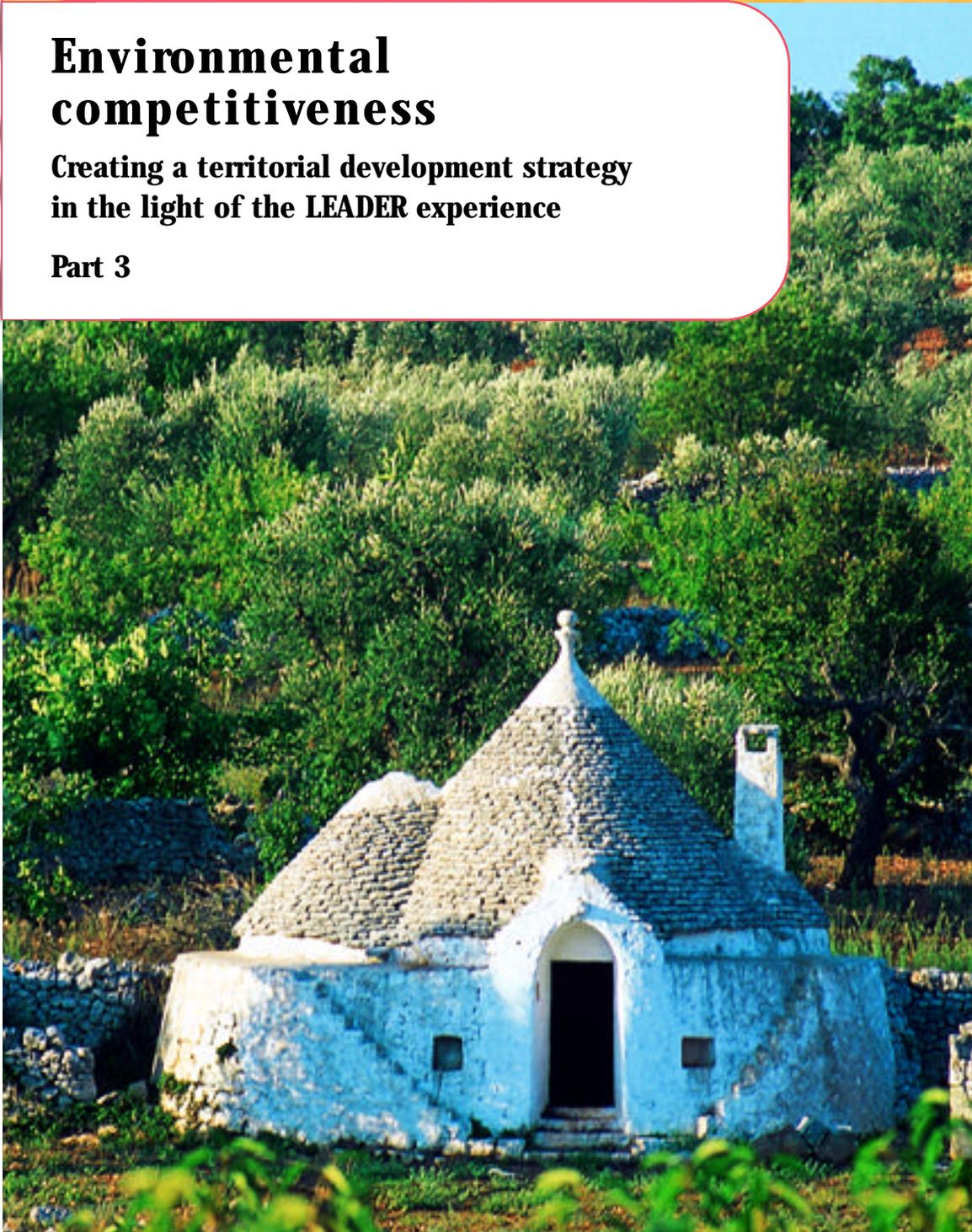




Environmental competitiveness

Creating a territorial development strategy in the light of the LEADER experience

Part 3



LIAISON ENTRE ACTIONS
DE DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE L'ÉCONOMIE RURALE

LINKS BETWEEN ACTIONS
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE RURAL ECONOMY



COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE
DE L'AGRICULTURE

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
AGRICULTURE

Environmental competitiveness

**Creating a territorial development strategy
in the light of the LEADER experience**

Part 3

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*This part was drafted jointly by **Gilda Farrell** (Deputy Director of the LEADER European Observatory), **Robert Lukesch** (ÖAR, Austria) and **Samuel Thirion** (INDE, Portugal).*

*This document is the product of discussions by the European LEADER Observatory's Innovation Working Group, coordinated by **Gilda Farrell** and comprised of **Evelyne Durieux** (LEADER European Observatory), **Martine François** (GRET, France), **Robert Lukesch** (ÖAR, Austria), **Elena Saraceno** (CRES, Italy), **Paul Soto** (Iniciativas Económicas, Spain) and **Samuel Thirion** (INDE, Portugal).*

***Yves Champetier** and **Jean-Luc Janot** (LEADER European Observatory) helped to finalise the text. Production coordination: **Christine Charlier** (LEADER European Observatory).*

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Territorial approach to rural development

In the face of the crises experienced by many of Europe's rural areas, there is no doubt that the LEADER Community Initiative has mapped out new paths of development which can now be seen as an important initial response to the need to revitalise and develop rural areas to the full.

The question remains as to whether the paths mapped out by LEADER can be consolidated to allow rural areas to acquire a genuine "territorial competitiveness".

This matter has become all the more crucial now that LEADER II is nearing completion and making way for LEADER+. The transition to the new LEADER phase, which is expected to provide a "plus" in relation to the previous Initiative, could offer an opportunity for the qualitative leap forward. This will require each area to draw up its own "territorial project" aimed at achieving what we term "territorial competitiveness".

What does "territorial competitiveness" mean?

The usual meaning of the term competitive is "to be able to withstand market competition". On the face of it then, the term territorial competitiveness has a strictly economic sense. Yet can an area that, for example, produces agricultural raw materials very cheaply, but under deplorable social conditions and with no concern for its environment, really be described as competitive? Such considerations have led us to attribute a broader meaning to the term competitiveness, as expressed by the concept of territorial competitiveness: an area becomes competitive if it is able to face up to market competition whilst at the same time ensuring environmental, social and cultural sustainability, based on the dual approach of networking and inter-territorial relationships. In other words, territorial competitiveness means:

- > *taking the area's resources into account in a bid for overall coherence;*
- > *involving different players and institutions;*
- > *integrating business sectors into an innovation dynamic;*

- > *cooperating with other areas and linking up with regional, national and European policies as well as with the global context.*

The aim of developing a territorial project is therefore to ensure that local players and institutions acquire four types of skills: the skills to assess their environment, to take joint action, to create links between sectors by ensuring that maximum added value is retained, and lastly to liaise with other areas and the rest of the world.

These four skills can be linked with what we call "the four dimensions" of territorial competitiveness, which will be combined differently for each area. They are:

- > "**social competitiveness**" – ability of the players involved to act effectively together on the basis of shared conceptions about the project, and encouraged by cooperation between the various institutional levels;
- > "**environmental competitiveness**" – ability of the players involved to make the most of their environment by making it a "distinctive" element of their area, whilst at the same time ensuring that their natural resources and heritage are preserved and revitalised;
- > "**economic competitiveness**" – ability of the players involved to create and retain maximum added value in the area by strengthening links between sectors and by turning their combined resources into assets for enhancing the value and distinctiveness of their local products and services;
- > "**positioning in the global context**" – ability of the players involved to find the area's role in relation to other areas and to the outside world in general, in such a way as to develop their territorial plan to the full and to ensure its viability within the global context.

In many areas the processes we describe have already begun. However, the crux of the matter now is to ensure that they form part of a long-term approach that is at the core of each area's development strategy.

In presenting this five-part publication, the European LEADER Observatory draws on the experience of LEADER I (1991-1994) and LEADER II (1994-1999) with a view to fuelling the debate among Europe's rural players who are seeking a new form of territorial competitiveness founded on consultation and cooperation.

Part 1 takes the starting situation as the focus for developing a territorial strategy; part 2 tackles "social competitiveness"; part 3 concerns "environmental competitiveness" as an element of this strategy; part 4 deals with "economic competitiveness" and part 5 addresses "competitiveness on a global scale".

Each part reviews one aspect of territorial competitiveness, in the following manner:

- > analysis of the context;
- > lessons learned from LEADER and from the experience of local action groups (LAGs);
- > proposed tools and methods;
- > presentation of possible strategies.

Many of the examples used in the different parts of this series refer to measures, activities or enterprises which are presented in more detail in the directory "**Innovative actions of rural development**", published in seven languages by the European LEADER Observatory in 1997 and available in six languages on the "Rural Europe" Internet site (<http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be>).

This site also contains a great deal of relevant information about the LEADER rural development Community Initiative, as well as most of the publications produced by the European LEADER Observatory.

Chapter 1

From exploiting resources to environmental competitiveness

From exploiting resources to environmental competitiveness

The environment is a leitmotif in virtually all local development programmes. It always figures in analyses and operational programmes, either as an aim and objective or as a development instrument. Certain local action groups in the LEADER Initiative always include it, either explicitly or implicitly, in their development measures by encompassing the measures within a sustainable development perspective. What is more, a good many LEADER areas include part, if not all, of a national or regional park or protected area.

In its strictest sense, the term **environment** refers solely to natural resources, i.e. land, water, fauna and flora. In its broader sense, it **refers to everything that makes up the physical living environment of the area's population**, and so includes the architectural heritage. It is the latter sense that we confer on the term environment in this document.

The notion of environmental competitiveness refers to **the ability of local players to “valorise” (preserve, develop and enhance) their environment**. The term “valorise” should be taken in its broad sense: valorisation can be not only economic, but also ecological, social, cultural and aesthetic in nature. It is by taking all of these aspects into account that local players are able to resolve the evident conflict between exploitation and protection which still profoundly characterises the environmental issue.

In other words, by expanding the concept of valorisation to spheres other than the purely economic sphere, the environment emerges as both a product and an engine of territorial development, making it an essential component of the “territorial capital” defined in Part One (“Territorial Competitiveness”). According to this approach, preservation and valorisation are intricately linked and the two are encompassed within a dual perspective of competitiveness and sustainability.

A radically new approach is therefore taking shape around the idea of environmental competitiveness. It is an approach that breaks with the old, but still deeply entrenched, approaches outlined below.

1.1 Brief overview

a) Growing role of the public authorities

For a very long time, man's relationship with his environment has been limited to exploiting the local natural resources. At best there were concerns about renewing such resources, especially farmland, water, pasture and forests. These resources were therefore maintained directly by the community or the local authorities, or even by collective forms of management, with individual, family and collective rights and obligations clearly defined.

With the rapid development of industrial society, the environment was exploited on a larger scale and the central government and local, regional and intermunicipal authorities gradually took over from traditional forms of management:

- > From a legal standpoint, the rights relating to individual ownership were extended, leaving owners free to exploit their land as they saw fit and to make any investment in it that they wished (with legal authorisation compulsory only for building dwellings, setting up industrial activities or exploiting the subsoil).
- > From a management standpoint:
 - the management of water and forest resources was taken in charge at levels that were to a greater or lesser extent decentralised (national water and forestry services, regional, departmental or municipal administrations, etc.);
 - the government assigned itself the task of managing the public infrastructure and living environment (paths, roads, public facilities, etc.), also at various levels (local, regional and national);
 - in addition, waste management services were set up (for household and industrial waste).

Since the last World War, the worsening environmental problems caused by agricultural intensification, industrial development and pressure from tourism has only strengthened the role of the central government and/or the local, regional and intermunicipal authorities:

- > New legislation has emerged to limit forms of environmental degradation (e.g. water pollution), to protect the architectural heritage and to regulate land use.
- > New restrictions on exploitation have been introduced, in particular with the establishment of protected areas (national or regional nature reserves, biosphere reserves, etc.).

This form of environmental management still characterises today's society, in that:

- > The public authorities are responsible for environmental management;
- > The central government is often perceived as a bureaucratic machine that imposes restrictions on exploitation, which arouses opposition rather than cooperation (e.g. the frequent opposition of farmers to the establishment of protected areas);
- > Associating the idea of a resource with the idea of "potential to be exploited" on an individual basis has become the accepted rule virtually everywhere. This has led to the neglect of resources that have no, or have lost, their economic interest. The dilapidation of certain areas, the existence of derelict industrial land, the failure to maintain buildings and the historical heritage, etc. are all illustrations of this.

In some countries, the introduction of the principle of planning and regional development has led to a more integrated approach to the public management of space, but it did not always consider the importance of preserving landscapes. Institutional divides sometimes resulted in a piecemeal approach and hence to disparate space management tools. It was also common for local councils, which are traditionally responsible for local infrastructure, to take action largely without consulting the institutions responsible for managing natural resources.

However, a gradual awareness of these problems has resulted in the creation of ever more elaborate provisions and regulations.

