

Participation in Austrian LEADER-regions. Findings from a multi-method study

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DRAFT

Main questions

- What is the current status and how did participation develop during the period?
- Which possibilities do LAGs offer for participation?
- How do LAGs successfully motivate different groups and arrange successful participation?
- Which factors favour participation?
- Which groups are difficult to reach?
- What are possible impacts of participation? What is the added value?
- What can be learnt for RD 2014-2020?

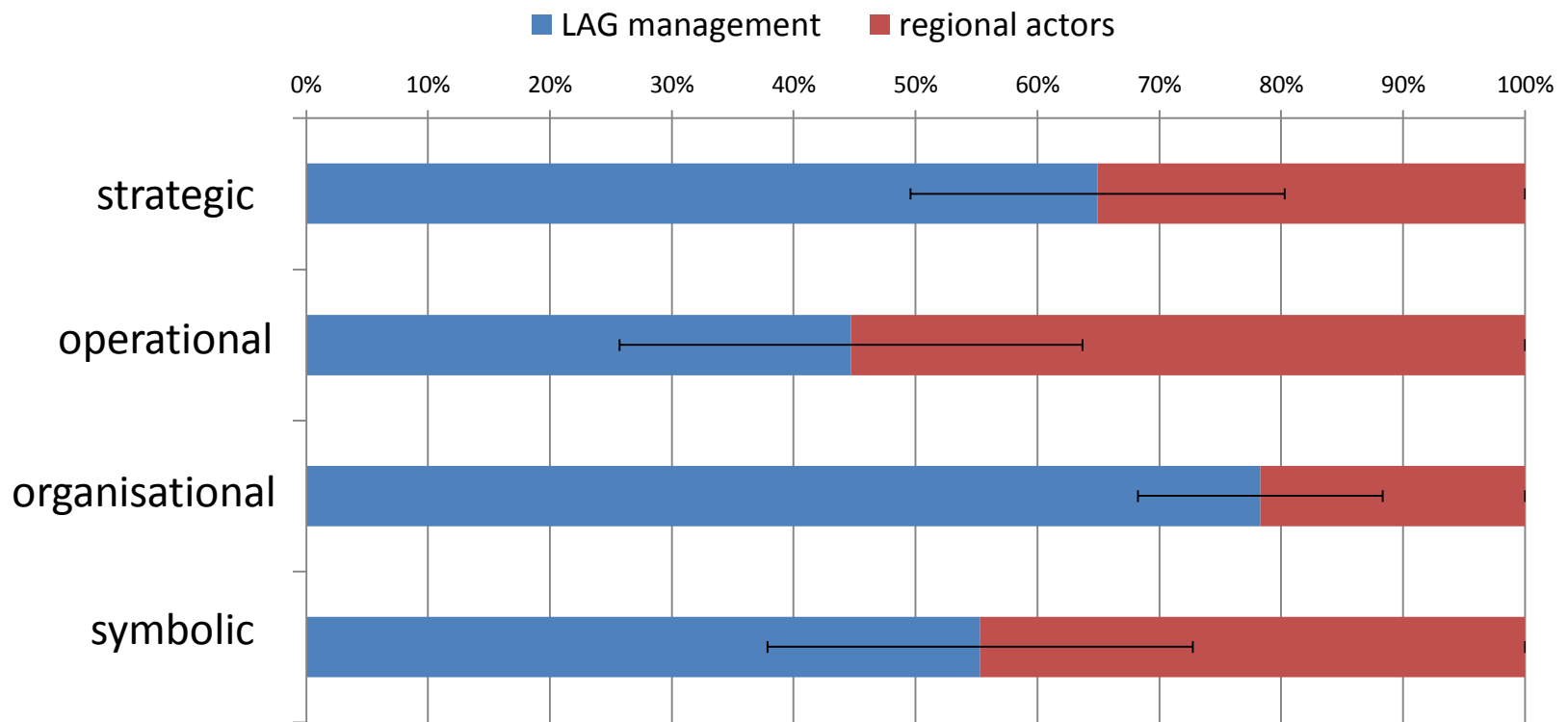
Methods used

- Comprehensive standardized online survey (response = 77 of 86 LAGs), answered by LAG manager
- Clustering LAGs according to participation related patterns
- Selecting 3 LAGs (one per cluster)
 - social network analysis
 - film- and photo-analysis
 - Focusgroup-discussion
- Stakeholder workshops (LAGs, MA)

