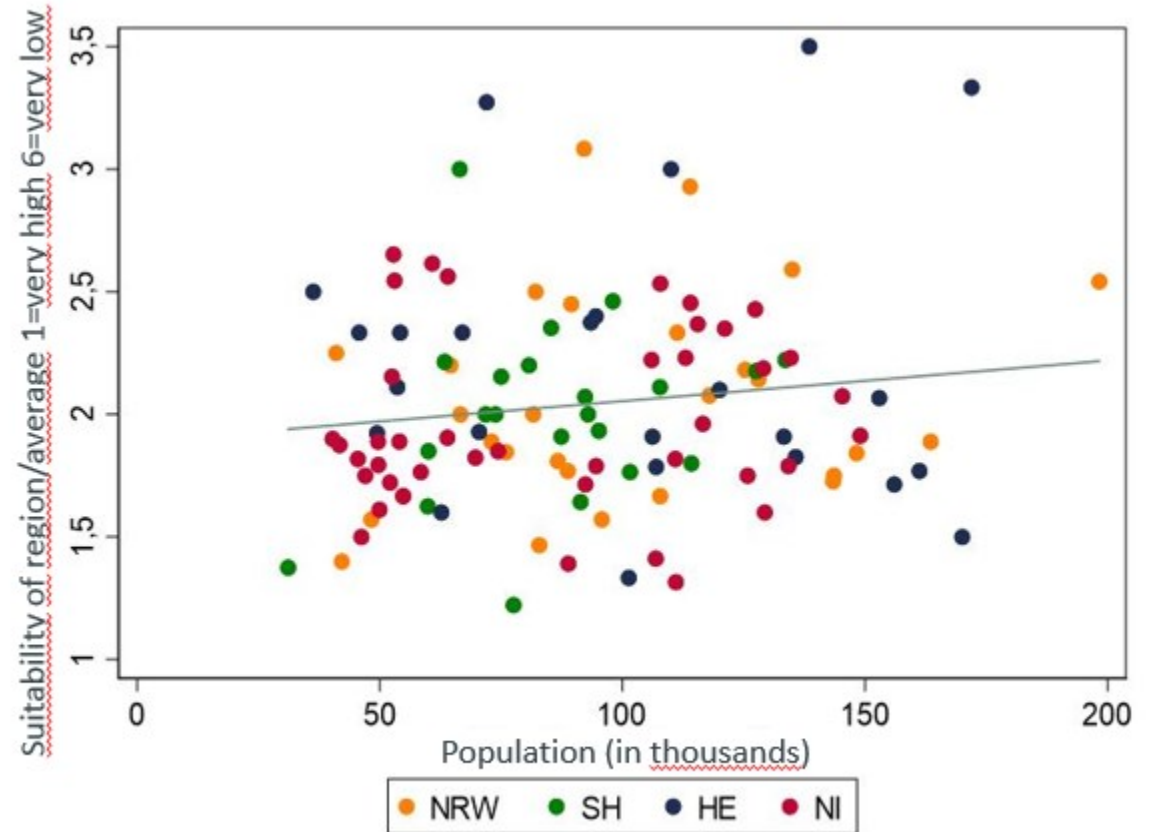
- Higher staff capacities enable more/better support of beneficiaries by LAG managements
  - Possible factor for more innovative projects (supported by statistical tests)
- Preset funding conditions are more successful than recommendations
  - Fixed minimum of 1.5 full-time employees as a funding requirement (2 as a recommendation)
  - Extra benefit: guarantees a minimum of two LAG managers (necessary for continuous functioning/availability of the LAG management and smooth transitions in the event of staff changes)

# Delimitation of the LAG territory: Population

- **EU regulation:** 10.000 to 150.000
- **Regulations in the federal states** (well justified exceptions are possible):
  - NRW: 40.000 to 150.000 (poss. 175.000)
  - NI: 40.000 to 150.000
  - HE: 50.000 to 150.000
  - SH: 50.000 to 150.000



**Correlation analysis:** population and opinions of LAG members on the suitability of their region to support regional development in terms of size



# Delimitation of the LAG territory: Interpretation and recommendation

- Similar funding conditions in all four 4 federal states
- Preset (wide) population ranges seem to be suitable
  - No need for more rigid specifications
  - Suitable delimitation is more dependent on local specificities (e.g.: administrative or political boundaries, natural, ecological and/or economic aspects)

# Conclusion

- With respect to funding regulations, **both binding targets and "softer" rules**, which allow for regional adjustments, **can be suitable approaches in programme design.**
- **A sound examination of the outcomes of different programme options** can provide **insights for future policy design for LEADER/community-led local development.**

# Further analyses

- LAG structure: proportion of female and non-public stakeholders
- Involvement/participation of local communities and stakeholders (project and working groups)
- Cooperation projects
- Cofinancing of projects
- Revision procedure of Local Development Strategies
- Framework for self-evaluation of the LEADER regions
- Innovation in LEADER projects
- Selection of LAGs in the new funding period/distribution of LEADER budgets

*Thank you for your attention!*

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