This overall trend conceals differences between countries and between areas:

- > in some countries environmental policies are more or less centralised, coercive and interventionist, whilst in others they are, on the contrary, decentralised:

competence for regional planning and development policies may belong to different levels, including local management level;

- > the sense of a collective asset is more developed in some regions than in others;
- > the extent of exploitation and degradation of natural resources differs widely from one area to another. Some areas have had to turn the battle against soil pollution caused by intensive agriculture into a key element of their development strategies, like in the Netherlands, whereas isolated areas are often relatively well preserved.

b) Outdated environmental management methods

Over the past 15 to 20 years, new trends have emerged.

- > Due to its scale (accumulation of waste, nuclear and oil incidents, consequences of intensive agriculture, etc.) and geographic scope (pollution knows no boundaries), the impact of human activities on the environment has demonstrated the need for new intervention measures.
- > The necessity of an environmental management system extending beyond geographical national boundaries¹ having been established in the 1970s, the issue of the relationship between the international and local spheres and between international commitments and local constraints has been stated in new terms, as evidenced by Agenda 21 for example (see box page 11).
- > The public authorities have gradually abandoned their monopoly over environmental management in favour of setting up consultation procedures, sometimes moving to a certain degree towards sharing responsibilities, which has once more given the various players a place and role (communities, business firms, etc.). This trend has led to the introduction of the "polluter pays" principle and the precautionary principle². Likewise, in pursuance of Article 3 of Regulation R 1259/99, which came into force in the European Union, direct payments to farmers are now conditional upon their compliance with environmental rules³.

[1] By means of transnational agreements (agreements for protecting the Rhine, RAMSAR treaty for protecting wetlands, Helsinki agreements) or through the intervention of international bodies such as the European Union or the United Nations.

[2] For details about the precautionary principle as defined by the European Commission, see Internet site http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24/library/pub/pub07_en.pdf

[3] See Internet site

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/markets/hori/index_en.htm

**AGRO-ENVIRONMENTAL CLAUSES
IN THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

Since 1992, the European Community has supported agricultural production methods that respect the environment and biodiversity. The rural development policy for the post-2000 period confirms the key role of farmers as paid suppliers of environmental services, going beyond good agricultural practices and compliance with basic legislative standards. In the new generation of rural development programmes, agro-environmental measures are therefore the only measures to be compulsory for the Member States (however, they remain optional for farmers). The planned subsidies are granted to farmers who sign up to agro-environmental commitments for a minimum period of five years. Where appropriate, a longer period may be established for certain types of commitment, based on their impact on the environment. The subsidy is allocated annually and calculated on the basis of loss of earnings and additional costs resulting from the commitments, as well as from the need to provide a financial incentive.

- > The public, increasingly confronted with environmental problems, has set about seeking solutions at all levels. Proof of this is the proliferation of environmental organisations, not only local ones (pressure groups fighting pollution or a project they consider to be potentially harmful, associations for safeguarding a natural heritage, collective management of a collective asset, etc.), but also national and international organisations (WWF, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, etc.).
- > The Rio Conference has taken on board the concept of sustainable development, which, in Europe, has led to environmental issues being taken increasingly into account in policymaking, as well as in the gradual implementation of Agenda 21. However, evaluations carried out into the subject have shown that there is still a long way to go (*see box page 12*).

c) A new approach to the environment...

The seeds of a radically new approach to the environment have therefore started to germinate and this approach should take firm root as time goes by.

Indeed we are moving from an approach that treats natural and heritage resources as a **reserve** that can be drawn upon in order to fuel economic activities, to an approach wherein the environment is considered as a **collective asset**, which whilst being essential to certain economic activities, is also a factor in the quality of life that needs to be safeguarded for the welfare of future populations.

The architectural heritage, not limited merely to buildings of historic interest, has itself become part of this collective asset. Reviving villages, salvaging abandoned houses, reconstructing historic buildings, renovating derelict industrial land, etc. have therefore all become increasingly shared concerns.

As a result, natural and heritage resources have acquired value in unprecedented areas:

- > due to the image they create, these resources contribute to the quality of products and services. Proof of this is the way in which producers and distributors are exploiting the image of a healthy and natural environment to vaunt the quality of their products to consumers;
- > they contribute to the aesthetic quality of the living environment which, though not a concern in the past, has today become an increasingly shared value, in terms of the landscape, architecture, town planning, etc. In this area, natural resource management is decisive: vegetation becomes a key element of the aesthetic quality of natural or cultivated areas or of built-up areas, associated with traditional or more modern architecture.

d) ... involving new ways of managing natural and heritage resources...

This new approach to the environment is leading to a rethink of the ways in which resources are managed.

- > As opposed to a purely administrative form of management by the central government and local, regional and intermunicipal authorities, we are now seeing a consultative style of management in which public/private partnership plays an essential role.
- > As opposed to a very broad approach involving individual ownership rights, we now have the notion of the owners' responsibility for the use they make of

their property, not only from the standpoint of the physical and biological impact of their economic activities (pollution, improper use of certain resources, etc.), but also their aesthetic impact (coherence within the overall framework, etc.).

- > In addition to the principle of an individual project, we now have the principle of a collective area-wide project to valorise the area's natural and heritage resources.
- > In addition to the idea of local responsibility, we now have the concept of general responsibility which extends to a global level.
- > Environmental protection concerns are no longer limited to protected areas and now tend to be applied to all the resources of a given area.

e) ... and new development opportunities

This new approach to the environment has led to changes in production systems, which are gradually focusing more on quality (in order to assert their competitiveness) than on quantity, which in the past frequently led to the over-exploitation of resources and negative environmental effects. This is especially the case with agricultural and livestock products that satisfy the environmentally-sound production standards demanded by consumers. The proliferation of quality labels is ample proof that respect for the environment is a growing factor in product differentiation, and hence commercial competitiveness.

AGENDA 21

"Agenda 21" is an international initiative for promoting sustainable development and ensuring that it becomes a reality in the 21st century. At the 1992 United Nations Conference on the environment and development (Rio Conference), 110 Heads of State and Government adopted Agenda 21 as proof of their commitment. This programme sets out the objectives to be achieved, specifies guidelines for preserving and managing development resources and the role of the principal groups concerned, and proposes means for achieving them.

The programme recommends a voluntary approach, on a local, regional and national scale, to define a short-, medium- and long-term strategy, with international cooperation being provided to support and complement national efforts.

According to a survey carried out in 1996, i.e. four years after Rio, 1,812 Agendas have been created worldwide, 87% of which (1,576) are in the European Union. These figures show just how limited the application of Agenda 21 still is. Even within the European Union the number of agendas being set up remains low compared with the existing number of local authorities (more than 30,000). In the places where it has been implemented, local authorities have encouraged the formation of "local Agenda 21 groups" proposing participatory and integrated approaches. These forums, based on partnership, consensus and dialogue have undertaken to:

- > draw up an inventory of environmental and development problems;

- > identify the possibilities for reducing wastage on a local scale (energy savings, recycling of waste and materials, etc.);
- > set up forms of partnership between the local authorities, business firms, research centres and civil society to promote sustainable development;
- > estimate the need for external aid.

Initiatives are concentrated in countries where a national campaign is under way (in the European Union, this mainly includes the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Greece and Ireland). An analysis conducted by ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) for the period 1992-1996 shows that these initiatives had had an impact on institutional management, public participation and the improvement in management systems.

The experience amassed so far points to a few of the keys to the success of such groups:

- > Setting up a multisectorial steering committee to prepare the action plan.
- > Wide-ranging consultation (associations, industrial concerns, development agencies, trade unions and trade organisations) in order to develop a common perspective, gather proposals and establish priorities for action.
- > Participatory evaluation of local social, environmental and economic needs.
- > Definition of operational objectives through consultation with the key players based on an action plan.
- > Development of information and monitoring procedures that include progress indicators.

Furthermore, this global approach to the environment has made it possible to create new products, especially in tourism, based on a set of resources, and to confer a specific identity on the area, sometimes so much so that the area can be “re-christened”.

Conclusion

Today, the environment is a resource in its own right and a key factor in the competitiveness of rural areas. Preserving the environment means preserving an area’s distinctive characteristics and identifying new vocations for it. There is no doubt that this trend is set to grow still stronger within the globalisation context since, in parallel with the market and corporate restructuring, we are witnessing renewed interest in identity resources, the first of which is the environment.

1.2 Lessons learned from LEADER concerning environmental competitiveness

By adopting a territorial approach, LEADER has helped to give renewed importance to preserving, reclaiming, valorising and enhancing local resources, including physical resources, which play a leading role. In this way it has contributed to the emergence of the new approach to the environment.

Lesson one: LEADER has helped to foster among the population an interest in the environment, often by targeting young people.

Awareness of the value of the environment entails first rebuilding the links between local players and their area, which is both a living environment and a common point of reference. The development of new consumer models and the influence of exogenous cultures have often weakened such links, blurring and sometimes even obliterating people’s original attachment to the area. Many LEADER groups have focused a great deal of attention on this aspect, showing special interest in the behaviour of the young people on whom the area’s potential revival relies.

EXAMPLE

In Penacova (Centre, Portugal), a group of young people organised a local association whose primary task was to arrange weekend dances. The association radically changed its direction the day one of the group was killed during one of the dances. This collective trauma prompted them to redirect their activities to restoring a dozen abandoned mills situated on the top of a low mountain overhanging the area. For years they invested all of their spare time in this initiative, and, thanks to financial support from LEADER, they managed to create a tourist centre of exceptional value on a spectacular natural site by converting a number of mills into dwellings and another into an eco-museum, and installing a restaurant and leisure centre below. Inspired by this initiative, the Adelo LEADER group has now launched further initiatives to redevelop the environment in conjunction with other groups of young people.

Lesson two: LEADER has helped to highlight the importance of local resources, even where they are not economically profitable in the short term.

The practice of exploiting resources and then abandoning them as soon as they are no longer of immediate economic interest has left scars that are still much in evidence. This is particularly true for:

- > rural areas that have undergone traumatic enforced economic transitions (uprooting vines, abandoning transhumance, closing mines or textile industries, etc.);
- > rural areas that have been subject to rural depopulation, with serious consequences as a result of neglecting the natural and architectural heritage and abandoning traditional collective forms of management;
- > rural areas that have suffered the enforced closure of certain services which macro-economic cost/benefit calculations had decreed to be non-cost-effective, in spite of the existence of infrastructure such as railway lines, canals, etc.

In stark contrast to this principle of abandonment, LEADER has worked to develop and reclaim an area’s endogenous resources, considering them as a prerequisite for acquiring a specific identity and a new form of competitiveness. As a result, resources deemed to be without interest under the former rationale have gained renewed value in the territorial development context. This is one of the consistent features of LEADER interventions.

This prompted several LEADER groups to redevelop breeds that had been abandoned because they were judged to be non cost-effective, by finding special outlets for them. Breeds of coarse-wool sheep from Styria (Austria) and from Douro Superior (Portugal) are fine examples of this.

Lesson three: LEADER has reinforced the idea that responsibility is more important than ownership.

The importance of the resource/individual or resource/administration relationship has played a decisive role in the neglect of resources considered to be unproductive in the short term. In the past, an abandoned building or site was of concern only to its owner, and an unmaintained railway line was the business of the national railway administration alone. According to this rationale, the possibility of restoring or reutilising such resources was dependent only on them.

In order to redevelop abandoned local resources it was therefore necessary to remove the barriers between public administrations and between the public and private sectors and to call into question the idea of the unconditional freedom of owners.

This type of approach frequently called for cooperation with non-local bodies, especially when infrastructure belonging to national public organisations was involved, such as railway lines or mines, or to absentee private owners, such as abandoned houses. In matters such as these, the problems are often complex: establishing a new use for historic buildings, for example, means finding the absentee owner and sorting out legal ownership problems and rules on conserving the historical heritage.

EXAMPLE

In the Montana Palentina area (Castilla-Leon, Spain), the LEADER group succeeded in ensuring that former railway lines could be reutilised by cycle trolleys mounted on train wheels for use by tourists. For this it was first necessary to negotiate with the Spanish railway companies.

The development of public/private alliances is sometimes the only available means of ensuring that resources are maintained or replenished and resolving problems of ownership or reassigning functions.

EXAMPLE

The Noordwest Friesland LEADER group (Friesland, Netherlands) provided support for the conversion of abandoned buildings into high-class tourist accommodation. With its own language and culture, Friesland is a region with a strong identity. Having been disused for several years, some of the region's historic monuments and buildings were deteriorating or even falling into ruin. It was important to restore this heritage whilst taking into account the very high costs involved in building restoration. This led to the idea of assigning new functions to the sites to be restored. As a result, several public buildings were converted into high-quality apartment hotels ("stedslouazjeminten"). They are managed by private operators whilst remaining under public ownership.

Lesson four: LEADER has demonstrated that environmental valorisation relies on a territorial strategy that is not limited to protected natural areas, but takes into account all of the area's resources.

LEADER has demonstrated that the idea of environmental protection is better understood by local players when it integrates all elements of the living environment and is not confined to natural resources, protected areas, rivers, etc. Territorial strategies have therefore broadened the concept of the environment to encompass the landscape, biological products and constructed sites, harmonising installations and facilities with the landscape, etc.