Approach

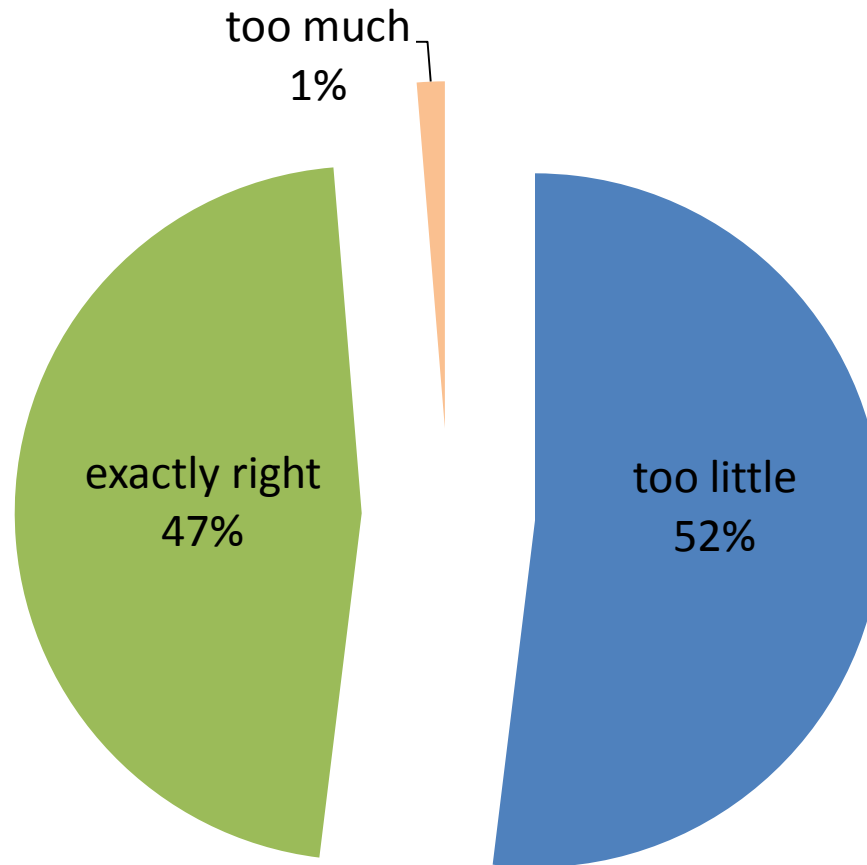
- Participation: any action taken by people in LEADER-regions in reference to LEADER.
- Four fields of participation
 - **strategic**: actions in relation with strategy development/ -adaption, introducing new topics to the LEADER system, joining monitoring/quality management teams, etc.
 - **operational**: more or less project development and implementation
 - **organisational**: (support the LAG management with) organizing and implementing LEADER related events, workshops, informal meetings, etc.
 - **symbolic**: representing LEADER, resp. the LAG and it's topics inside and outside, motivating others for participating, etc.

An indicator for participation: distribution of tasks between LAG management and regional actors