EXAMPLE

In Northern Ireland's West Tyrone LEADER area, the main road through the area traverses a particularly rundown stretch. The LEADER group therefore decided to work on restoring the aesthetic value to the landscape it crossed. The group began by ordering computer-designed redevelopment proposals in the form of synthetic images showing the seasonal aesthetic changes of the various scenarios, with suggestions regarding the species to be planted, the areas to be reorganised, etc. The group is currently seeking funding so that it can carry through this redevelopment project.

Likewise, LEADER experience has shown that the participation of local players in managing protected areas in response to highly diverse problems, ranging from the introduction of appropriate means of transport, to tourist management, spatial planning, etc., opens up new prospects for areas such as these which often find it hard to take off economically.

Lesson five: LEADER has demonstrated that the environment can serve as the cornerstone of an area's identity and the unifying theme behind an overall territorial strategy.

Attributing an identity value to certain environmental components is one of the methods used by LEADER groups to interest local economic operators in abandoned or neglected resources. This includes, for example, former plantations that, whilst forming part of the landscape and providing an identity that is essential to the area's tourism development, have been more or less abandoned because they were not sufficiently cost-effective.

EXAMPLE

Sweet chestnuts in France and Italy are a particular case in point. The task of the LEADER groups in this case was to create walking and tourist routes around the theme of the sweet chestnut for people to explore the area. In parallel, research and development initiatives were undertaken to return the sweet chestnut trees to a productive state.

LEADER's experience has therefore taught us that the environment can be an asset to local development when it presents a tangible economic interest and that it can act as a unifying theme, enabling the players involved to draw a link between their economic concerns and their area's positive environmental image. The various examples of tourist attractions created around a theme that associates natural resources with an area harbouring a number of heritage resources amply testify that a combination of the architectural heritage and natural resources can serve as an anchor for local development strategies.

Strategies have also been developed around preserving the lesser heritage, derelict industrial land, abandoned mines, disused railway lines and even local resources such as water.

Lesson six: LEADER has helped to show that environmental preservation can inject new life into activities in crisis and can create new jobs and occupations.

Certain initiatives developed under the LEADER programme highlight the benefit of environmentally-friendly practices in opening up new economic prospects to areas that were hitherto devoted to intensive agriculture and livestock production.

EXAMPLE

In the Obere Altmühl LEADER group area of central Franconia (Bavaria, Germany), beef producers launched the "Franki" brand for meat from local brood cows raised on pasture. To do this they created the company WFG, guaranteeing that the animal was of local origin, was fed on pasture throughout the pasture growing season, has travelled no more than two hours on foot, has been carefully slaughtered and that the meat has been matured for 14 days in a vacuum. The initiative has been quite successful and 60 farmers are currently selling their meat under this label.

Furthermore, in order to cope with the problem of maintaining areas that have suffered as a result of declining agriculture, LEADER has introduced new jobs and occupations that are essential in preventing the deterioration of rural areas.

Lesson seven: Lastly, LEADER has helped to bring an end to the traditional conflict between nature conservation and development, by advocating the need for a gradual process of education.

Environmental concerns are often perceived by local players as a source of restrictions, especially where they involve protected areas, which arouses strong opposition when such areas are imposed by decree. It is only possible through a gradual process of education and consultation to secure acceptance for changes in the way resources are exploited. Such an approach takes time, but also requires the proponents of such new practices to acquire a legitimacy in the community and, above all, prove the economic benefits of such practices.

EXAMPLE

In order to overcome the resistance of livestock producers to the creation of the Haute-Sure national park (Luxembourg), which was in conflict with some of their intensive livestock production practices, the LEADER group recruited a technical expert who gradually convinced the livestock producers – starting with the younger ones – to produce quality meat using less intensive and more environmentally-friendly livestock production methods. A quality label was introduced (“Véi vum Sei”) making it possible to sell the meat at a higher price. Although the principle of the park has not yet been accepted by all the livestock producers, the trend is now in this direction.

Conclusion

After eight years of experimentation in a wide range of different territorial contexts, LEADER has helped to forge the new approach to the environment that is emerging today, by providing answers to basic questions and to the methodological problems that arise when this new approach is put into practice.

However, there remains much to be done in order to ensure that the environment is taken fully into account in territorial approaches. For example, the LEADER groups have only had a limited opportunity to intervene on more fundamental environmental issues such as pollution, maintaining biodiversity, protecting biotopes or spatial planning. Some of the reasons for this may be the difficulty that LAGs have in establishing partnerships with players and/or institutions with the know-how and legitimacy to intervene in such fields. This because these players and/or institutions come from outside the area (universities, specialised research centres), or because they form part of more restrictive protection approaches, or even because they work in fields of no direct concern to LEADER (infrastructure, planning and regional development, etc.). The creation of links with other players specialising in the environment and in spatial planning in order to turn these aspects into fully-fledged themes of the territorial approach still poses a major challenge to local action groups, especially under the LEADER+ Initiative.

1.3 Identifying what room for manoeuvre exists to improve environmental competitiveness

a) Diverse environmental competitiveness situations

There are many possible causes for the lack of environmental competitiveness in certain areas.

- > In some cases it is the environment itself that has deteriorated, with serious pollution (such as soil pollution in certain areas where there is intensive agriculture), degradation of landscapes (uncontrolled building and infrastructure, encroachment into forested areas), local heritage in a state of neglect (farmland, buildings, historic monuments, etc.).
- > In other cases it is the local players' lack of consideration for their environment that is at fault (lack of concern for environmental issues, considering the environment as an inexhaustible resource, resulting in uncontrolled hunting, pumping excessive amounts of water out of ground water aquifers, etc.).
- > In yet other cases the cause is the local population's difficulty in accessing natural and heritage resources (large tracts of land owned by absentee landowners, such as in Scotland or the southern Iberian peninsula, rigid regulations preventing redevelopment of the historical heritage through conversion, etc.).
- > Lastly, in some cases it is the lack of cooperation between institutions and users that triggers the process of environmental degradation due to a failure to resolve disputes (conservation areas whose use is regulated adjacent to areas subject to environmentally-destructive practices).

In each of the above situations, there are varying amounts of room for manoeuvre – and in some cases it is very restricted.

- > In cases where the environment itself has deteriorated, it is still possible to restore the natural or heritage resources, but this takes varying amounts of time and investment (e.g. about 50 euros for each cubic metre of soil polluted with heavy metals). Removing pollution from a water course or recreating a landscape requires less funding but more time, and rebuilding a historic monument poses problems when the required technical skills have died out. This is aside from the fact that prior agreement needs to be sought between the players concerned, which is not always possible.

- > In cases where the main obstacle is the players' lack of consideration for their environment, galvanising local players and raising their awareness for resolving this complex cultural problem is not something that can be achieved overnight.
- > In cases where the problem is the population's lack of access to resources, first it is necessary to pinpoint the players responsible for this constraint, in particular the owners, and then to engage in negotiations.
- > Lastly, if the problem is a lack of cooperation between users and institutions, then creating forums for negotiation can help to solve it. This involves changing attitudes and introducing new institutional management procedures.

b) Varying degrees of urgency to heighten environmental competitiveness

Where there is little room for manoeuvre, the question is whether environmental competitiveness is essential in this particular case? Is it urgent? Surely a number of areas have, for several generations, based their economic development on a process of environmental degradation?

The fact is that nowadays, generally speaking, it has become difficult to secure a rural area's development without a minimum level of environmental competitiveness:

- > since consumers are becoming ever more demanding regarding the quality of the products and services they buy, environmental quality has become a key criterion;
- > since environmental problems now extend beyond the strictly local scale (e.g. when an area's polluted waters drain into a wider catchment basin), it is becoming virtually impossible for a rural area to remain aloof from the general trend;
- > the aesthetic quality and upkeep of landscapes and the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems are shared values in today's European society.

Whether or not the matter is urgent is no less dependent on the different types of area.

- > Some areas are still able to secure their development without needing to worry about environmental competitiveness in the short term. This is particularly so for farming areas where yields are still high enough to provide farmers with a comfortable income on the market in undifferentiated products (e.g. where there are large-scale cereal-growing plains). However, such areas

are often highly dependent on advanced technologies, the environmental impact of which has still not been fully assessed and may at any time be called into question if an unexpected health problem were to emerge.

- > For other areas, environmental competitiveness has become a question of survival. Revitalising a rural area that has, for example, suffered a crisis in a formerly important industrial sector calls for environmental problems to be resolved (conversion of derelict industrial land, treatment of polluted soil, reclamation and development of former quarries or waste storage areas, restructuring the local heritage, etc.).
- > For many isolated areas that have undergone rural depopulation, the environment is an important asset in regaining some form of economic competitiveness.
- > Finally, there are numerous areas where the acquisition of environmental competitiveness is not a question of economic survival but there is strong support for it (from environmental associations, local consumer groups, monument preservation groups, etc.). Any effort to harness local support must therefore take the environmental dimension into account.

c) Conflict between urgency and taking the necessary time

In some cases there is a conflict between the urgency with which environmental competitiveness needs to be acquired and the timeframe required for achieving it. For instance, even if relaunching a spa for tourism proves to be essential to revitalising an area in the short term, the need to redevelop certain buildings and secure the required agreement of their owners may mean that the process will take several years.

However, this conflict may be easier to resolve than might first appear:

- > Where there is urgency, it is generally easier to gain the support of local players and so shorten the timeframe required.
- > Where there is no urgency, the timeframe tends to be longer because it is much more difficult to garner support from local players. In this case alternative anchorage points and entryways will need to be found.

Chapter 2

Evaluating the environmental competitiveness of an area

Evaluating the environmental competitiveness of an area

How can an area's environmental competitiveness be evaluated? In other words, how is it possible to evaluate the ability of local players to preserve, develop and enhance their environment, not only economically but also socially, culturally and aesthetically?

As we have seen, the player/environment relationship is at the heart of this issue. In such a complex issue as this, some aspects are tangible, such as the way in which men and women treat the environment in their everyday lives, on farms, in business, etc. And then there are aspects that are less immediately tangible underlying them, more difficult to change in the long term, i.e. the rules of the game and the deeply ingrained values that underpin people's habits and behaviour.

Evaluating an area's environmental competitiveness therefore means peeling away these various layers of the player/environment relationship in order to understand how they interact, starting with the most tangible aspects before proceeding to the more deep-rooted, but in the long term more decisive, issues. This calls for four stages of analysis:

- > The first stage is an inventory of **the existing situation**, seen from the angle of the potential and **limitations** of what is possible and tolerable in the relationship between players and their environment.
- > The second stage corresponds to the actual physical relationship between players and the environment, i.e. systems of exploitation and **utilisation practices**.
- > The third stage involves striving to ascertain **which rules** govern the terms of the relationship, in particular ownership rights, rights of use, etc.
- > Finally the fourth stage represents **the values** underpinning the players' practices and behaviour towards the environment.

These four stages of analysis and their interactions can be applied to each of the various components of the area's capital involved in the player/environment relationship. Four of the eight territorial capital components described in Part 1 are of particular relevance:

- > **human resources**, i.e. the local players themselves;
- > **physical resources**, i.e. everything to do with the environment itself;
- > the landscape, not only in terms of the spatial planning of the area's physical resources but also as an embodiment of the concrete and real-life **image** of the area and its environment;
- > **external relations and markets** as a form of relationship between the local environment and players from outside the area (new consumer demands, global environmental concerns, etc.).

2.1 Human resources

Analysing the human resources is the starting point for evaluating the player/environment relationship and an area's environmental competitiveness. How many people live in the area and, more importantly, what are their activities and what rights and values do they share? All of these elements must be taken into account when gauging the "human burden" placed on the area's natural and physical resources.

a) Existing situation and its limitations: the demographic burden

General population statistics make it possible to assess the global “burden” on the area and pressure on the environment. However, such global assessments are not particularly significant because the key factors are the type of activity, consumer profiles and social behaviour. Such information can be refined by taking into account:

- > the socio-professional distribution, in particular occupations directly concerned with the environment (farmers, shepherds, forestry workers, tourist operators, entrepreneurs exploiting natural resources, etc.);
- > the geographic distribution, highlighting the disparities (e.g. densely populated micro-regions alongside depopulated micro-regions);
- > seasonal variations (e.g. the number of tourists present in the area during the summer period).

Analysing the demographic burden makes it possible to ask pertinent questions about:

- > the upkeep of resources, especially the landscape (Are there enough farmers, forestry workers, etc. to maintain the area? Have contracts for maintaining the area been concluded with farmers or other professionals?);
- > the ability to absorb growth in tourism (How is waste processing organised during the tourist season?).

The issue then leads beyond considerations about the demographic burden to the relationship between the communities living in an area and their environment. This relationship is expressed in three different ways, each corresponding to the levels mentioned earlier (utilisation practices, rules and values):

- > Relationship of exploitation: this varies from one person and one occupation to another.
- > Relationship of ownership: this concerns any person, family, business or public organisation that owns a plot of land or buildings, in other words a portion of the landscape and of the area’s environmental capital;
- > Relationship of identity: any inhabitant who comes into daily contact with the physical elements around him ends up by identifying with the environment in which he lives, especially with the landscape, and by developing an emotional tie with it.

These three relationships have intrinsically different characteristics that are interrelated, superimposed and sometimes even conflictual.

b) Utilisation practices: relationship of exploitation

The farmer, gardener, forestry worker, architect, etc. each act on the environment in their own way, as do the public authorities when they intervene in response to public needs (opening a dump, granting a forestry concession to private firms that will create jobs in the area, etc.).

The relationship of exploitation is one that is:

- > compartmentalised, with each player, family or firm acting on the environment within the confines of the area of which they have usufruct and responsibility (under whatever legal status), in most cases without taking into account the overall framework. The result of such compartmentalisation is a landscape with a wide diversity of forms (patchwork landscape);
- > different and potentially conflictual, interests and approaches may coexist in a single area or certain types of exploitation may harm neighbouring areas.

Consultation mechanisms should therefore be examined when disputes arise over modes of exploitation (pollution caused by intensive agriculture or livestock production and tourism development, disputes about the use of buildings, etc.): who takes the decisions in such cases?

However, it is also necessary to take into account “codes of good conduct” established either implicitly or explicitly by the players themselves in order to secure a better market position or, more generally, to preserve the environment.

In the past there have been a great many different forms of social organisation and cooperation for managing common assets (cooperatives of peasant farmers for exploiting mountain pastures, for irrigation, for exploiting forests, etc.). Several of these forms of collective management have disappeared along with the system of exploitation that gave rise to them. However, modern forms of cooperation are now being established: nature conservation contracts (compensatory payments), contracts for maintaining the landscape, etc.

c) Rules: the relationship of ownership

The relationship of ownership is a formal individual, collective or institutional relationship, the nature of which depends on the legal framework, in the case of private individuals, and on procedures for assigning powers in the case of public organisations.

It is the nature of such ownership that will determine the limitations of the territorial development initiative or, at least, that will determine the type of cooperation required to overcome legal obstacles. The number of absentee owners, the amount of abandoned or under-exploited private and public resources and the trend towards the concentration and reallocation of resources (land and buildings) should therefore be taken into account. It may also be useful to consider what risk there is of resources being abandoned, by seeking to find out how many owners over the age of 55 have no heirs, for example.

If resources that are key features of the landscape's character or classed as part of the historic heritage are falling into neglect or have been abandoned, it is necessary to find out who the owners are, what type of cooperation would be required to restore such resources, whether the public heritage is maintained, and finally if a reassignment of functions can be envisaged in order to create new opportunities.

Parks and protected areas raise questions about the institutional management system, regarding decisions that have influenced their development. What changes have taken place over recent years? Who took the decision? Did this create conflict between public services and private individuals or between administrations? More generally the relationship between public property and private property should be examined, as well as ways of exploiting resources in and around protected areas. One frequently asked question about the sort of relationship between public and private spaces concerns respect for biodiversity in the reforestation of non-protected areas.

d) Values: the relationship of identity

Above and beyond relationships of ownership, the values shared by local players play a decisive role in their relationship with the environment and in their behaviour. These values lie in great measure in the local players' relationship of identity with the environment.

The relationship of identity is a profound and often unconscious relationship that is nevertheless strong. It is also collective in nature (generally it is shared by all of the area's inhabitants, including those who have moved away from the area). It is at times when a threat hangs over the environment (e.g. the construction of a road that is liable to destroy the harmony of a valley) that the relationship of identity is manifested. It can then become a development lever, especially when it arouses a collective awareness or compels people to work in consultation.

However, it is rare for the inhabitants of rural areas to also attribute a socio-economic value to the landscape that can support a long-term strategy or foster new opportunities.

Analysing the area's capital therefore involves ascertaining the nature of the ties that bind the population to its area. It means answering the following questions: Are people sufficiently aware of the historical value of monuments? Have the changes undergone by the environment over the years – colours of the landscape, extent of river pollution, development in biodiversity – been properly identified? Does the population exert pressure to ensure that monuments, landscapes, roads, trees and the lesser heritage are maintained? How does the population feel about neglected resources (disused farming and industrial areas, railway lines, houses, terraces, former cultivated land, etc.)? Has there been any intervention from historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, restorers, etc.? What impact has this had on the local population's knowledge about their area?

2.2 Physical resources of an area

Analysing an area's physical resources is the second step in analysing the player/environment relationship. It makes it possible, once how much of a burden local players place on their environment has been gauged, to analyse this player/environment relationship from the standpoint of the area's physical resources and the extent to which they are able to support it.

a) Existing situation and its limitations

The first aim is to take stock of the area's physical resources by drawing up an inventory of: land, water resources, forests and biodiversity, as well as architectural heritage (listed monuments, lesser heritage). This inventory, which is both quantitative (surface area, rates of flow, etc.) and qualitative (quality of land and water, the architectural heritage, biodiversity, protected areas, etc.), makes it possible to define the limitations of what can be achieved and to draw a line between exploitation systems that are sustainable and those that are unsustainable under the particular environmental conditions.

b) Utilisation practices: systems of utilisation and their impact

Analysing the relationship of exploiting natural resources from the standpoint of the resources themselves involves examining what systems of utilisation exist in an area.

What are the characteristics of the area's existing systems for exploiting agriculture, pastureland, forest, tourism, mines, etc.? What is their relative importance in terms of land and what is the relationship between them? How much land is used for other activities (industry, housing, leisure, etc.). The same questions should be asked about water, timber, etc.

This analysis of the systems of utilisation of physical resources makes it possible to ascertain the level of exploitation compared with the existing situation and hence to pinpoint environmental weakness, in particular:

> Neglected resources or resources which, since they are no longer exploited, call for targeted intervention: derelict industrial and farming land, mines and railways, bridges, roads, etc., which have lost value due to changes in the market. Forests that are no longer exploited because of falling wood prices, and are encroaching into villages, also call for measures whose cost outstrips their strictly economic value.

- > Resources that need to be monitored and conserved – such as water, which in some European areas requires a particularly far-sighted form of management.
- > The negative impact of human activity on the environment, such as excess nitrogen compounds and the use of chemical fertilisers, which contaminate ground water aquifers, and chemical products (pesticides, growth regulators, fodder additives, etc.), which enter the natural cycle and accumulate in the food chain, reducing the *diversity* and *stability* of ecosystems and of the biosphere, etc.

Analysing utilisation practices also concerns the way in which the architectural heritage is used: how is it possible to identify changes in the nature and use of the architectural heritage and evaluate its maintenance or renovation. The possibilities of converting the neglected heritage can also be evaluated within this context, by applying the standards governing the renovation of the architectural heritage and the distribution of institutional responsibilities.

Finally, another important aspect of systems for utilising resources relates to renewable energies.

EXAMPLE

The local cooperative "Baywind", situated in Ulverston (Cumbria, England, United Kingdom), has signed a contract with Wind Company, a firm specialising in wind energy, to manage electricity production from five turbines. Sixty percent of the shareholders are from the region. The investors are paid 7% of the net annual profits from selling electricity, a sum that can be converted into reductions in their electricity bill. Some 0.5% of the revenues are invested in energy saving measures (e.g. low watt light bulbs for public lighting).

EXAMPLE

In the Sierra de Segura region (Andalusia, Spain), a group comprised of the Seville electricity company, the renewable energy institute of the Ministry of trade and industry and the Madrid institute of telecommunication engineers offered to install a complete electricity system in 57 houses dotted around five mountain villages. Now the population has taken these new technologies totally on board, thanks to a series of awareness-raising efforts since 1988. In 1993, a local association, which went on to become the LAG, launched the theme of the “photo-voltaic route”, brings together all types of renewable energy exploitation (water, wind and biomass). This has updated the area’s image and a good many inhabitants have decided against the idea of abandoning their village and instead have started to modernise their homes.

c) Rules of utilisation: the rules of use, taking costs into account

What are the rules governing systems of utilisation? Apart from individual or collective ownership, this includes rental systems, rights of use, etc. Rules have also been established for the collective use of resources, in particular for taking into account costs to the community.

Individual players often overexploit publicly accessible production factors such as water and air, or factors that fail to be taken into account when calculating costs, such as land fertility, because the benefit they draw from them is rarely correlated with the losses engendered to the community. Even though laws and regulations often exist in this domain, to what extent are they enforced? What are their limitations?

More generally, for some of the resources considered to be public assets there is no owner to establish their price on the basis of their scarcity, which can result in significant losses for rural areas. Many original environmental assets that are symbols of an area’s authenticity (isolated trees, remote biotopes, rare species, unusual topographical forms, old buildings, etc.) have also disappeared in the race for productivity. Society is aware of the problem, but rarely manages to produce a reaction commensurate with the threat.

In general, society has recourse to two stopgap measures:

- > zoning and legally specifying the type of land use, making it possible to limit changes in land use and to commit the authorities to new development projects;
- > negotiating and establishing “rules of good conduct” for farmers, entrepreneurs, etc. in line with particularly rigorous quality criteria for sensitive sites (areas where spring water is tapped, inhabited areas, etc.).

d) Values: awareness of the need to preserve and replenish natural resources

Underpinning practices and rules are the values that the inhabitants attribute to the natural and physical resources of their area, as well as their awareness of the need to preserve and renew them.

The value accorded to such resources depends first and foremost on the economic interest they represent, although other types of value are also taken into consideration. For instance, when it comes to maintaining hedgerows, embankments, lanes, etc., a farmer’s attitude will often be based on considerations other than economic interest alone.

Likewise, protecting the local fauna depends more than anything on the value accorded by the local population to the species concerned. In certain cases, such species are considered as a heritage to be protected, whilst in others they are seen merely as a hunting resource, or even a threat to their activities.

The value that populations attribute to physical resources is linked to the notion of a “collective asset”, a common reference implicitly shared by an area’s inhabitants.

The value accorded to such resources and awareness of the need to preserve them also depend on local players being aware of the importance of such resources to the ecological balance. The use of procedures for monitoring and publicising the impact of human activities on natural resources is a means of reinforcing such knowledge and awareness.

2.3 Landscape and rural land

The landscape is primarily the visual expression of the spatial planning of the area's physical resources. However, it is also a strong element of the area's identity. The four elements of analysis that we propose to examine introduce successively deeper methods of examining landscapes and land in rural areas:

- > first, analysing the **landscape in its visual expression** (analysis of the existing situation) provides an initial interpretation of the relationship between man and his environment down through history;
- > second, analysing the **spatial planning of an area's resources** makes it possible to understand the different functions of the rural area concerned (level of utilisation practices);
- > third, analysing the **rules on landscape and spatial planning** – whether formal or implicit – provides an even more precise interpretation of the relationship between human activities and the environment;
- > fourth, analysing the **inhabitants' attachment to the landscape**, as both a collective factor of the area and an identity factor, is the most refined level of analysis.

a) Existing situation: the landscape in its visual expression

The landscape is the contemporary manifestation of the entire history of natural ecosystems and of the interaction between these ecosystems and society. The landscape is the result of the successive forms of utilisation that have been superimposed over the years and bear the stamp of the know-how and investment of hundreds of generations and the vestiges of local economic flows. We rediscover these features not only in agricultural and/or natural land, but also in built-up areas: villages and sites where products and services are processed, sold and consumed, etc.

Analysing the landscape therefore provides a valuable element of information and insight into an area. It enables us to understand how, over the centuries, humans were able to exploit the potential of natural resources and establish rules for managing their area.

A landscape can be analysed either by direct observation or photographically (i.e., by taking terrestrial photographs from strategic points and/or aerial photographs), supplemented by maps, and comparing them with older photographs, etc. Moreover, it is useful to study vertical sections along certain axes to reveal the successive strata, forms of land use, production systems, etc.

b) Utilisation practices: satisfying the major functions of the rural area

The landscape is not only the visual remnant of an area's history. It is also the living expression of the contemporary rural area. However, the rural area is the subject of expectations not only of the area's inhabitants, but also of society as a whole. Rural landscapes therefore have a distinctly collective character that goes far beyond the boundaries of the area itself.

Indeed, the rural space is expected to satisfy several functions, representing a number of different landscape and spatial planning requirements.