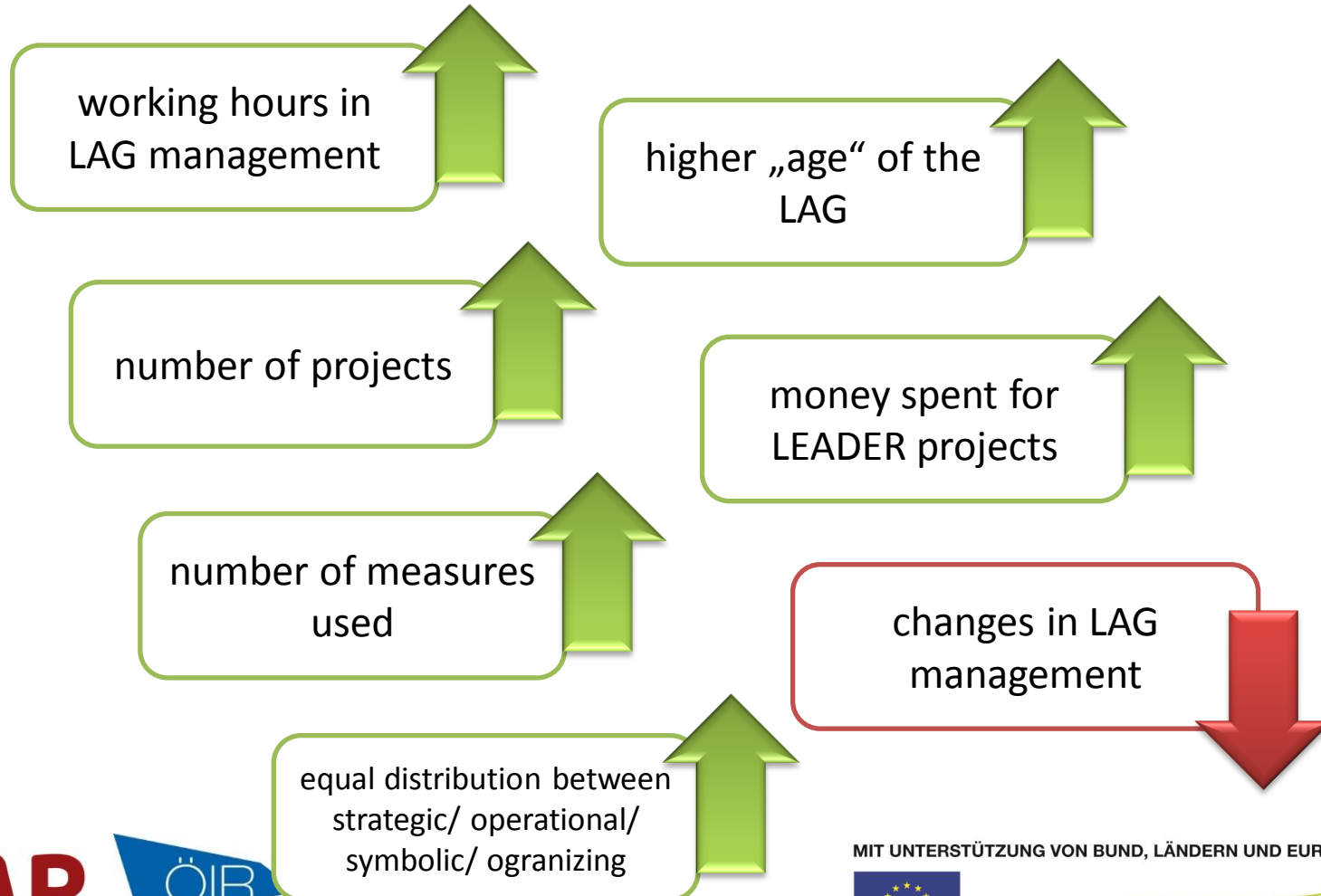
n=77 LAG managers

„If you think of the goals in your Local Development Strategy – is the current participation (quality/quantity) of local actors rather too little, exactly right, or rather too much for achieving these goals ?“



n=77 LAG managers

Correlations with higher degree of participation



Findings at a glance I

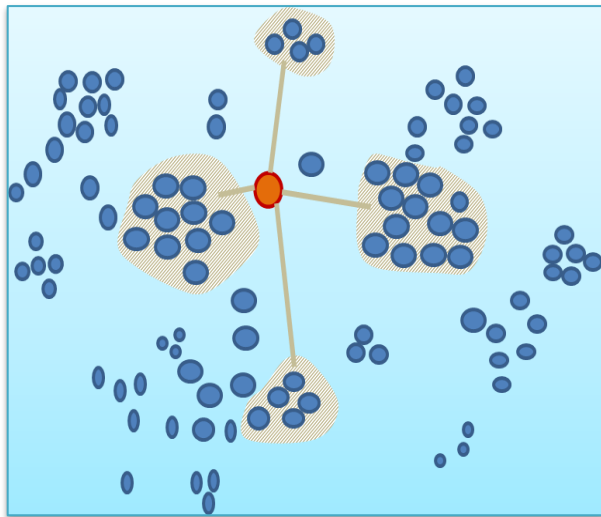
- Supporting participation is an intensive social process which needs continuity, trust, time and stable circumstances.
- We found well established participation in project development and implementation – but: involvement in strategic processes seems challenging
- Participation intensity follows individual rhythms (coming, going, „stand-by“, ...)
 - ➔ Keep people informed
- Lack of participation <-> Lack of knowledge
 - about LEADER as an instrument for change and development / about regional development
 - about regional problems/ shortcomings („we are doing well – why engage?“)