VARIOUS POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS FOR THE RURAL SPACE

Functions	Examples of landscape and spatial planning requirements
<p>1. Economic function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To ensure quality agricultural production that respects the environment > To develop local resources by ensuring that they are regenerated: wood, energy, etc. > To supply local markets > To attract new investment and workers 	<p>To ensure the syntonetic relationship between agricultural production and the natural environment (topography, type of land, water resources, etc.)</p> <p>To ensure access routes to markets: to valorise existing access routes and/or create new ones</p> <p>To create/adapt the other infrastructure necessary to economic activities</p>
<p>2. Ecological function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To preserve biodiversity > To preserve and valorise distinctive natural and landscape features > To absorb carbon dioxide and other polluting substances 	<p>To ensure spatial planning that maximises biodiversity: maintaining the diversity of biotopes (hedgerows, water courses, etc.); “patchwork” landscapes; organisation of biological corridors, etc.</p>
<p>3. Residential function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To accommodate people wishing to stay > To integrate newcomers from urban areas > To ensure the quality of life of residents 	<p>To provide conveniences whilst preserving the typical features of the local architecture</p> <p>To ensure nearby services</p>
<p>4. Cohesion function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To ensure social integration and combat exclusion > To cater for the elderly > To turn the rural area into one of conviviality and good citizenship 	<p>To plan space in such a way as to foster socialising and social integration: village squares, community leisure centres, etc.</p>
<p>5. Cultural and educational function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To promote the values of the heritage and of local history > To turn the rural space into a place of learning and discovery 	<p>To preserve and valorise the visual features that form part of the area’s identity: architecture, architectural heritage, land division, etc.</p> <p>Make the landscape a place of discovery and learning: visitors’ centres, etc.</p>
<p>6. Recreational function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To meet the various needs of urban society: places for relaxation, leisure, sporting and keep-fit activities, etc. > Linking the needs of local populations with those of visitors 	<p>To ensure the aesthetic quality of the landscape.</p> <p>To build meeting and leisure places highlighting the values of the heritage.</p>

Analysing the landscape is a key element in assessing the area's ability to fulfil these different functions, especially the links between the economic and ecological functions and functions relating to the quality of life (aesthetics, comforts, social life, education and leisure activities, etc.).

Very often only certain of these functions are fulfilled to the detriment of others, or conflict with them (as in the case of certain intensive agricultural practices that fail to consider the environment, aesthetics and/or the quality of life). Furthermore, land given over to intensive agriculture no longer serves nearby consumer centres and marginal land no longer appears to be of use to anyone. Such polarisation of land – overexploitation on the one hand and neglect on the other – results in the disappearance of the landscape's former functionalities. The landscape becomes impoverished and its functional relationship with the people living closest to it is then called into question. This is a cause of social concern that goes hand in hand with a growing awareness of the damage being done to the environment and to the integrity of ecosystems.

Running counter to these trends are multiple forms of complementarity and synergy. The crux of the matter will therefore be to find a balance in the composition of the landscape that will make it possible to fulfil all the different functions of the rural space and to mutually reinforce them without harming any individual function.

According to this approach, livestock farming and forestry activities have a key role to play. How can agriculture be enabled to step beyond the boundaries of its traditional productive function and to become a component of other functions too? This question links with the issue of the multi-functionality of agriculture, which today has become a key issue at European level.

c) Rules on the use of rural land

The functional analysis of rural land represents a new approach to planning and regional development. In addition to the former approach of establishing rules on a purely administrative basis (land use plans, local development plans, etc.), there is now a more complex approach according to which natural resources, aesthetics, the quality of life and social cohesion are gaining in importance.

As a result, planning and regional development has evolved towards a more partnership-based approach that involves exchanges between different areas of expertise, plus a commitment from local players to implement jointly agreed rules. It is no longer merely a case of following pre-established rules, but of promoting consultation strategies in order to ensure diversification and complementarity between methods of land use and to prevent their polarisation.

Consultation can therefore lead to the definition of landscape and land use guidelines for use in contracts. In France, for example, the “territorial exploitation contracts” [*Contrats territoriaux d'exploitation*] make a portion of farmers' subsidies conditional upon certain undertakings by farmers to abide by environmental standards.

This raises the issue of developments in land use rules in rural areas. Are we in a situation where only the law prevails, with each individual free to do whatever he sees fit within the limits of administratively defined land use plans? Or do other forms of agreement exist for preserving landscapes? Are any consultation processes under way that may culminate in such agreements, or are such processes likely to emerge?

d) Values: the attachment of local players to the landscape and the landscape as a vehicle of image and identity

How is it possible to foster cooperation and public debate on the subject of the use of rural spaces and landscapes? Without a shadow of doubt, local players' attachment to the landscape as the expression of a shared identity is a key element to achieving cooperation and public debate. The landscape is of concern to all because it is the living environment with which each person identifies.

More often than not it is an underlying attachment that is not explicitly expressed, but which comes to light in a situation where the landscape is under threat. Any event that exposes the landscape's vulnerability, for example, can be enough to provoke an immediate reaction.

EXAMPLE

The great storm of 1989 in France raised the awareness of the population of the Lanvollon region (Britanny, France) that it was necessary to stem the area's degradation as a result of overexploiting the land. During wide spread consultations between landowners and local authorities, a land management scheme was developed that made it possible to reconcile farming with the environment throughout the area.

In many cases it is obvious gradual changes that finally trigger a collective desire to recreate the original landscape.

EXAMPLE

In Majorca the disappearance of dry stone walls and farm terraces due to depopulation prompted the Consell Insular de Mallorca (Sierra de Tramuntana, Balearic Islands, Spain) to create a vocational college to train young people in traditional building techniques. In 1991, the LEADER group launched a support programme to restore the terraces and create a tourist walking trail ("stone route"). The Sierra de Tramuntana region has now become an internationally renowned skills centre for dry-stone building. This is quite apart from the fact that restoring the landscape heritage has provided jobs to many of the region's young people.

It is also possible to valorise the landscape by integrating it into other elements of an area's identity, such as culture.

EXAMPLE

In the Haut-Jura nature reserve (Franche-Comté, France), a festival has been created, called "Bis Repetita", based on an inventory of the "sound landscape" jointly drawn up by a musical percussionist and a Park technician. A tourist route and several multimedia products were then created for a wider public.

It is at times like these that it is possible to appreciate the local players' attachment to the landscape and its role in the territorial identity and to use this attachment as the basis for constructing a strategy.

The landscape can therefore serve as a "projection screen" to unite local players. By using the landscape as a unifying theme it can be possible to progress from considering an issue only in the short term, to taking a long-term view, with the landscape helping to "crystallise" the interests at stake.

2.4 External relations and markets

After human resources, physical resources and their spatial planning comes the fourth component of the player/environment relationship: external relations and markets. Indeed, an area's environment concerns not only its inhabitants but also society in general. Society expresses certain expectations of its environment in terms of markets and formal requirements that constitute key levers upon which the players can base their area's development.

a) Existing situation: identifying the new requirements and changes in them

At market level, consumer requirements take the form of demand for quality products; for labels based on environmental specifications, such as organically-farmed products, products from protected areas; new livestock production requirements (natural feedstuffs, animal welfare, etc.); and natural products in general. Also in this category are tourists' environmental demands for the services offered to them.

In addition to market requirements, we find other more explicit forms of requirement, such as regional, national or European legislation and recommendations regarding environmental protection, Agenda 21, national and international programmes to curb desertification, etc. Apart from these formal requirements, there are initiatives by civic organisations to promote the environment (lobbying groups, non-governmental environmental protection organisations, etc.) that exert maximum pressure to influence the decisions and recommendations of the public authorities and frequently lead practical action in the field.

As a result, numerous rural areas are subject to interventions from national or international environmental organisations, usually acting in partnership with local organisations, thereby bringing into the area all sorts of knowledge, skills and support (institutional, financial, methodological, etc.) for the environment.

An overview of these diverse types of external requirements and/or interventions and changes in them makes it possible to define what opportunities are available for developing an area's environmental competitiveness.

For example, the growing demand for organic or natural products provides an opportunity to develop environmental standards in the area's agricultural production systems⁴.

b) Utilisation practices

How are these new requirements promoted at area level? Are only a few individual players concerned, or do collective approaches already exist that could serve as the basis for common standards at local level? If not, what are the chances of such an approach emerging?

In the case of markets, for example, this can take the form of creating labels for the area. However, at present labels often promote the intrinsic qualities of the product whilst ignoring production conditions, even though reference to the environment can be a key element of competitiveness for all products from rural areas, whether food or tourist products.

LEADER groups have carried out numerous initiatives to highlight the importance of a clear relationship between product quality and the landscape, especially in the case of meat. By agreeing to apply less intensive farming standards, livestock producers have promoted labels associated with harmonious landscapes or with areas that also cater for tourists, treat water, respect animal welfare, etc.

EXAMPLE

At Umhausen (Ötztal LEADER area, Tyrol, Austria), an entrepreneur invested in a medium-sized wool-washing plant in order to meet the development needs of a line of textile products that produces no waste from processing. The plant uses water from a river that is 100% soft, which makes it possible to wash the wool completely using only soap, producing no waste water. By rebuilding a value-added processing chain using wool from alpine sheep, a product that has been undervalued for many years, the entrepreneur and the LAG are hoping to diversify the activities of the valley, which lives mainly from mountain tourism, which have a serious impact on the landscape.

EXAMPLE

A young entrepreneur from Gaeltacht Cork (Ireland) invented an organic fertiliser by recycling waste from a mushroom-growing firm near his home. With the support of the LEADER group, he created a company to market his product, called "Earthcare Organic Compost".

c) Rules

Fulfilling external requirements, whether they are expressed through markets or recommendations, calls for preliminary studies to be carried out, agreements to be negotiated and rules to be defined, either at the level of the individual farm/firm or at a more collective level. In many cases the key aim is to reduce pressure on the environment.

Not only business firms but also the local authorities can considerably reduce their consumption of physical and energy resources by introducing certain internationally recognised production standards, such as Agenda 21.

For example, carrying out a corporate "eco-audit" allows a company to reduce its consumption of water, energy and raw materials, which not only translates into financial gains but also gives the company a positive image.

An "environmental assessment" is a more collective approach that goes beyond the scale of an individual company. It assesses the consumption of natural resources and the environmental impact of a product or range of products. Essentially it is a guidance instrument that makes it possible to choose between diverse solutions.

d) Universally recognised values

The ever-stronger emergence of universally recognised values, such as sustainable development, landscape quality, heritage preservation, etc., is a considerable advantage to the environmental competitiveness of rural areas. And nowadays it is becoming increasingly difficult for rural areas to remain aloof from such issues.

How are such universal values recognised and shared at area level? Clearly it will be difficult to attract the support of producers and other entrepreneurs for negotiation processes concerning production standards unless they share a number of beliefs concerning respect for the environment and preservation of the heritage, especially if at first sight there is no obvious economic interest.

[4] The European Commission is working on defining appropriate agro-environmental indicators and has published several reports and other documents relating to the integration of environmental concerns into agriculture. See Internet site http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/envir/index_en.htm

2.5 Conclusion

At this stage it is useful to summarise the various elements discussed in relation to the four levels of analysis applied to each of an area's components.

This provides us with an analysis of the player/environment relationship from a variety of complementary and interrelated standpoints. This allows multiple synergies to emerge, making it possible to gain an overview and to lay the foundations for a strategy to enhance environmental competitiveness.

		<u>LEVELS</u>			
		1- Analysis of the existing situation	2-Utilisation practices	3- Rules	4- Values
COMPONENTS	Human resources	Analysis in terms of the human burden	Relationships of exploitation	Relationships of ownership	Relationships of identity
	Physical resources	Analysis in terms of exploitation potential	Systems of exploitation	Rules of use	Awareness of the need for replenishment
	Landscape/ Rural space	Visual analysis of landscapes	Functions of the rural space	Planning and regional development	Attachment to the landscape
	External relations and markets	Analysing new requirements	Markets affected and external interventions	Eco-audits, environmental assessments, etc.	Espousal of universal values

Chapter 3

Reflecting on a strategy for improving environmental competitiveness

Reflecting on a strategy for improving environmental competitiveness

This chapter deals with developing a strategy to improve environmental competitiveness based on the situation and issues affecting the rural area concerned. Due to the wide variety of possible situations, we start by addressing general issues before going on to provide a few concrete examples.

3.1 Conventional territorial project approaches

The strategic environmental approaches that have predominated in the past can generally be characterised as follows:

- > they have tended to be **environmentally focused sectorial interventions**, which are not integrated with other forms of intervention;
- > in the main they are designed and implemented by **the public authorities**, without any real partnership with private, voluntary or civic organisations;
- > more often than not they are **defensive and restrictive strategies** that do not always suffice to bridge the divide between environmental protection and development;
- > sometimes they are **compensation strategies**, introduced to counterbalance or limit the damage caused by business and industry, or to make up for shortcomings, by means of awareness-raising and education initiatives aimed at producers and consumers.

a) Environmentally focused sectorial interventions

In conventional strategic approaches, natural resources and the environment are treated as objects in their own right, divorced from their context, that have to be protected from external assaults and excessive exploitation.

This is because environmental protection is the responsibility of specialised departments within the central government (Ministry of the environment, water and forestry department, etc.), which take a sectorial approach. In the past, such government services have

tended to ignore the relationship between inhabitants and their environment or treated this as a separate issue or even a potential threat, but never as an advantage and still less as the key element in an integrated approach in favour of the environment.

However we are now seeing a number of changes in the interventions of specialised services and, in particular, a bid to forge closer links with local players. In France, for example, the national forestry organisation (*ONF*) is conducting a number of different local experiments, such as the establishment – in partnership with local schools – of an arboretum close to La Mure dans l'Isère (Rhône-Alpes), designed as a place of learning and ecological discovery for children and disabled people.

b) Defensive government strategies

Legislation and regulations

There is a multitude of restrictive laws and regulations regarding environmental protection and human health, which are increasingly being harmonised Europe-wide, in order to provide a coherent framework for protecting the quality of life and preventing any disastrous effects from potential “eco-dumping”.

For example, there are regulations regarding the level of nitrates in ground water aquifers, a ban on hormones in animal feed, maximum distance thresholds for transporting animals to the slaughterhouse and procedures for authorising pesticides and genetically modified organisms. Such control measures can be used as a sales argument for consumers in search of health products.

EXAMPLE

On the day when the Nuovo Cilento cooperative, established in the Cilento national park (Campania, Italy), decided to use the ban on pesticides to produce organic olive oil from the local olive variety, WWF Italy helped it to market this oil through an affiliated organisation using the panda as its logo. This led to strong growth in production, rising from two tons produced by five farmers in 1995, to 13 tons produced by 15 farmers today.

Creating nature reserves

Many LAGs carry out their activities either inside or alongside a **national park** and most LEADER areas include **protected landscapes** and **regional nature reserves**. The latter, as well as **UNESCO biosphere reserves**, have been set up to preserve and develop the man-made heritage. These protected areas are subject to a number of restrictions on exploitation aimed at preventing the disappearance of elements of the landscape, historic monuments and distinctive architectural features. As it is a real “world environmental label”, being listed as a “biosphere reserve” may provide rural areas with the opportunity they are looking for to regain lost territorial competitiveness.

EXAMPLE

When it was decided to create a “biosphere reserve” in the isolated mountain region of Rhön, straddling the border between the three German Länder of Bavaria, Thuringen and Hesse, most people either had no idea what the future of this “reserve” would entail, or were simply sceptical. It took years of contacts, meetings, awareness campaigns and training courses to attract the interest of local farmers in the local market. Today, a number of hotels in the area offer products more than 50% of which are bought from local suppliers, based on the slogan “breakfast of local products”. Furthermore, the biosphere reserve has enabled farmers whose farms are situated at an altitude between 700 and 1000 metres, who would otherwise have been doomed to extinction, to survive with the help of the environmental income and by raising the local breed of sheep for the quality butchery trade.

c) Government compensation strategies

Repairing the damage

The first generation of environmental protection measures often led to relocating polluting industries and setting up dumps in rural areas, usually close to towns. Some such rural areas have attempted to take advantage of the situation by offering themselves up as dumping places for waste, but the costs in both ecological and image terms have often exceeded the financial gains.

Another example is mass tourism which, due to the excessive numbers of tourists using certain areas (e.g. ski runs), has wrought such damage that local councils have either restricted access to them or obliged visitors to take public transport. Tourist associations are attempting to distribute tourist numbers more evenly by diversifying into alternative tourist activities.

EXAMPLE

The Hohe Tauern national park (Austria), which straddles the Länder of Salzburg, the Tyrol and Carinthia, lies close to the panoramic route leading to Grossglockner, the highest peak in the Austrian Alps (3,797 m), which attracts over a million visitors during the summer season. The park also maintains a ski course on the Kitzsteinhorn glacier. Realising that neither a strict protection policy nor mass tourism provided the appropriate solution for environmental management, the park administration and the three LEADER groups operating in the region have been seeking to develop quality tourism in the less frequented areas, whilst at the same time emphasising ecology as the principal guarantee of quality. Based on the unifying theme of the national park as an element of identity, the Nationalparkregion Hohe Tauern LEADER group has created a label for the region's organic products (chiefly meat and dairy products), which is also accorded to gastronomic restaurants and craft workers.

Raising the awareness of producers and consumers

Regional and national authorities and non-governmental environmental protection organisations soon realised that there was no future in a policy based on the “command and control” principle. Without intrinsic motivation, a community will never take responsibility for protecting an area from which it feels excluded; on the contrary, it will try to infringe the regulations. Awareness-raising initiatives have therefore been established, frequently accompanied by educational activities to encourage local players to assume new tasks and learn new occupations associated with protecting the local area.

d) “Territorial project” approach

Today approaches that are developing in favour of the environment at every level, are according an ever-greater role to the participation of local communities and to the search for new forms of partnership. Gradually we are seeing the emergence of what could be termed a “territorial project” approach that can be characterised as follows:

- > isolated interventions are ruled out and instead environmental activities are set within an overall territorial strategy;
- > in order to achieve this, activities are based on a partnership between the public and private sectors;
- > it accords not only an economic, but also a cultural, social and human value to natural resources, preferring the “collective asset” concept to the “protected reserve” concept;
- > this enables it to reconcile exploitation with the preservation of resources;
- > it is encompassed within a coherent overall project to ensure the long-term preservation of the environment which requires fewer compensation strategies;
- > it is based on work to consolidate the population’s relationship of identity with its environment.

The territorial project approach fundamentally differs from conventional approaches in that it tackles the environmental issue via the player/environment relationship and not as an aim in itself. Consolidating and enhancing this relationship also benefits the environment, which is seen not only as a reserve for natural resources but also as a collective asset representing the area’s economic, social, human, cultural and aesthetic capital.

3.2 A few methodological guidelines

How can a strategy be developed for improving environmental competitiveness based on a territorial project approach? Clearly, the stages are the same as when drawing up a territorial strategy:

- > defining objectives that allow a general policy to be established;
- > establishing priorities based on what can and cannot be achieved in the short, medium and long term;- on this basis, ascertaining the best starting point; – seeking the methods best suited to medium-term implementation;
- > subsequently, seeking the methods that will optimise long-term consolidation;
- > not forgetting monitoring/evaluation methods and tools, which are essential to preventing divergences between expectations and reality.

3.2.1 Choosing a general policy.

Developing and implementing a global project that turns the environment and the relationship between local players and the environment into a key element of the area’s distinctiveness

Isolation, demographic dispersion and the problem of making local services viable in rural areas mean that, in most cases, rural areas are able to increase their competitiveness only by emphasising their distinctive qualities. This is one of the basic principles which LEADER groups⁵ have exploited to the full.

The environment and the relationship between local players and their environment are often a key element of such distinctiveness, although they are not sufficiently promoted. The environment is commonly associated with vestiges of the past (monuments, historic sites, etc.) or with the natural environment (nature reserves, visitors’ centres, etc.), or else a certain quality of life (tranquillity, pure air, landscape beauty, etc.), but is rarely seen as part of a whole which decisively contributes to making the rural area distinctive.

[5] See Part 1.

EXAMPLE

The managers of the Haut-Jura regional nature reserve (Franche-Comté, France) have adopted a strategy for integrating the players concerned with each of the five functions attributed to this nature reserve:

- > **Nature:** the park is developing in-depth knowledge about the area and changes in it to alert local councils to the risk of environmental degradation;
- > **Rural activities:** in consultation with trade organisations and local authorities, the park is helping young farmers to get started. It requests pilot “heritage production rights”, supports high quality cheese production and backs diversification initiatives (in particular by granting the Park’s label);
- > **Skills:** the park is endeavouring to draw up an inventory of traditional skills, helping to update them and ensuring that they are promoted. The aim of this initiative is cultural as well as economic, in that it helps with understanding the history of the local heritage. Furthermore, it encourages companies to integrate environmental, landscape and human quality requirements as factors of development;
- > **Tourism:** the park helps to arrange cooperation between tourist organisations in order to construct a coherent overall image of tourist offerings in the Haut-Jura region. Furthermore, it encourages joint consultation between ski stations in order to develop a global scheme for restructuring skiing areas, that specifies which developments should be introduced over the next ten years;
- > **Coherence:** the park is equipping itself with a real communication policy. It organises cultural and festive events, educates a number of different target groups and seeks to organise the area’s prime movers. The park also strives to develop close and sustained upstream consultation with the central government and the Regions in order to ensure the effective implementation of public rural development policies, whether initiated by the European or the national authorities. It works as the key partner of these bodies for testing innovative policies.⁶

This example gives some idea of the all-too-often neglected potential of the environment. It also shows just how important it is, from the outset, to conduct in-depth consultations on the environment **as part of a whole**, in order to define **long-term** objectives. Such consultations must be allowed to stray from the beaten track so that new solutions can be dreamt up that form part of an overall territorial strategy involving local players as much as possible.

EXAMPLE

The Lesachtal valley in Carinthia (Austria), lying deep in the mountains and accessible only via a rather narrow road, has suffered from heavy emigration of its young people. Here peasant farmers are involved in farming/livestock production and exploiting the forest on steep slopes. Summer tourism is closely linked with farming activities and there are no ski tows. There is a very good local community spirit and cultural life. In the 1980s, growing public awareness made it possible to launch a programme for developing the built heritage in a way elsewhere considered to be “backward”. The inhabitants deliberately decided against building ski tows for winter sports and restricted work to improve road access to the minimum. The number of tourist beds was limited in line with the number of inhabitants. Today the Lesachtal area is a model of sustainable local development. Tourism, which declined in the rest of Austria during the 1990s, remained at a high level. Numerous initiatives for promoting local products (sheep, handcrafted products, timber) have been adopted and new companies have set up in business, thereby reversing a trend which for many years was negative.

A global project in favour of the environment must first and foremost spring from the will of the local players, with individual projects having to be reoriented in order to adapt the area to a new function. This exercise may appear economically less profitable in the short term, but, in the longer term, it brings benefits at every level (economic, social, cultural, etc.).

3.2.2 Defining priorities in line with what can be achieved in the short, medium and long term

Designing and implementing an environmental competitiveness project that is integrated into an overall territorial strategy means engaging in a number of parallel processes.

- > The first aim is to **raise awareness** among the local players, which also involves enhancing **knowledge** about the environment.
- > At the implementation stage, **negotiations** must be conducted at every level: consultation with owners, search for mutual commitments or transfers of rights, creation of new forms of collective organisation, etc.

[6] Journal du Parc Issue 21, June 1999.

> **Market penetration** is essential to ensure the viability of the process, because owners, operators and entrepreneurs will usually only agree to changes where they are certain of at least their medium-term viability. Any **commitments** that are adopted in connection with global policies or international agreements and which take the form of preferential support (Agenda 21, agro-environmental support measures under the Common Agricultural Policy, etc.) also relate to market access.

> Finally there remains all the task of **physically transforming** the area, the visible embodiment of the global project, involving redevelopment, new planting schemes, new production systems, etc.

The above four processes are interactive: they do not follow on in succession but are conducted in parallel, mutually reinforcing one another. The following table proposes, for each of these processes, a possible breakdown into short-, medium- and long-term measures.

**POSSIBLE BREAKDOWN OF MEASURES FOR EACH OF THE PROCESSES
TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITIVENESS**

Four interactive processes	Knowledge and awareness	Negotiations and collective approaches	Market penetration and search for external commitments	Physical transformation of the environment
Short term	Collective work on people's perceptions Establishing an initial overall project	Raising the awareness and gaining the support of owners Reintroduction of past forms of organisation	Integration into the local market Exploitation of renewable energies Making use of environmental measures associated with the CAP	Pilot and demonstration projects
Medium term	Research into knowledge about the environment	Conclusion of agreements with owners and public administrations Creation of new forms of organisation	Integration into existing quality markets Creation of a pilot label for the area Commitments as part of international agreements (Agenda 21, etc.)	Gradual changes
Long term	Raising children's awareness	Global agreements such as "territorial charters" [<i>Chartes de territoire</i>]	Consolidation of the area's label	Global transformation is completed

3.2.3 Choosing a starting point.

Launching initiatives with a visible short-term impact whilst at the same time preparing longer-term initiatives

Obviously the scale and time required for each of the above-mentioned four processes depends on the context, i.e. on the area's resources at the outset. In an area where absentee owners are disinterested, the process of negotiation will certainly take longer. Likewise, in an area where farming land provides high yields using intensive methods, it will be harder to convince farmers of the need to change over to more environmentally-friendly production systems.

Below are a few possible starting points for each of the four processes.

a) Knowledge and awareness

Exploring with the community its perceptions of the environment and what it conjures up in their imagination can lead to it re-appropriating the heritage and becoming aware of the area's diverse functions, which are sometimes conflicting. On occasion it may be useful to invite visitors, school groups, etc. to explain their points of view.

EXAMPLE

The population of 16 local councils in the Toulis area (Lorraine, France) was invited by the Lorraine regional nature reserve to take part in collectively evaluating the landscape, with the aid of a map of the landscape indicating the ecological assets. Three percent of the population replied to the invitation and a series of proposals was made concerning roads through villages, the restoration and upkeep of public buildings and the development of meeting places for young people. Schools also contributed by organising "landscape classes" and exhibitions of pupils' work on the subject.

b) Negotiation

It is sometimes useful to base an initiative on a strong element of the local identity in order to more easily gain the support of owners and other players concerned and to identify those project promoters likely to facilitate negotiations and to scale up the process.