Findings at a glance II

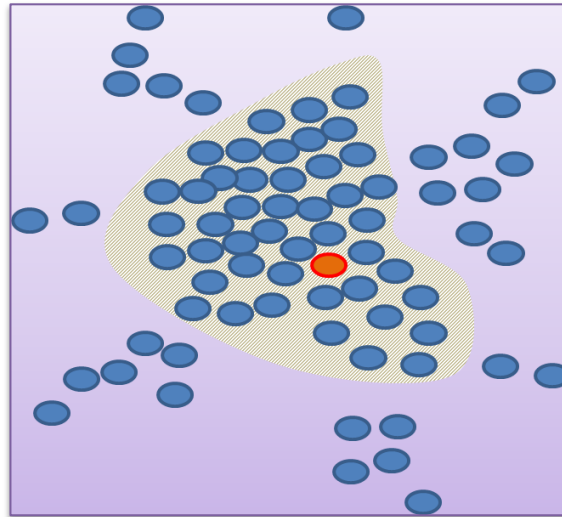
- The main added values of participation in LEADER from LAG managers` perspectives:
 - creating social capital and fostering co-operation
 - better projects (social capital <-> economic capital)
- A well established network structure can make participation for currently underrepresented groups easier

3 types of network structures

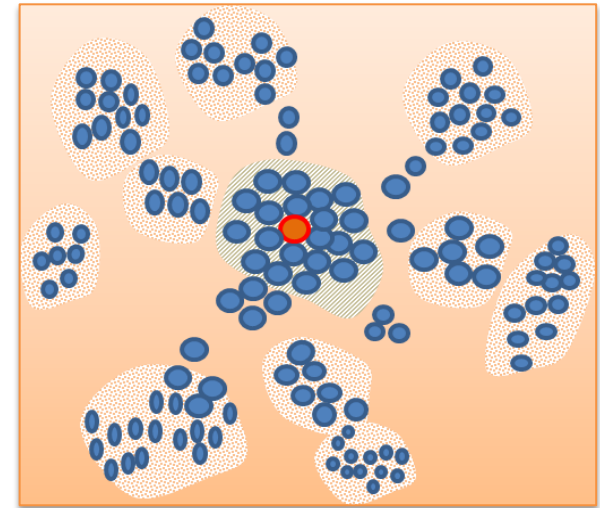
„Program-manager“



„Team player“

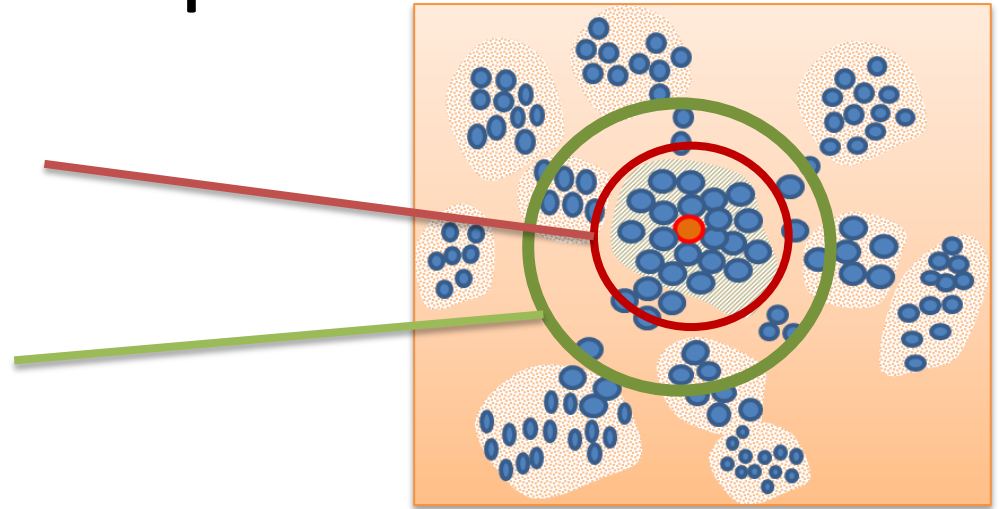


„Networker“



Recommendations for Local Action Groups

- Maintain the „inner core“ (bonding)
- Build up and strengthen a „second ring of power“ (bridging)
- Find good ways to communicate the benefit of participating in LEADER
 - think and act target group specific
 - make use of different communication tools and take advantage of national and international experience
 - realize the importance of face-to-face interaction



Recommendations for Managing Authorities

- Provide a clear and stable framework
- Provide support for LAGs in local awareness raising, communication, knowledge-exchange...
- Find a balance between bureaucratic necessity and time for building up/ maintaining social relationships