EXAMPLE

In the Vale do Minho area (Portugal), the LEADER group supported the initiative of the mayor of a small district wishing to renovate the houses traditionally used for summer transhumance in the past and convert them for use by tourists. Thanks to his tenacity and to the fact that this was a strong element of the local identity, associated with traditions still very much alive in the memories of their owners, negotiations advanced rapidly and the project took only two years. The houses, whose original architecture was respected, now have all the modern conveniences. One also serves as a centre for gastronomy and the sale of local products. In parallel, a local visitors' programme was organised around the activities traditionally associated with transhumance and a tourism company was set up comprised of the owners. For the LEADER group this initiative currently serves as a lever for other initiatives to valorise the environment, especially mountain areas abandoned by younger generations.

c) Market penetration and the search for external commitments

It is often easier to start with local markets, which are easier to manage and have the advantage of allowing direct links between producers and consumers. Initiatives for producing renewable energy are a good illustration of this.

EXAMPLE

In Deutsch-Tschantschendorf (Burgenland, Austria), a village cooperative, created in the spring of 1993, built a 1100 kw central heating station in October 1994. The station is fuelled with twigs and bark gathered almost exclusively from clearing up surrounding forests. Moreover, 325 square metres of solar panels supply hot water to the 29 users, especially in summer when the boiler is switched off, and an energy top-up during the remainder of the year. The project forms an integral part of a programme called "renewable energy region", which covers the Güssing administrative district. The station was built largely thanks to the system of mutual aid still very much alive in this region of peasant farmers, who often work half time in the building trade.

EXAMPLE

With the help of a specialist consultant, the Stirling LEADER group (Scotland, United Kingdom) provides technical support to local businesses wishing to carry out an energy assessment. This consists of studying what improvements could be made to reduce energy consumption. When invited to undertake a collective approach, firms secured better prices for their electricity supplies from private enterprises which – as a result of deregulation – now distribute electricity throughout the country.

In order to facilitate the short-term viability of new, more environmentally-friendly forms of exploitation, it is also possible to harness external aid, such as, in the case of agriculture, CAP agro-environmental measures (former regulation 2078/92, regulations on organic farming, etc.).

d) Physical transformation of the environment

If commenced at the outset, this process, which normally begins after the other three, can be of demonstration value. In some cases, transforming the environment arouses interest and can even serve as an example to raise awareness and encourage negotiation.

EXAMPLE

In the Trièves area (Rhône-Alpes, France), the Terre Vivante centre, created by the LEADER group in partnership with an environmental association and a district council, provides examples of small scale sustainable exploitation systems (in the sphere of organic farming, gardening, waste treatment, etc.). The centre currently serves as the basis for initiatives to raise the awareness of farmers, residents, decision-makers, etc. and for demonstration projects.

This form of intervention is particularly useful in a deteriorated situation where urgent action is required.

EXAMPLE

In Vindlefallen (Sweden), the LEADER group, faced with forest degradation stemming from intensive commercial exploitation of a single species used to make pulp for papermaking, set up a centre to demonstrate exploitation methods that respect biodiversity and local ecosystems, especially the wetlands.

3.2.4 Implementing a territorial project based on medium-term initiatives

At the implementation stage, the project's credibility and feasibility come into play. It is then necessary to undertake more in-depth projects that can be completed in the medium term.

a) Knowledge and awareness

Research work backed up by researchers or academics may make it possible to further knowledge about the local environment and to highlight other opportunities.

EXAMPLE

With the aid of historians, anthropologists and the LEADER group, the inhabitants of South Pembrokeshire, Wales (United Kingdom), learned more about their area's natural and architectural heritage prior to organising tourist activities. Raising the community's awareness of the value of its heritage was one of the keys to success, leading to environmentally-friendly tourism based on the inhabitants' new-found pride in their own development. Gradually, further elements of identity were integrated into the approach, such as the inhabitants' traditional sense of hospitality and the region's gastronomy.

b) Negotiation

Mobilising various players during the start-up phase makes it possible during the implementation phase to find ways of combining interests that make it easier to accommodate them. Indeed, a key role can be played by initiatives to settle conflicts between economic and ecological or individual and collective interests to ensure short-term performance without compromising long-term interests.

EXAMPLE

In eastern Styria (Austria), the movement for self-build solar energy collectors shows that, within a global project, economic interests (in this case, lower energy prices for users) can perfectly well exist alongside technical curiosity and idealism. After a slow start with part-time farmers from rural and peri-urban communities, the experiment was quickly extended to other regions and professional groups. An association was set up to support mutual aid groups in assembling solar panels. Contacts between groups, the association and suppliers made it possible to choose the most appropriate techniques. After 15 years of existence, the association has now become an

international group of consultants and today the region is the largest consumer of solar energy in Europe – the factor on which it has based its distinctiveness.

c) Market penetration and search for external commitments

In the medium term, it is possible to penetrate markets for quality products situated outside the area, by cashing in on new consumer demands.

EXAMPLE

Nineteen farmers from the Coteaux du Lyonnais region (Rhône-Alpes, France) organised themselves into an economic interest group (EIG) in order to sell their products from a collective point of sale. A fruit processing building made available by a member of the EIG is used as the sales premises (25 km from Lyon). A varied range of products is on offer: fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, jams, fruit juices, wines, sheep's cheese, sausages, poultry, rabbits, pâtés, terrines and fruit sorbets. This approach is a novel one in that urban consumers come to spend a weekend in the country, where they produce their own tarts, pâtés and apple turnovers. This has the advantage of reassuring Lyon city-dwellers about the quality of the products they consume.

It is also possible to use international agreements (Agenda 21, and others) to foster consultation between local public authorities and ensure that they are integrated into wider networks.

EXAMPLE

In the high Möll valley (Carinthia, Austria), which forms part of the Hohe Tauern national park, an environment and energy working party organised by the LEADER group convinced the valley's six local councils to join the International Climate Alliance. Following a feasibility study, the six local councils signed a contract to implement a whole series of environmental management innovations.

d) Physical transformation of the environment

Following the demonstrative start-up phase, it is then possible to introduce processes of transformation that can be completed in the medium term.

EXAMPLE

The Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta LEADER group (Ireland) supported the development of former pilgrimage routes in the Dingle peninsula (Kerry). Following the creation of a local development association, the initiative involved developing, jointly with the principal local players, an inventory of the area's natural and cultural resources. The project, deeply rooted in the history of this isolated area and containing a significant environmental element (redevelopment of sites, paths, etc.), had numerous positive repercussions on tourism and farming activities, as well as on the local dynamic of these two remote villages. The work involved in maintaining the project sites raised real environmental awareness: the population discovered a source of new economic activities that help to protect and valorise the natural and cultural heritage, whilst a number of farmers have turned to organic products and quality farm produce.

3.2.5 Consolidation

Encompassing the territorial project within a long-term perspective

At this stage, the aim is to create new production and environmental management systems, to forge a new identity, to enhance the links between players and to ensure strong market integration (consolidation of the four processes).

EXAMPLE

In the Ticinese region (Lombardy, Italy) which, though close to Milan, is still well preserved, the inhabitants, concerned at growing urban pressure, called for the creation of a nature reserve. Thanks to cooperation between the public authorities and local players, the activities of an information centre (Carefour européen) and the judicious use of CAP environmental measures (regulation 2078/92), the creation of the 90,000-hectare Ticino park went on to become the starting point for new environmentally-friendly practices, particularly in farming (introduction of biodiversity into crops and hedgerows, creation of biological corridors between forested areas and restricted use of chemical fertilisers). Little by little, common ecological farming standards were established, giving rise to a quality label which, as a result of its popularity with consumers, is securing the economic viability of farms and the competitiveness of the area as a whole.

EXAMPLE

The Pays Cathare region (Midi-Pyrénées, France) provides another example of consolidation, this time in the sphere of heritage resources. It has been possible to recover and redevelop the hitherto totally abandoned historical architectural heritage (castles and their surroundings), by constructing an identity based on the area's Cathar past and a process of negotiation, which has been on-going for the past 20 years, between the public authorities and local players. The launch of the "Pays cathare" label, attributed to local products and services that meet quality standards for sale to tourists, has made it possible to consolidate market integration. Thanks to the integrated promotion of its historical heritage, this formerly neglected area has succeeded in achieving territorial competitiveness.

3.2.6 Monitoring/evaluation

Monitoring/evaluation plays an essential role in the development of the four processes, because it is through regular follow-up and an in-depth knowledge of such development that the synergies and solutions for overcoming deadlock situations can be brought into play.

EXAMPLE

In the Pays de Lanvollon region (Brittany, France), by monitoring the landscape, and in particular by showing photos taken ten years earlier at meetings with the authorities, the local group succeeded in raising the awareness of elected representatives and local players and persuading them to participate in the joint initiative to restore the landscape.

Monitoring/evaluation frequently calls for special skills:

- > The help of specialists in natural resources (biologists, chemists, ecologists, etc.) is often required to monitor transformation systems.

EXAMPLE

In the Maestrazgo region (Aragon, Spain), the LEADER group has launched a wide-ranging project to clean up a number of polluted and degraded rivers through the creation of a "river reserve". The objectives of this project are ecological (treating water, redeveloping river banks, multiplying the fauna, as well as upstream analysis of soil erosion, improvement, conservation and valorisation of the forest heritage), as well as social (educating the local population, improving municipal management and exploiting the river as an element of cultural identity) and economic (creation of water treat-

ment companies and developing tourism). This project requires permanent monitoring/evaluation of the state of the rivers, for which the LEADER group uses the services of biologists and chemists from Saragossa University.

- > Monitoring awareness-raising and negotiation requires observation skills and the ability to understand the position of each player involved, skills which the LAG technicians often acquire themselves only through experience.
- > Monitoring market integration processes calls for in-depth knowledge of commercial matters (marketing, customer loyalty process, prospective analysis of demand, etc.).

3.3 Creating a collective dynamic

The gradual process of consolidation described above can come up against many different problems and pitfalls. It is therefore necessary to exploit every opportunity to create a collective dynamic, in particular by:

- > focusing on the capacity for collective reaction to an external threat;
- > using anything likely to facilitate negotiation between the players by developing a common perception of problems/opportunities;
- > making use of available financial instruments;
- > seeking to create a snowball effect.

a) Focusing on the capacity for collective reaction

The emergence of a threat to the local environment often triggers a "reactive" movement that can turn into a "proactive" movement to valorise the area if links are created between those pursuing a specific objective and the wider group of players primarily concerned about the quality of life and collective assets.

EXAMPLE

The Waldviertel-Management local development agency stemmed from a protection movement that emerged in reaction to a national plan to install a nuclear waste dump in the area. As the Waldviertel area (Lower-Austria) had already experienced several decades of economic decline and heavy depopulation, the local players were shaken by this threat. They grouped together to form the Pro Waldviertel movement, which has since come to embody a new willingness to work together to restore the area's quality of life and productive strengths.

The movement's merit is to have turned a temporary public protest into a lasting local development organisation that forms part of a network of public and private players.

b) Using anything likely to facilitate negotiation between the players

Working on perceptions of the environment with the help of visual aids – such as maps of the area indicating problem points, opportunities and flows between the area and the outside world – can provide an opportunity for renegotiating with the players to effect changes in attitude.

EXAMPLE

In France, collective and participatory initiatives to reappraise the environmental heritage, where they are supported by the municipal and intermunicipal authorities, can be based on the “landscape charter” [Charte paysagère] and the “territorial charter” [Charte du territoire] developed by the Mairie-Conseil, a service organisation for the benefit of small local councils and the federation of regional nature reserves [Fédération des parcs naturels régionaux]. Designed for local use, these charters are designed to secure a joint commitment from the parties concerned.

c) Making use of available financial instruments

Available financial instruments, particularly those at the disposal of LEADER, can be a useful aid in seeking to trigger a collective dynamic or to unblock a situation.

EXAMPLE

In the Vinschgau/Val Venosta region (Trento-Alto-Adige, Italy), the LEADER group was asked by hotelkeepers for a tourist cycle path to be developed in the valley. However, the project was opposed by farmers (who did not wish to meet up with cyclists on paths hitherto reserved for tractors) and aroused a certain amount of reluctance among elected representatives, who did not dare to go against the farmers' wishes. However, the LEADER group finally secured the farmers' agreement by bringing all of the players together to study a map and by emphasising the fact that in the past LEADER had financed the redevelopment of homes in the alpine pastures.

d) Seeking to create a snowball effect

The multiple interactions between individual and collective players are giving rise to an invisible “shell” structure, within which a new collective capability for managing local resources is being forged.

EXAMPLE

Following German unification, ten villages in the Seelow administrative district east of Brandenburg set out to relaunch the local economy. Backed by the Land authorities, which attributed to this project demonstration value for the entire Brandenburg region, the Wulkow local council opted for a “global ecological development” model, the central aim of which was job creation. In order to get this idea to spread fast, several coordinated initiatives were launched in parallel: renovation of the village, use of renewable energies (using biomass), wastewater treatment, diversification of agriculture into organic production and pisciculture, etc. All of these projects are linked into a network to associate the member associations, local councils and producers, coordinated by “Ecogrenier” (Ökospeicher), an association of a hundred or so volunteers working in liaison with other similar organisations throughout Europe. In this specific case, restructuring the villages went hand in hand with restructuring civil society.

3.4 Examples of strategies

The above description of the stages involved in any strategy to improve environmental competitiveness forms a complete circuit integrating all of the different levels of intervention.

However, the examples given to illustrate each phase of each process (starting point, implementation, consolidation, monitoring/evaluation) and the various methods for creating a collective dynamic are in the main only partial examples of processes.

The fact is that it is usually difficult to ensure that rural areas acquire genuine environmental competitiveness, due to a combination of:

- > the complexity of the processes to be implemented;
- > the fact that, since the environment has only recently become a concern, experience is still limited;

[7] Mairie-Conseil, 44 rue de l'Université F-75006-Paris.

> the difficulty in linking together the different types of intervention and instruments available. A proper strategy of environmental competitiveness would mean linking up with planning and regional development, as well as with farming subsidies, two areas that are outside LEADER's sphere of intervention.

In addition, there are reasons more directly linked with the context of rural areas themselves. Two particular conditions are essential to initiating the four processes described above:

1) A balance of power between production requirements and environmental concerns that is not too unfavourable to the latter. Indeed, to varying degrees, in rural

areas there is always a latent conflict between the two. It is a conflict which, to be overcome in the territorial project approach, must be tackled straight away. However, in rural areas, economic interests are often so predominant that very little leeway is left for environmental concerns.

2) The presence at local level of a minimum number of players on whom to rely.

This leads us to define four types of area: those where the first of the two conditions is fulfilled; those where the second of the two conditions is fulfilled; those where neither condition is fulfilled; and those where both conditions are fulfilled.

THE FOUR TYPES OF RURAL AREA, DEFINED ON THE BASIS OF THE TWO CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL TO LAUNCHING A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE TERRITORIAL COMPETITIVENESS

		Environmental concerns withstand pressure from economic interests	
		Yes	No
There are local players on whom to rely	Yes	Type 1	Type 2
	No	Type 3	Type 4

3.4.1 Examples of strategies for Type 1 areas

(there are local players on whom to rely and environmental concerns withstand pressure from economic interests)

In Type 1 areas, all of the conditions are fulfilled for launching a strategy to gradually improve environmental competitiveness.

The differences between strategies therefore pertain mainly to the starting points used.

In the two examples described earlier, these starting points were: 1) work to introduce area-wide standards for ecological production among farmers (Ticino); 2) reclaiming the historical heritage based on a new territorial identity (Pays Cathare).

Below are two further examples of strategies using alternative starting points.

Strategy using the existence of a nature reserve as its starting point

EXAMPLE

In the Vindelfjällen LEADER area, situated in Lapland in northern Sweden, the conflict between economic interests and environmental demands focused on the systematic exploitation of forests for the production of papermaking pulp, which threatens the wetlands and biodiversity. However, the balance of power favours the environmental approach: in the eyes of the local population of this very isolated region, the environment provides the only development opportunity and the existence of the Vindelfjällende nature reserve, created in 1974, is a considerable asset.

In this context, a children's study centre was created in the village of Ammarnäs in 1970, prior to the creation of the nature reserve into which it was later integrated. This centre, like the 12 others throughout the rest of the country, provides Swedish children, as well as children from neighbouring countries, with an opportunity to come into contact with the natural environment in an educational way, as well as with the local traditions and culture of spatial management. It is also used to teach students from the two nearby universities.

Recently the centre took over the management of an abandoned site which, due to its proximity to a lake, enables children to discover fishing traditions. Later it decided to build a small house within the confines of the old site. Permission was immediately granted by the local authority, but permission from the region, which was also required

because the site is situated within the Vindelfjällen reserve, was refused under the pretext of preserving the wildness of the reserve. The press was alerted and the regional authorities were criticised for refusing to take into account the need to educate children to respect the environment. The regional authorities were forced to reconsider their position and the permit was finally granted.

This institutional misunderstanding, a result of the distance between the local population and regional institutions, left the inhabitants with a sense of political isolation, and, as a result, they wanted decisions concerning the reserve to be taken at municipal level. The local LEADER group worked to foster dialogue and mutual understanding by organising forums between village representatives, local councils and the regional and national authorities.

Strategy using concerted initiatives to revitalise a village as its starting point

Germany and Austria provide several examples of concerted initiatives to revitalise villages in crisis.

EXAMPLE

In the mid-1980s, the serious structural crisis in rural industries in the Kirchdorf region of Upper-Austria prompted the members of the Steinbach an der Steyr municipal council to promote sustainable local development and so to establish a consensus on a number of rules and principles of cooperation. In the years that followed, around 40% of the local population has taken an active part in implementing the various projects. Provided that they abide by the basic rules established by the council, all those proposing new ideas for sustainable local development are given official recognition from the local authority. The renovation of the historic centre, the redefinition of areas of housing concentration, the relaunch of traditional organic fruit syrups, the installation of biomass heating stations and the creation of 124 jobs in firms, were all visible results of the "route to sustainable development in Steinbach", as the citizens like to dub their approach.

3.4.2 Examples of strategies for Type 2 areas

(there are local players on whom to rely but environmental concerns do not tend to withstand pressure from economic interests)

In such areas, strong economic pressure – whether from intensive farming areas, regions with heavy tourism or peri-urban areas where property speculation is becoming rife – makes launching environmental competitiveness strategies very unpredictable. However, there are local players who can be relied upon to launch certain initiatives.

Small-scale demonstration strategy

One possible strategy is to start working on a small scale first, by choosing a limited area that is subject to less pressure on which to focus any environmental protection energies that are available in the area.

EXAMPLE

In the Ribatejo Norte area (Portugal), situated 100 km from Lisbon, which is subject to heavy pressure from tourism and property development, an environmental association, backed by the LEADER group, has focused its efforts on preserving an area of around 20 km², featuring a small, relatively well conserved mountain. Here it was possible to create a balance of power that made it possible to withstand the many different pressures and threats hanging over it. Little by little, the association succeeded in gaining the support of the population, schools, then the local authorities, and finally the national authorities, with the result that the area is now being declared an officially protected area and already figures in the Natura 2000 programme's Portuguese list.

Due to its scale, widespread local support has begun to prompt a change in attitude which, as it gathers momentum, may perhaps reverse the balance of power and lead to the gradual acquisition of environmental competitiveness.

3.4.3 Examples of strategies for Type 3 areas

(there are not really any local players on whom to rely but environmental concerns withstand pressure from economic interests)

In such areas, although the balance of power is more favourable to environmental protection, it is an issue that nobody cares about and for which it is very difficult to gain the support of local players.

This category essentially includes areas that are falling into neglect and are marked by rural depopulation and agricultural decline, as in many marginal and isolated rural areas that have barely any assets on which to base their development.

Long-term awareness strategy

In this type of situation, development agents can start by raising the awareness of local players in order to arouse an interest in the area and its environment. This must form part of a long-term strategy, because all the local players have their attention focused further afield. Young people, in particular, seek to leave because they can only envisage a future outside the area.

EXAMPLE

In the Agueira-Dão and Caramulo region (Centre, Portugal), the LEADER group, faced with the young people's systematic desire to move to the coast or the city – a desire that was jeopardising the area's future – launched the initiative "children's images of development". This involved asking 3,500 primary school children to portray, in the form of individual or collective drawings, their idea of their region and its future. These drawings highlighted the children's strong attraction to modernity in the guise of urban landscapes. Socio-educational activities were then carried out with the children (school discussions, staging local and international exhibitions, producing aids to interpret the drawings and teaching material, etc.), which made it possible to develop the children's positive perceptions of the local area. Furthermore, the children's ideas revealed by these socio-educational activities were taken into consideration in the LEADER II business plan.

3.4.4 Examples of strategies for Type 4 areas

(there are no local players on whom to rely and environmental concerns fail to withstand pressure from economic interests)

It is in Type 4 areas that conditions for launching an environmental competitiveness strategy are worst: the balance of power between economic and environmental requirements is particularly unfavourable to the environment, and there are no local players on whom to rely. This is particularly so in areas that have benefited from rapid economic development, to the advantage of all of the local players, but which has marginalised any form of ecological opposition. This particularly concerns coastal and mountain areas that have experienced a steep rise in mass tourism over the past two decades.

In this case there are two possible strategies that can be conducted in a simultaneous and coordinated manner.

Circuitous strategy

Where a problem cannot be resolved directly, seeking indirect ways may provide a solution. It is possible, for instance, to choose a roundabout starting point for the issue of environmental competitiveness, to enable it to be introduced indirectly.

EXAMPLE

In the Po delta (Italy), the growth in agriculture and tourism had relegated the problem of the environment to oblivion and galvanising any support at all for the subject was something of a challenge. This was why the Delta 2000 association and LEADER group, created to protect the wetlands of the Po delta, toned down its initial demands and, with the support of the local authorities and trade councils, launched a territorial marketing strategy aimed at attracting business to the area. However, faithful to its original vocation, the association imposed respect for the environment as one of the criteria for receiving funding. New “clean” companies were then established: at the same time as providing a certain economic dynamism, they help to promote the image of an environmentally-friendly area. However, more time and greater legitimacy are needed before this will be recognised as a credible alternative.

Anticipation strategy

The other possible strategy in this type of area is to prepare for the time when the balance of power tips in favour of an environmental approach. What is certain is that the conflict between economic interests and environmental concerns cannot indefinitely be resolved to the benefit of the former. Eventually the time comes when environmental degradation itself calls into question the cost-effectiveness of economic activities. Local players may then change their position and espouse environmental objectives. In areas that fail to ensure the renewal of their natural resources, this reversal in the balance of power is bound to happen sooner or later.

The problem is that it is very often too late to repair the damage, since the degradation has become irreversible. What is more, many of the solutions cannot be implemented overnight: time is needed for negotiation, experimentation, adaptation, etc.

The LEADER group can choose to anticipate the time when the balance of power reverses, by developing solutions ahead of time which, because they have already been tested, will be easier to implement when the time comes.

EXAMPLE

On the very arid island of Gran Canaria (Canary Islands, Spain), lack of water has become such a critical issue that it is calling into question the survival of farming activities, even though they are essential to maintaining the island's plant life and combating erosion and desertification. However, within the current context of expanding seaside tourism and coastal towns, it is very difficult to galvanise decision-makers to address the problem. What is more, the privatisation of water distribution companies has introduced the short-term profit rationale. Privatised water companies are pushing consumption and prefer to collect already over-exploited underground water rather than desalinating seawater, so putting them into direct competition with farmers. It was against this backdrop that a simple solution of conserving water by fitting a reducer into taps in residential homes was devised by an engineer but rejected by water distribution companies because it was not in their interests. The LEADER group then decided to finance the pilot installation of such reducers in an inland village in order to acquire know-how that will be available when the balance of power changes.

This example shows that the outcome of a conflict between economic interests and environmental concerns can also depend on decisions taken outside the area itself, and that a regional or national policy can tip the balance one way or another. In our example, it was privatising water distribution in 1985 that tipped the balance against environmental concerns. This is why, for Type 4 areas (or even Type 2 areas), it can be useful to seek higher level solutions, in order to tip the balance of power more in favour of implementing an environmental competitiveness strategy. The whole issue of the links between local and global concerns is something that we shall be addressing in Part 5.

3.5 Conclusions

Analysing the player/environment relationship in rural areas and possible strategies for achieving environmental competitiveness has highlighted the extreme diversity of situations encountered by local groups. In general an area's environmental competitiveness remains a long-term objective that requires the implementation of different processes and a strategy to link immediate measures with longer-term objectives.

LEADER+ opens up still further the possibility of confirming the role of the environment in the development of rural areas. Indeed, due to the emphasis placed on sustainable development and the importance attributed

to approaches to improve the quality of life and preserve heritage resources, the new Community rural development initiative encourages local action groups to probe the relationship between players, environment and development. In order to be sustainable, any such strategy must aim to establish new functions for the rural world and the resulting job opportunities.

Furthermore, this type of strategy can be based only on consultation processes at several levels. Of the different types of consultation to be developed, consultation between several neighbouring areas – particularly through inter-territorial cooperation encouraged by LEADER+ – becomes a key factor in building territorial **COMPETITIVENESS**. Indeed, considering interests and resources that go beyond merely defining a sphere of intervention should make it possible to establish the importance of environmental competitiveness as the key element of a territorial strategy.

Increasingly, therefore, the challenge of the future seems to be to turn the environment into a key factor of development. Under LEADER+, this challenge involves the ability to transform the environment into an instrument of coordination, cohesion, job creation and a new sense of identity, heightening the attractiveness of the areas and their products, etc. Ultimately the environment has to be made a fully-fledged part of integrated development.

Leader II est une Initiative communautaire lancée par la Commission européenne et coordonnée par la Direction générale de l'Agriculture (Unité VI-F.II.3).

Le contenu de ce dossier ne reflète pas nécessairement les opinions de l'Union européenne.

***Leader II** is a Community Initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture (Unit VI-F.II.3).*

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Information

Observatoire européen LEADER
LEADER European Observatory
AEIDL
Chaussée St-Pierre 260
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tél +32 2 736 49 60
Fax +32 2 736 04 34
E-mail: leader@aeidl.be



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